

Welcome

to the newsletter of the European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers. Here you can find recent news and events for early-career researchers across Europe. Our newsletter is a joint collaboration between the many members of Eurodoc and is distributed across 28 countries in Europe. Feel free to contact us with news, questions, opinions, contributions, and information on events for early-career researchers. Would you like to advertise in our newsletter? Contact us for information on our packages.

Eurodoc

is a non-party, non-profit, pan-European, grassroots federation of 29 national associations (NAs) of doctoral candidates (DCs) and junior researchers (JRs) in Europe. Eurodoc was founded in 2002 and aims to: represent all early-career researchers (ECRs) in Europe; improve the quality of training, research, and career development for ECRs; share information and organise events for ECRs; establish and promote cooperation between national associations of ECRs; inform and influence policy making for ECRs.

This issue

focuses on junior researchers and the major faces they are confronted with in the current European job market. Articles of this issue include updates on the Annual General Meeting 2018 and on Eurodoc activities, reports on the situation of Junior Researchers in some European countries, in terms of working conditions and job prospects inside academia, and a discussion on the impact of interdisciplinary approaches for Junior Researchers. The issue also features contributions on career development from Euraxess and researchers from Leiden University.



Eurodoc Conference/AGM 2018

Edited by Emanuele Storti

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Eurodoc 2018 AGM

On Friday 20th and Saturday 21st April, the Eurodoc's Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held at University of Tampere in Finland and elected the new administrative board for 2018-2019. **Gareth O'Neill (Netherlands), doctoral candidate in linguistics at Leiden University, was re-elected as Eurodoc President.** "This year has been an extremely active year" Gareth said in his speech, "and we have reorganised much of the inner administration workings of Eurodoc. We have also engaged extensively with key partners and stakeholders. As a result, we are currently highly visible and are involved in many meetings and projects and proposals."

During the AGM, **Eva Hnátková (Czech Republic)** has been elected as Vice-President, **Farouk Allouche (France)** as Treasurer and **Mathias Schroijs (Belgium)** in the role of Secretary.

Emanuele Storti (Italy), Auréa Cophignon (France) and Milena Medineckienė (Lithuania) have been elected as General Board Members.

The AGM also appointed officers and coordinators of workgroups, with **Véronique De Herde (Belgium)** as Secretariat Coordinator, and approved the admission of **PAND (PhD Association Network of Denmark), SNPA (National Postdoc Association in Sweden)** and **USI (Union of Students in Ireland)** as new members. Regarding the annual goals for the new administration, Gareth said: "Next year is set to be a busy year especially regarding Open Science, Mental Health, Research Integrity, Next Generation Internet, and Pensions for ECRs. We will build on what we have developed and will engage even more with our partners and stakeholders".



Meet the Eurodoc Board and Secretariat Members 2018/2019

Administrative Board

President	Gareth O'Neill	PNN (Netherlands)
Vice-President	Eva Hnátková	SK RVŠ (Czech Republic)
Treasurer	Farouk Allouche	CJC (France)
Secretary	Mathias Schroijsen	Focus Research (Belgium)
General Board Member	Aur�a Cophignon	CJC (France)
General Board Member	Emanuele Storti	ADI (Italy)
General Board Member	Milena Medineckiene	LSYR (Lithuania)

Secretariat

Secretariat Coordinator	V�ronique De Herde	Focus Research (Belgium)
Social Media Coordinator	Giulia Malaguarnera	ADI (Italy)
Newsletter Coordinator	Agata Skwarczyńska	KRD (Poland)
Financial Controller	Maximilian Lesellier	CJC (France)
Policy Officer	Davide Pacitti	Focus Research (Belgium)
Pension Officer	Antoine Dujardin	CJC (France)
Skills Officer	Charlotte Weber	SiN (Norway)
ESOF Officer	Claudia Dobrinski	Thesis (Germany)
Webmaster	Oleksandr Berezko	RMU (Ukraine)
WG Accreditation Coordinator	Salome Adam	Actionuni (Switzerland)
WG Doctoral Training Coordinator	Mariana Hankov�a	SK RVŠ (Czech Republic)
WG Equality Co-Coordinator	Adrienn Oravec	DOSz (Hungary)
WG Equality Co-Coordinator	Farouk Allouche	CJC (France)
WG Finance Coordinator	Tristan Nabong	SiN (Norway)

WG Employment & Careers Coordinator	Beata Zwierzyńska	KRD (Poland)
WG Interdisciplinarity Co-Coordinator	Yuliia Ovchynnykova	RMU (Ukraine)
WG Interdisciplinarity Co-Coordinator	André Batalhão	ABIC (Portugal)
WG Mental Health Co-Coordinator	Gareth O'Neill	PNN (Netherlands)
WG Mental Health Co-Coordinator	Mathias Schroijen	Focus Research (Belgium)
WG Mobility Co-Coordinator	Edgar Lopez-Rojas	SiN (Norway)
WG Mobility Co-Coordinator	Julia Hamsovszki	DOSz (Hungary)
WG Open Science Co-Coordinator	Ana Slavec	DMRS (Slovenia)
WG Open Science Co-Coordinator	Enrico Riccardi	SiN (Norway)
WG Policy Research Coordinator	Rens Philipsen	PNN (Netherlands)
WG Research Integrity Co-Coordinator	Iryna Degtyarova	RMU (Ukraine)
WG Research Integrity Co-Coordinator	Margaux Kersschot	Focus Research (Belgium)

Meet the Eurodoc Advisory Board Members 2018/2019

Aidis Stukas	LSYR (Lithuania)
Filomena Parada	ABIC (Portugal)
Iryna Degtyarova	RMU (Ukraine)
Margaux Kersschot	Focus Research (Belgium)
Miia Ijäs-Idrobo	FUURT (Finland)

Defining 'Junior Researchers' and Challenges they Face

Different terms are used for researchers who have received their PhD but have not yet reached senior rank. Accordingly, this group of researchers is often defined differently by different institutions and stakeholders. Depending on how the group is defined, other implications for specific needs and challenges may follow.

A [new Eurodoc paper](#) aims at defining Junior Researcher as the term that describes one of our main target groups. Second, the paper highlights the overlaps with and distinctions from other commonly used terms. Finally, it outlines some important challenges this group of researchers is facing.



Definition Junior Researchers

Junior Researcher is a term coined by Eurodoc to refer to people who have been awarded a doctoral degree and are engaged in a temporary and defined period of advanced, not yet fully independent research, either in academia, in the public or in the private sector.

Eurodoc believes that there should be transparent and achievable career paths for *Junior Researchers* with reasonable time intervals between career steps. However, to give an exact time frame in which a person should be considered a *Junior Researcher* after the conferment of a doctorate is neither possible nor desirable. First, it would ignore the reality of many researchers given the diversity of career structures and labour markets for researchers that exist across Europe.

Second, any restriction to a determinate time frame does neither take into account breaks or stretched career paths (for example due to family tasks, other private obligations, or lack of employment opportunities), nor does it allow for any non-linear career steps (e.g., leaving time for researchers to gain experiences in the private sector or to spend time with their family). Therefore, we only provide a broad definition of *Junior Researchers* that considers the diversity of experiences, backgrounds and career paths is useful to help retaining and resuming talented people in research. The status as *Junior Researcher* ends with the appointment of a permanent position as fully independent researcher or with a complete and ultimate disengagement from research.

Overlaps with and distinction from similar terms

The European Charter & Code¹ distinguishes Early-Stage Researchers (ESRs) from Experienced Researchers. The latter are (in short) defined as researchers who hold a doctoral degree or four years of research experience. A similar definition is found in the European Framework for Research Careers for R2 Recognised Researcher: PhD holders or equivalent who are not yet fully independent². Further, postdoc is a popular term to denominate researchers in their first years after their doctoral degree. However, it is most often used to refer to researchers on a fixed term contract. It also tends to be used at universities only and rarely in other research institutes in the public and private sector.

Major challenges of Junior Researchers

In the following, we want to point briefly to major challenges that Junior Researchers typically encounter nowadays. A detailed discussion of these challenges has been and/or will be provided elsewhere³.

- **Precariousness or even lack of employment:** For Junior Researchers throughout Europe it is increasingly common to get stuck in continuous fixed-term, precarious positions. Additionally, many hold only short-term contracts, receive stipends (which do often not include social security benefits) or have to deal with repeated periods of unemployment. This employment pattern suggests an increase in institutional abuse of temporary contracts, leaving Junior Researchers in a weakened position in the research community due to their job insecurity.
- **Inappropriate and unattractive working conditions:** Looking at working conditions, Junior Researchers can be confronted with a lack of access to research infrastructure and an insufficient integration in existing networks at the institution they are working. Further, inequality of opportunities for men and women is still a reality in most research and HE institutions, especially when it comes to advanced research positions. Finally, the demand for career planning security is very high among Junior Researchers given the employment conditions mentioned above, but rarely met appropriately by research and HE institutions.
- **Insufficient career development support:** While career development is a crucial matter to Junior Researchers, they often miss sufficient according offers at their work place like mentoring or further training opportunities. In relation to the above mentioned career planning but also to career development activities, honest but promoting feedback regarding career prospects is a necessary support activity. As a prerequisite for these support activities to become fruitful, transparent, realistic and fair recruitment criteria need to be a standard throughout Europe.
- **Non-standard career paths:** The imbalance of career demands and private needs (e.g. family tasks and caring work vs. mobility demands and job insecurity, dual career couples⁴) stays a constant challenge for Junior Researchers. Many have already been confronted with this challenge during the doctorate. Additionally, non-standard career paths are rarely acknowledged for promotion, making variable career profiles and permeable career paths an

¹ European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers: "Experienced Researchers are defined as researchers having at least four years of research experience (full-time equivalent) since gaining a university diploma giving them access to doctoral studies, in the country in which the degree/diploma was obtained or researchers already in possession of a doctoral degree, regardless of the time taken to acquire it"; reference: European Commission, 2005; <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter>, access date: 08.07.2017

² Reference: European Commission, 2011;

https://cdn5.euraxess.org/sites/default/files/policy_library/towards_a_european_framework_for_research_careers_final.pdf, access date: 08.07.2017

³ For example, see the review included here: Science Europe. (2016). Postdoctoral Funding Schemes in Europe: Survey Report. Retrieved from Brussels: <https://www.scienceeurope.org/wpcontent/uploads/2016/10/20160922-Survey-Postdocs-Final.pdf>

⁴ See also Eurodoc's policy paper on „Dual Career Opportunities for Doctoral Candidates and Early Career Researchers“, 2014: <http://www.eurodoc.net/sites/default/files/attachments/2017/133/eurodocdualcareerservices.pdf>

obstacle for a research career. Further, those many Junior Researchers with the non-standard career paths do often (structurally or informally) suffer from a lack of institutional acknowledgement and/or voice (e.g. lack of representation in university structures).

- **Barriers to mobility:** While mobility is often a requirement for Junior Researchers to follow a research career, the diverse labour markets and HE systems as well as career structures across Europe pose a barrier to mobility that is still difficult to overcome. The European research market is characterized by diverse recruitment practices and policies and huge differences between national pension and social security systems, leaving a disproportionate part of the (financial and other) mobility costs with the individual researcher. This includes costs in terms of life-domain-balance issues caused by mobility. However, for those moving between countries, international mobility is not always being rewarded. As for intersectoral mobility, societal ignorance of academic merits, the value of the doctorate and research skills can be an obstacle. Finally, a return to academia after working in other sectors is a challenge faced by Junior Researchers willing to move between academia and industry or other non-academic job markets.

This list of challenges gives an impression of what Junior Researchers are confronted with in the current European research system. While there are already some measures in place to meet these challenges, many are still causing serious problems and repeatedly discourage talented Junior Researchers to follow a research career. Hence, we plead for keeping this group of researchers in focus and investing further efforts into appropriate counter-measures.

Contact: for any correspondence regarding this paper, please contact the Eurodoc Employment and Career Development Working Group or the Eurodoc board via info@eurodoc.net.

Eurodoc signs an open letter to European Parliament to halt potentially harmful copyright reform

Eurodoc has signed an open letter directed to the members of the Legal Affairs Committee of the European Parliament in which asks to halt the adoption of the current draft of the Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market as some articles could threaten Open Access and Open Science.

Together with several other signatories, we express our alarm at the draft Directive and in particular at the potential impact of Articles 11 and 13. We are concerned that these provisions will create burdensome and harmful restrictions on access to scientific research and data, as well as on the fundamental rights of freedom of information, directly contradicting the EU's own ambitions in the field of Open Access and Open Science.

We believe that further limitations in the open circulation of knowledge products are likely to pose, especially for doctoral candidates, a severe threat to the effectiveness of the education process, which would require a wide and unlimited access to papers and data. Further barriers risk to have a strong negative impact also on the career of researchers, especially ECRs, in terms of visibility of their work, credit and recognition, opportunity for funding and networking.



In particular, with the provision of Article 13, and the possible closure of many non-profit repositories, many ECRs who often are working on their lab head's grant, may have no chance to even experience Open Science at all. This can happen especially for those working in small-medium universities, that can barely afford the already expensive subscriptions to publishers. Moreover, ECRs are more likely to embrace openness when their senior colleagues are acquainted to these publishing practices and when they have actual access to papers and data. As a consequence, provision of the mentioned articles risk to dramatically slowen the acceptance of Open Science itself as a publishing practice.

The letter has been firstly signed by a coalition comprised of academic, library, education, research and digital rights communities including CESAER, COAR, The Commons Network, Communia Association, Creative Commons, C4C, EBLIDA, EIFL, EUA, Free Knowledge Advocacy Group EU, IFLA, LIBER, RLUK, Science Europe, and SPARC Europe.

The letter is available at the [SPARC Europe website](https://sparceurope.org/copyrightreform) (<https://sparceurope.org/copyrightreform>).

Postdoctoral researchers in Portugal: A handful of empty promises

The Portuguese context

In Portugal no single clear, overarching and shared national strategy for tertiary education and research and innovation (R&I) exists ([OECD](#), 2018). The responsibility for these two areas is shared mostly between the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education (MCTES) and the Ministry of Economy. Currently, responsibility for higher education, public funding of research and researchers based in higher education institutions and associated public non-profit organisations, and science-based innovation activities involving tertiary education institutions and public research units, lies with MCTES. FCT, Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (Foundation for Science and Technology), is the main research funding agency in Portugal. FCT is under the supervision of MCTES and is responsible for the competitive funding

of doctoral and postdoctoral positions in Portugal. FCT was greatly affected by fluctuations and recent cuts in Portugal's gross expenditure on R&I brought by the 2008 economic crisis and ensuing austerity years.



Data on academic career paths and career development of doctoral candidates and graduates is limited, which makes it hard to provide an accurate picture of where and in what type of occupations Portuguese doctoral degree holders work. Data presented in the OECD preliminary report that reflects the country's situation in December 2015, suggest that (1) 85% of doctorate holders work as postdocs, teaching staff or researchers in the tertiary education and public research sectors;

(2) 2% work as researchers in the business sector, (3) 6% work in positions outside the academic sector without an R&D component; (4) 5% of the graduates who acquired their degree in the last 2 years work as researchers in business and 13% in non-R&D roles outside academia. The demand for doctoral degree holders by the private and public sector beyond research-oriented positions is scarce. Both the structure of the Portuguese economy and a lack of tradition of cooperation between academic research and productive sectors and public services account for this situation. No reliable data on the level of out-migration from Portugal by doctorate holders is available, however the widespread perception is that growing and significant numbers of highly qualified Portuguese graduates regularly leave the country to work elsewhere in the world.

The grant-holding system

The Portuguese system of R&I relies heavily on the work of grant holders. Although the exact number of researchers working for the system that are grant holders is not known, recent estimates point to a number that rounds the tens of thousands. The grant holding system is a major pillar of the country's R&I system. Grant holders are responsible for an important portion of the system's outputs (e.g., publications, grant applications). The skills and qualifications of grant holders working as researchers is diverse: while some have a master degree and/or are in the process of obtaining a doctorate, others already have a doctoral degree and occupy a diversity of positions not always formally recognized in the organizations hiring them.

The Portuguese grant holding system was first consolidated in 2004. From that year onwards, the different political parties in power were responsible for its further implementation and enlargement. Over time, political decisions enforced by these different governments contributed to maintain and reinforce the grant holding system, which, from the start, presented some structural deficiencies that had a major impact in grant holders employment and career development. The deficiencies of the grant holding system both reinforce the precariousness of the working conditions and weaken the long-term sustainability of the country's R&I system.



In Portugal, grant holders are not legally recognized as workers, therefore, the laws that regulate labour do not protect them. In addition, the system is based on stipends, which makes possible for grant holders not to be entitled to many of the social benefits other workers have, for example, they do not have access to unemployment benefits or sick leave. As a result, employers are able to hire highly qualified scientific workers with a minimum of labour expenditure.

These circumstances not only hinder the establishment of (stable) research careers in Portugal, but also have prevented researchers from being duly recognized and respected for the essential contributions they make to the system of R&I and to society.

ABIC

ABIC, Associação dos Bolseiros de Investigação Científica (Association of Research Grant-Holders), has been since its foundation in 2003, the critical voice that denounces the frailties of the working conditions offered to researchers in Portugal. ABIC main claim is the establishment of employment contracts for all researchers working in Portugal, in particular for grant-holding researchers. Such claim fully agrees with the Recommendation of 11 March 2005 on the [European Charter for Researchers](#) and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, and the [UNESCO's](#) Recommendation on the status of scientific researchers.

Throughout the years, ABIC advocated and proposed solutions to overcome the deficiencies that underlie to the Portuguese grant-holding system. Our endless struggle ensured grant holders some partial victories. Examples of successful ABIC endeavours are grant holders' access to parental leaves, more transparency in calls for funding of doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships, increases in funding allocated to human resources in the national R&I system.

Postdoctoral researchers' mirage of employment

In Portugal, entry-level positions for doctoral degree holders that have completed periods as postdocs in the last 5-10 years decreased. Between 2011 and 2016, auxiliary and adjunct professor posts fell by over 200 ([OECD](#), 2018). This decrease in academic staff positions, which has been accompanied by an increase of the doctoral graduates that annually seek a position in the labour market, led a growing number of doctoral degree holders to precarious postdoctoral positions, without formal employment contracts and with limited perspectives of obtaining a permanent academic post in the longer term. Many researchers, especially those at the postdoctoral level, are forced to seek out other employment opportunities, to find a research position abroad, or to remain in the country and accept working under very precarious conditions and with little to no prospects of career progress.



The current government made various and wonderful promises to researchers. Partly due to political pressures from the parties with which the government maintains a parliamentary agreement that sustains them in power, assurances were given to researchers concerning the improvement of the situation of doctoral degree holders and the fostering of employment and research careers in Portugal.

In 2016, a new initiative to promote scientific employment was launched by the government. The proposed aim was to create more and more stable research posts in the academic sector at different levels (from junior researcher to coordinating researcher) and, in so doing, to address the precariousness of employment of postdoctoral grant holders. The careers of postdoctoral researchers in Portugal are usually characterized by a succession of stipend-based, temporary postdoctoral fellowships, often with (unpaid) breaks between grants.

A law was approved formalizing the status of doctorate holders as employees and establishing the employment contract as the preferred means of employment for postdoctoral researchers. However, this new law (DL 57/2016) is severely limited in its ability to address some of the main issues affecting postdoctoral researchers' employment. Salaries will be kept low and career progress is not assured. Many R&I organizations, such as universities, have no research careers where to integrate postdoctoral researchers. For those R&D organizations where research careers do exist, there is no guarantee that postdoctoral researchers hired under DL 57/2016 will ever progress beyond the early stage of their careers.

At the same time, and quite paradoxically, the law does not apply to all doctoral degree holders working for the Portuguese system of R&I. Proposals in DL 57/2016 do not apply to the large numbers of postdoctoral researchers that do not have FCT funding. Between 2011 and 2016, almost 15000 new candidates acquired their doctoral degrees. According to OECD, during the same period, just over 3000 postdoctoral positions were directly funded by FCT, which corresponds to a ratio of 1:5. This ratio does not take into account older and international doctoral degree holders that also compete for those positions. Postdoctoral researchers with FCT indirect funding (for example, grant holders working for a FCT funded research project) amount to, at least, several hundreds. Many others either work with no funding or are paid through alternative means of employment (for example, short fixed-term contracts). No one really knows how many postdoctoral researchers work under these circumstances.

From ABIC's perspective it does not make any sense to have postdoctoral researchers performing the same function in the national R&I system that work under different legal status. Furthermore, it is highly discriminating!

DL 57/2016 also helped nurture what turned out to be unrealistic employment expectations for a large number of doctoral degree holders working or wishing to work in Portugal. As the [OECD](#) report highlighted, at least 1800 doctoral degree holders wanting to pursue a research career in Portugal will have to find employment outside the academic sector and/or of the country. This assuming that both the number of people acquiring a doctoral degree in Portugal remains stable at around 2300 a year, and the number of junior postdoctoral contracts yearly available stays unchanged.

At present, the group of grant holders with a doctorate that would benefit from DL 57/2016 have not yet seen their situation change. The call for the positions that would change their status from grant holders to employees has not yet opened. The deadline set by the government for the opening of this call expires in August 2018. ABIC fears that the circumstances of many postdoctoral researchers will not change and that they might even worsen since postdoctoral researchers will no longer be able to apply to FCT direct funding through grant calls for research positions.

The way forward

ABIC is not alone in its positions and convictions. Over the years, we have and will keep on working with other stakeholders (trade unions, scientific workers' organizations, political parties) sharing our vision and believing in our mission. ABIC's position and convictions will remain unchanged until this and other situations contributing to the precariousness of (postdoctoral) grant holders' employment and career development are not adequately addressed. We firmly believe that employment contracts should be the preferred means for hiring all researchers.

A step in the right direction would be to abolish the grant holder statute, the document sustaining the grant holding system in Portugal. Such step needs to be complemented by the reinstatement of research careers in public and private R&D organizations that contemplate the hiring of (postdoctoral) researchers through employment contracts, and provide them access to the same benefits and career development opportunities the Portuguese general workforce has access to. It is ABIC's core conviction that no research system is sustainable if it relies on precarious work and working conditions. As is sought by the UN in the 2020 sustainable development goals, ensuring (researchers') decent work is the best way to not only guarantee the growth and sustainability of the Portuguese R&I system, but also contribute to researchers' productivity and wellbeing.

Author: ABIC (Associação dos Bolseiros de Investigação Científica - Association of Research Grant-Holders)

“It could be raining”: conditions and prospects of Junior Researchers in Italy

ADI, the Association of Italian PhD candidates and PhDs, since 2010 has been annually analysing the working conditions of Early-Career Researchers (ECRs) in Italy, presenting the results in universities as well as to members of Parliament and Senate in hearings in Rome. During the years, the aims and topics covered by the survey have widened, from the early editions focused on the difference in taxation and number of granted scholarships between different Italian universities, to comprising additional topics such as rights and representation, the weight of the doctorate in the Italian labour market, evaluation of the hiring policies in use in the Italian academic system.

These surveys, thanks to their periodic nature, have drawn in the years the evolution of the Italian academic system, focusing on its early stage members, and highlighted the effect of the policies adopted by the different governments to the demography and working conditions of the more vulnerable part of the university system. In addition to this time coordinate, a spatial one has been always employed in the analysis. This is especially relevant in Italy, as a huge wealth gap is still present

between the north and the south of the peninsula, that is visible from universities as well. From the data collected in these years, it clearly appears that the policies actually in place are failing in bridging this distance, that it is actually increasing.

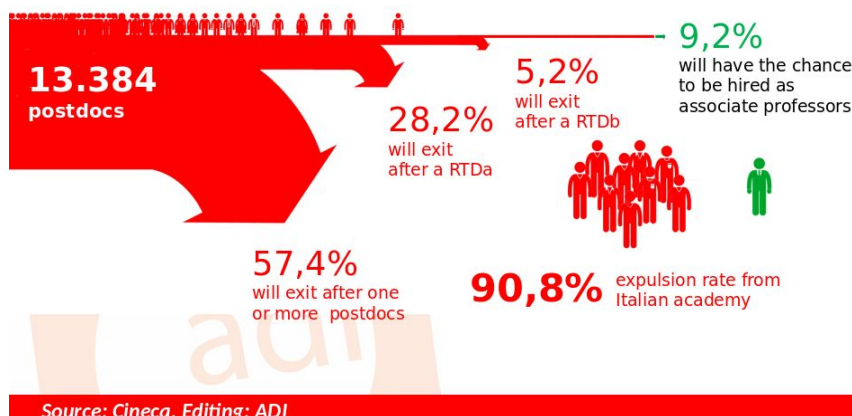
The comparison of the Italian situation with the rest of Europe has been an invaluable part of these surveys, that has helped to put the Italian academic system in the European context and to suggest which are the best practices that should be adopted. A complete adoption of the European Charter for Researchers, that would harmonize national laws concerning ECRs, is still far from realization.

The results of 2017 ADI report shows that the number of postdocs remains stable in the recent years (around 13000). However, the geographic distribution of ECRs is related to the number of students or to the size of the universities. Territorially, 58% of granted postdoc positions are offered in universities in Northern Italy while only 26% in Central Italy and 20% in Southern Italy. Moreover, the first ten universities in terms of positions offer the 48% of the total number and none of them is in Southern Italy. The trend in positions for fixed-term assistant professors does not differ significantly. As for the top 10 universities in terms of employment, just two are located in Central Italy ("La Sapienza" University, Rome) or in the South ("Federico II", Naples). Furthermore, the number of lecturers and professors hired in the last year is negative of 922 units, not covering the number of retirements. The bio-medical area was the most affected one in terms of loss of researchers, meanwhile the most stable were industrial engineer with 1:1 ratio between employment and retirement.



ADI - Associazione Dottorandi e Dottori di Ricerca Italiani
www.dottorato.it

What prospects for postdocs? 2017



According to our projections on job prospects for postdocs in Italy for coming years, 57.4% of them will be forced to leave academia after one or more postdocs, while 28.2% after a fixed-term contract as assistant professor. Finally, 5.2% will leave after further 3 years as tenure-track researcher. This massive rate of expulsion can be ameliorated only through a significant change in the governmental policies on recruitment and public funding to research.

Author: Alessandro Agostini & Giulia Malaguarnera (ADI - Associazione Dottorandi e Dottori di ricerca Italiani)

Interdisciplinary approach as a prerequisite for the development of science and education

Currently in the scientific field, interdisciplinarity has been structured as an appropriate and widespread method of making two or more different disciplines interact in a complementary way, promoting an exchange of methodological resources and findings relevant to the performance of research or teaching practices that are common and solve disciplinary problems. This term does not have a consensual definition in academia and is still considered complex and multifaceted by all fields of knowledge. This is easily perceived and verifiable in the history of scientific development, however it is also possible to identify several interdisciplinary practices that aided in the progress of science.

Interdisciplinary study allows for synthesis of ideas and the synthesis of characteristics from many disciplines. Also it addresses for young researchers individual differences and helps to develop important, transferable skills. These skills, such as critical thinking, analysis are important and continually developing at all stages of life.

In postgraduate programs in Europe there are interdisciplinary approaches such as the interdisciplinary Biochemistry, which is the crossroads of various scientific disciplines with the industrial and organizational field. However, the movement of educational policies still does not accompany the scientific and epistemological transition movement. This lack of institutional articulation negatively affects junior researchers, PhD candidates and postdocs. Although interdisciplinarity is a reality in today's science, the products and results (scientific publications) are disciplinary. This must be understood by all agents involved in scientific research programs.

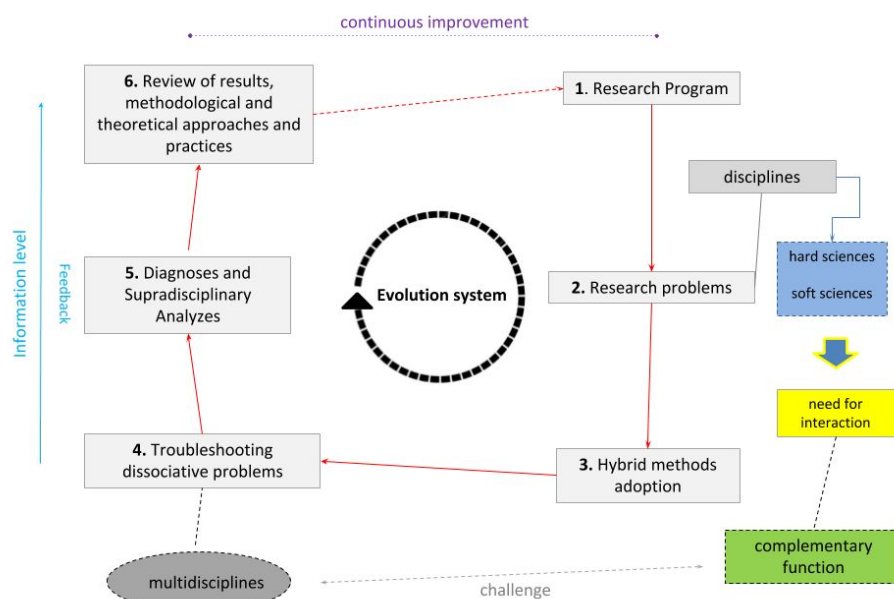
Vann Merriënboer and Kirschner (2013) argue that Educational policy is continuously developing in response to new research about how best to prepare students for a rapidly changing world. For this, research programs attempt to develop innovative curricula to enable students to develop collaborative skills and lifelong learning attitudes, for engage with new technologies, and participate and influence in decision-making in society. For the implementation of perspectives and approaches of interdisciplinarity in the daily research of junior researchers, PhD candidates and postdocs, it will be necessary to:

- create new spaces for learning influence to how educational goals can be reached (Nordquist & Laing, 2015);
- include the teaching approaches suggested and adopted (Conner & Sliwka, 2014; Stukalina, 2010);
- formulate educational activities (Sigurdardottir & Hjartarson, 2011).

Therefore, these changes in the educational vision and approaches require appropriate changes in the curriculum and in the training premises. In education, it is crucial that we take into account these perspectives to develop powerful learning environments, including stakeholders with their own expectations and perceptions. In the scientific programs design, there is growing evidence of the importance of teachers in the design process, as well as evidence that junior researchers, PhD candidate and postdocs participation in learning design increases satisfaction with the learning experience.

We created an illustrative figure as a suggestion of evaluation and application of interdisciplinary methods and approaches. It is a practical model which includes:

1. Mixed methods approaches.
2. Complementary approaches.
3. Interdisciplinary questions and disciplinary answers.
4. Review of methodological and theoretical approaches in research programs in EU.
5. Supradisciplinary analyses (breaking exclusively disciplinary responses, and indicating complementary responses).
6. Evolution of science through the cooperation of various fields of knowledge.



Many of today's global scientific challenges require the joint involvement of researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds.

Interdisciplinary research may involve different disciplines within a single scientific culture, and it can also cross cultural boundaries as in the study of humans and their environment. The research is based upon a conceptual model that links or integrates theoretical

frameworks from those disciplines, uses study design and methodology that is not limited to any one field, and requires the use of perspectives and skills of the involved disciplines throughout multiple phases of the research process. It approaches research and collaboration as a process that needs to be designed with the sole purpose to answer the general research question.

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Author: Yuliia Ovchynnykova & André Batalhão (co-coordinators of Eurodoc Interdisciplinarity WG)

EURAXESS: out there to help PhD fellows and junior researchers



You might have heard of EURAXESS, a service created by the European Commission, set up at the beginning of this century to assist researchers' mobility. The main aim lays on international mobility (entry conditions, social security, work permits, employment benefits, pension, accommodation, spouse support, etc.), but the focus over the years has broadened to career development of especially early stage researchers. As this service is set up for you, the early stage researcher, EURAXESS would like to introduce itself to you.

Network in 40 countries – EURAXESS is initiated, facilitated and pushed forward by the European Commission (DG Research & Innovation). It spreads over 40 countries, consists of 569 organisations and it has over 1100 people working on it. It has developed a national network in each participating country, which consists of a national coordinator and EURAXESS Centres. These Centres are often embedded in academic institutions. EURAXESS Centre supports researchers with their specific questions on mobility issues and/or career development, within or outside the academic sector. Sometimes these EURAXESS Centres are a separate unit, more often they are integrated in an already existing service, such as a HRM unit or international office at a university, university hospital and a research institution.

Website – For you the website is probably the most visible part of EURAXESS – <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/>. It contains the largest job database with research jobs (i.e. over 6800 job vacancies), it provides a fellowship database, you can post your cv, find partners for research activities in a recently introduced partnering section, and furthermore it provides a lot of information on working conditions and practical matters. The website holds national sections in which the specific information relevant for that country can be found (check out the globe symbol in the menu). Here you can find out which administrative procedures might apply when you go to this country for research purposes, either for a longer or shorter period.

Worldwide – EURAXESS has representatives stationed around the globe (Asean, China, India, Japan, Latin America and North America). Their activities can also be found on the website – under the EURAXESS worldwide pages. They connect the research community there with the European countries.

Spouse support – More and more there is an awareness within institutions that to attract talent to an institution, it is important to also take into account that they might not come alone. In order for a researcher to be able to work well, it is important that the partner also has opportunities. Within EURAXESS much attention is spent on setting up and advising on Spouse support. Be it social inclusion, sports programmes, skill development, intercultural training or helping with finding a job.

Career development – Another challenge in which EURAXESS wants to make the difference, is on career development of researchers, with a focus on early stage researchers. EURODOC is very active in pointing out the need for career prospects – and rightly so! EURAXESS encourages and facilitates all the participating organisations in setting up and thinking about career development facilities for their early stage researchers. In the coming months many online

tools will become available to the researchers themselves – published on the EURAXESS website. Focus is on PhD, junior researchers, on career development in general and on career development relevant for taking steps into the non-academic world. The coming years EURAXESS expects to take a more and more active role in the field of career development.

Impact – What is the main impact of EURAXESS? From an insiders point of view I would say there are many ways in which EURAXESS has a huge impact.

- By providing personal assistance thousands of researchers have had a smoother encounter with international mobility issues than would otherwise have been the case. This helps making Europe more attractive as a location, improve the quality of research output of these researchers as they are not caught up in other problems and most important, it helps in making people feel welcome, heard and looked after.
- By teaming up within Europe, the support staff of the different EURAXESS centres has exchanged and inspired each other, which has brought about a wave of professionalisation through Europe on supporting researchers.
- EURAXESS connects EU policy makers, national policymakers, academic institution policymakers and support staff in an effective way, allowing for short lines between high level policy makers and the actual work floor. This has had an impact on policy development both on national level and EU level. For example EURAXESS was consulted often on the new directive 2016/801 on entry conditions for non-European researchers, and was actively involved in the setting up of RESAVER.
- The job portal has gained importance over the years, allowing for talent to find research positions all over Europe.
- Career development and spouse support activities were not on the map a few years ago, and are now at the centre of the stage within EURAXESS.

We hope you already know about EURAXESS, but if not, maybe you might want to take a peak. Do remember, we are here to help you.

Author: Ilse Schenk (EURAXESS)

The employment situations and career prospects of postdoctoral researchers – a summary



Universiteit
Leiden

The purpose of this study is to understand how postdoctoral researchers experience their working conditions and their prospects and opportunities. We collected empirical data by organizing three focus group meetings with postdocs, representatives from the Dutch Research Council and the HRM staff members of a Dutch university.

Results show that, whereas in principle postdocs could continue their academic work on temporary contracts, such a pursuit is not very attractive for them, as it does not contribute to their personal and professional objectives. Their personal circumstances, for example whether they have a spouse and/or offspring, play an important role in the decision making concerning further career options. The discussions that emerged out of our focus groups make clear how

the postdocs struggled with career development. Where on one hand the criteria for promotion or a tenured position are clear, on the other hand, they are opaque and coincidence plays a large part. If a tenured position academia turns up, the likelihood of obtaining this position is small and dependent on many undetermined factors. In addition, extra investments as a postdoc diminish in value after a certain point and the gains from the investment in human capital and social networks at some point outweigh the costs of pursuing more postdoctoral training. That is, the postdoc pile-up leads either to dropping out or to permanent posts, while the postdocs' satisfaction decreases during the time of their employment.

At first sight, the postdocs' role seems rather passive and invisible, but in daily practice, they act strategically and their personal agency is much stronger. Instead of attending unsuitable courses, they take over teaching and management tasks to enhance their positions, consequently acquiring transferable skills. They are fully aware of their contribution to the organisation and even more of their importance for their field science. They enjoy their job because of that. They know that their supervisor or full professor relies on them in terms of academic output. Supervisors are academically involved with the postdocs, but for topics beyond the content of their work such as further career options, postdocs have to rely on the individual willingness of their supervisors. The focus group discussions reveal that if postdocs intend to leave academia, their personal interests do not coincide with those of their supervisor, making their mutual relationship even more fragile and susceptible to failure. The opacity of their further career prospects causes a great deal of stress, while in many cases, the idea of discussing or even mentioning any options outside academia with their supervisor or direct colleagues is considered inappropriate or even a disqualification. Furthermore, postdocs' expectations are unclear as well: they are insecure about what kind of engagement they are allowed to expect and feel they should not impose upon their professors/supervisors too directly. In this context, it seems that both the postdocs and their supervisors rely too much on the traditional academic socialization in other words, their contact is mainly about the content, while the postdocs could make their expectations for guidance and support in further career steps more explicit. The professors or heads of departments have a de facto responsibility for any guidance and support the postdocs need, but if they fail to take on that responsibility, and if their postdocs are not able or willing to remind them of their responsibilities, no one else will.

Despite the breadth of their activities, the postdocs generally feel weakly linked to their university as an employing organization. This not only due to the nature of their contracts but also by the limited attention from HRM and policy departments. The postdocs have to admit that they are rather invisible as a group of employees. It is very urgent that universities take the postdoctoral researchers much more seriously into account within their current employment organization. A simple starting point is more visibility, through their recognition of postdocs as a separate staff category. Second, universities should foster greater support of postdocs by developing appropriate, focused, and pragmatic HRM policies. Examples of instruments which could be realized include: launching a postdoc community, career guidance by offering training modules for personal and professional development, including mentorship programs; and establishing contacts with organizations that employ postdocs or are interested in doing so in the future. In this way, postdocs will be encouraged to reflect on their own future prospects and career path, either in academia or outside the university.

Source: Christine Teelken & Inge Van der Weijden (2018). The employment situations and career prospects of postdoctoral researchers, *Employee Relations: The International Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-12-2016-0241>

Author: Inge van der Weijden - Working Group Leader Career Studies & PhD coordinator, Center for Science and Technology Studies (CWTS) - University of Leiden, The Netherlands

Eurodoc Contributions to Events

"PRIDE Training and Conference week" April 3–6 2018 in Vienna, Austria

Our current Eurodoc Vice-President and the former General Board Member and Coordinator of Eurodoc Doctoral Training Working Group (DTWG), Eva Hnatkova, attended on behalf of Eurodoc the "PRIDE Training and Conference week" which was organized by PRIDE Network association.

The event consists of three parts: training courses, pre-workshop on transferable skills and PRIDE conference. At conference, Eva held the presentation about "What doctoral candidates expect from professionals in doctoral education".



Joining Eurodoc as a Member or Observer

Eurodoc currently consists of 29 national association members and 4 observers. If you are interested in setting up a national association for doctoral candidates and/or junior researchers

in your country or you are already a national association and would like to join our Eurodoc network then contact us for more information via info@eurodoc.net.

If you are interested in getting involved in Eurodoc as an individual early-career researcher then contact one of our national association members for more information: <http://eurodoc.net/eurodoc-members>

