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The European Council of PhD Candidates and Junior Researchers

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EURODOC Response

on the

Consultation on the Greenpaper on the European Research Area

edited by Wolfgang Eppenschwandtner

October 4, 2007

Eurodoc, European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researcher, **is the Voice of Young Researchers in Europe.** It takes the form of a federation of 28 national associations of Ph.D. candidates and other young researchers. Please consult our website (http://www.eurodoc.net) for more information.

Eurodoc welcomes the initiative of the European Commission Greenpaper on the European Research Area. Eurodoc is ready to add a valuable contribution to the debate of shaping the future of the European Research Area (ERA).

Please do not hesitate to contact the board of Eurodoc by email at board@eurodoc.net

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1. *Are these the essential elements that the European Research Area should provide? Are there other elements which should be taken into account?*

The division into six chapters is useful to structure the discussion – every intervention seems to fit into one of these pigeon holes. Nevertheless, we want to stress those points which are discussed below but which have not sufficiently been mentioned in the Greenpaper:

Doctoral programmes and the link between science, policy and society. Part-time doctoral candidates working in policy, administration, education, development and technology should be considered in the context of a policy to embed the ERA in society.

Increased Attention to Scientific Conferences in the ERA. They play a major role in knowledge sharing while a comprehensive European policy is missing.

Visibility for the European Research Area – Highlight Major ERA Conferences and European Research Capitals. Here we suggest enhancing the visibility of ERA by supporting conferences about the ERA, enabling researchers, policy makers and EU citizens to meet and discuss relevant matters. (Examples: ESOF, Eurodoc conference)

(1) Realising a single labour market for researchers

4. Is there a need for a more effective European framework to improve significantly the recruitment, working and geographical and intersectoral mobility conditions for researchers, including enforceable measures?

Analysis: the Labour Market for Researchers in Europe:

Information on vacancies for researchers is scattered on homepages of universities and research institutions, news papers, subject-specific and commercial job web pages. Moreover, undirected job advertisements are being distributed in relevant scientific mailing lists. There is a job database also on the Researcher's Mobility Portal but acceptance is still low.

Some countries have regulations in place ensuring that positions of certain kind[1] have to be announced in the official gazette or in major newspapers. In some countries there are national initiatives trying to collect job advertisements in research and development with considerable effort[2], but nothing is coordinated at a European level. **There is no common standard, no systematic approach.**

The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers outlines principles of good practice for recruitment procedures, transparency and nonlinear career paths. Still, it in a number of points it remains rather vague, there is a considerable leeway for interpretation.

There is a need for more detailed and widely recognised **standards in recruitment procedures**, containing recommendations on appropriate deadlines but also on timely information of successful and unsuccessful candidates.

An example, which is unfortunately not yet well-known, is the MINERVA Code[3], which requires that:

- The call to be advertised at least 2 months in advance
- All evaluation criteria published in the job description
- CVs of the evaluation board's members available
- CVs of candidates available
- List of winners and their CVs published

A unique place to find vacancies

There is a need for a consistent, **comprehensive and unique European-wide database of open positions for researchers**. We suggest elaborating the existing database on the European Researchers' Mobility Portal and national initiatives. It is necessary to put such a database on a sound basis to ensure acceptance and uptake of both recruiters and researchers. While taking into account the complexity of researchers' job profiles and the demands of employers, it is indispensable to keep input of data simple. This can only be achieved by involving experts and stakeholders, both researchers and practitioners in human resources departments of research institutions.

Legal measures

Experience shows that mere promotion of a European wide database for open positions is not sufficient to counteract a highly fragmented researchers' job market and indifference of many recruiters. The best way has to be identified **to urge employers to put every position into the database which is publicly announced anyhow**.

Targets for legal instruments could be higher education institutions funded by the public, or more general research institutions which benefit from European funding programmes.

National mandates to put job advertisements into the national official gazette seem not to be appropriate in an integrated European Research Area anymore. A regulation could target national governments to move towards a mandate adding job advertisements to the European database.

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[1] mostly professor positions and university management positions.

[2] Example: AT: Brainpower Austria http://www.brainpower-austria.at

[3] Mentioning this example does *not* mean that Eurodoc considers it as appropriate for all cases.

Guidelines and sharing of good practices in human resources policy

A dialogue between both researchers (including young researchers) and recruiters on new standards for recruitment procedures has to be initiated. As an outcome, we would expect a **flexible set of recommendations on recruitment procedures for researchers' positions**, taking into account different sizes of the institutions, different demands and researchers' job profiles.

The recommendations should sketch a timeframe for a recruitment process including appropriate deadlines and timely information to those candidates who made it to the shortlist and also those who are not considered anymore. This would also allow candidates to coordinate their personal and professional plans for the benefit of the European knowledge society.

5. How could the principles established in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for their Recruitment be effectively implemented, in order to develop fully the European dimension of research careers, including the trans-national opening of vacancies and funding opportunities for researchers?

Analysis: Progress on the Charter for Researchers

The Charter for Researchers has been issued more than two years ago. Progress in implementation is still very low. Some institutions which have signed the Charter for Researchers have shown no substantial coordinated effort to implement it.

There is a need of a more sophisticated labelling procedure which is non-bureaucratic and still effective. It seems to be necessary to include and strengthen stakeholders at research institution level in the process. On top, external evaluation on some aspects should complement the system.

However, it has to be stressed that the labelling process is not about keeping research institutions under surveillance, it is rather in the interest of the institutions themselves to improve their performance and make themselves more attractive for the best brains in the world.

ERA promoters

We propose to appoint "**Promoters for the European Research Area and the European Charter for Researchers (ERA promoters)**" at national level. In analogy to the "Bologna-Promoters" these persons should be trained to

- Inform about all dimensions of the European Research Area and the European Charter for Researchers at conferences and information days.
- Provide assistance for the management and administration of research institutions to properly implement the Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.
- Play an advisory and mediating role in the labelling process (see below).
- Constitute the missing link to maintain the contact between scientific community, national policy actors and the European Commission.

It seems to be most appropriate that ERA promoters are researchers themselves, this ensures that the ERA promoter initiative is deeply rooted in the scientific community. The ideal ERA promoter should therefore be half-time employed for ERA promoting activities while still remaining active in a researcher's position.

The Labelling Procedure

The basic principles of the proposed procedure are **transparency** and **involvement of stakeholders at university level**. Technically speaking the procedure requires a document system to be set up which offers a webpage for every institution participating in the process. This system collects declarations of the participating institution, notably the Gap Analysis Reports, as well as comments from stakeholders. Of course, the regulations have to be worked out more in detail; here we only sketch the principal course of a labelling procedure.

- ***Step 1 – Commitment to Implement the Charter for Researchers and Follow the Labelling Procedure***

A letter of intent is published on the web. As well, the institution provides additional **information on how it interprets the Charter for Researchers**. There is considerable leeway of interpreting and implementing the content of the Charter. For transparency, it is necessary that institutions disclose their policy aims and their understanding of the principles of the Charter for Researchers. It is also much in the interest of research institutions to get clear focus for future work on improvements; this will also help in compiling Gap Analysis reports later. In this vein, institutions should **outline priorities**, as well as ponder on **potential complications** due to legal constraints or budget shortage (the latter never being an excuse for idleness, of course)

- ***Step 2 – Gap Analysis***

The Gap Analysis report identifies the disparity between the status quo and the aims as laid down in the Charter for Researchers. It should name **measures to close the gap** which will become effective in short and medium term. Once the first Gap Analysis Report is published, the label of "*an institution implementing the Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*" is conferred to the institution.

In the following years, the document will also report on progress which has been achieved. It **highly advised** (though formally not mandatory) that this report is being developed in a transparent procedure **involving all stakeholders at the institution**. In a pilot project, the Commission could develop a proposal for a structure of such reports and develop sample reports. Also the "*ERA promoters*" which are suggested above could play a major role in assisting research institutions to prepare a Gap Analysis report.

- ***Step 3 – Stakeholder Interventions and Reactions***

Without any additional procedure, there is considerable **danger** that in many cases the Gap Analysis Reports will **end up in** an embarrassing gush of **ignorance and self-praise**. Also, there is a need to compensate lacking structural internal dialogue and feedback mechanisms on gaps in some cases.

Local stakeholders could include members of the works committee at research institution level, of the committee on equal rights, the ombudsperson (as mentioned in the Charter), researchers' organisations and young researchers' organisations. These organisations/persons should state their mission and representativeness before posting comments.

If the Gap Analysis Report has been developed on a sound and broad basis, stakeholders will probably just add approving statements, declaring that they have been involved in drafting the report and highlighting the pertinence of progress needed in different aspects. Otherwise, **stakeholders will comment on where the report departs from reality**. These responses will eventually be published.

Research institutions could as well show additional openness by also allowing anonymous comments on the Gap Analysis Report. However, the research institution will always have the possibility to reply to different published comments.

- ***Step 4 – External Evaluations***

The labelling procedure would certainly benefit from including additional external evaluations. Therefore, the document system proposed should provide for results of external evaluations to be included, some of which already exist in a national framework. Also, it is important to engage in a dialogue with quality assurance agencies for higher education and other existing quality assurance institutions.

The labelling procedure is a continuous process, not a single event which terminates after conferring the label. An appropriate time schedule for the succession of Gap Analysis Reports and stakeholder responses is still to be determined.

The labelling procedure is all about fostering a constructive dialogue to improve of practice and to implement the principles of the Charter for Researchers. It is in the institution's own interest. It is not about surveillance. That said, it cannot be neglected that in a few cases, it is to be expected that external mediation will be necessary, in those cases again the "*ERA promoters*" could be involved. But for the ultimate case, the Commission should still reserve the right to withdraw the right to be called an

"institution implementing the Charter" to avoid serious damage on the credibility of the labelling procedure.

7.How could 'flexicurity' principles (e.g. combining labour market flexibility with employment security) be applied to the researcher labour market?

Analysis: Researchers' Working Reality

Researchers in Europe are already exceptionally flexible: readiness for short-time mobility is tacitly included in any researcher's working profile. Moreover, **fixed-term contracts** are still ubiquitous in Europe. This kind of **flexibility is not balanced** by security for workers.

On the social security side, it is there is a clear call for action: It's a shame that the research activity of many doctoral candidates and even of many post-docs is not rewarded in proper contract relations with their funding institution. **Stipends without social security** are still wide-spread in Europe.

The working reality of researchers is very diverse; this has to be taken into account. Research is not like working in a factory on the assembly line. Especially in "curiosity-driven" research, periods of increased daily working time do not necessarily lead to more results. Ideas cannot be forced. In the debate on "flexicurity", this has to be taken into account.

Proposed actions on "Flexicurity":

Clearly, it cannot be the aim to increase **career instability disguised in the word "flexibility"** as this would certainly not contribute to the attractiveness of the ERA and **would contravene the European Charter for Researchers.** The flexibility part is already incorporated in most research situations throughout Europe; however the security part is missing.

"Flexicurity" **as we understand** it would mean to propose a kind of **tenure-track system** which could also include alternative career paths outside of academia. But as a priority, it has to be recognised that research activity is proper work in all career stages which has to be remunerated in a proper contract relation.

EURODOC proposes incorporating social security conditions into young researchers "contracts". Whether these are stipends, contracts, or bursaries, young researchers should be eligible for pensions, illness leave, maternity leave, etc.

Guidelines on whether, how and to what extend "Flexicurity" can be applied to researchers are still to be worked out. Importantly, there has to be a true involvement of young researchers in the debate.

Eurodoc has issued a **recommendation for Core Research Career Structures in Academia[4]. Eurodoc** is ready to contribute with its expertise in the debate on Researchers' Career Paths in Europe in an advisory group, if necessary incorporating the vogue word "Flexicurity".

8. How could we increase the numbers and quality of researchers in Europe by attracting young research talents, ensuring real equal opportunities for men and women and exploiting the experience and expertise of end-of-career researchers, for example in advisory and training roles?

Providing attractive and fair conditions for researchers:

To attract young people and especially women to embark a research career, they have to be given at least the same prospects and conditions than in other jobs. It is particularly important that the research work of young researchers is necessarily rewarded by a proper contract with **social security**, not just a bare stipend. Many stipends include no rights in case of pregnancy, for example. It is thus rather obvious that many women are being inclined to choose more secure but less challenging career options.

End-of-career researchers

Research methodology has **changed quite dramatically in the last years**. Research is much more intertwined at an international level; it is more team-oriented, much more interdisciplinary. It should

[4] http://www.eurodoc.net/file/20060125_eurodoc_recommendation_CoreCareerPathsAcademia.pdf

not be ignored that many of older researchers have kept a blinkered "**old thinking**" in their field, being reluctant to new, innovative and unorthodox developments.

Also, at the end of their career, many people who are employed on research positions as professors are **no researchers anymore**. They moved into research management or research organisation or full-time teaching (or just quitted working altogether) while still being spuriously recognised as researchers.

Therefore legal provisions allowing **later retirement** at the cost of positions for young researchers **cannot be the best and only solution**.

The role of end-of-career researchers to provide advice based on their long-term experience should be duly recognised – yet always *at level* with young researchers. It has to be ensured that they do not exert direct or indirect power being a clandestine head of the institute.

8. How could the specific education and training needs of researchers be addressed at all stages of their careers, starting with post-graduation and doctoral curricula, building on the Bologna process for higher education?

Doctoral programmes in the ERA

This is in the core of the expertise of Eurodoc. Indeed, Eurodoc had major contributions to the developments in the Bologna process concerning doctoral programmes. Eurodoc contributed to several workshops, projects and conferences, notably to the Bologna seminars on doctoral programmes in 2005 (Salzburg) and 2006 (Nice). It has also been formally accepted as a "partner" in the Bologna process in 2007.

The core component of doctoral training is the advancement of new knowledge through original research. It is essentially 'training by, not training for research'. Supervision and Training of doctoral candidates should be improved and structured, moving from the highly individualised apprentice model to a more team-oriented and collective form of supervision. Suitable differentiation between supervisors and examiners should thus be implemented. Rights and duties of both the doctoral candidate and supervisor should be clearly established at the start of the doctoral process. The PhD-candidate should have appropriate freedom in filling his/her training requirements to suit his/her needs with the support of her/his supervisor.

Already in 2004, **Eurodoc has proposed a Charter on Supervision and Training of PhD candidates**[5]. Based on this document, **common standards** for supervision and training **should be developed** in the context of both the ERA and the EHEA.

Minimum requirements should be adopted in the assessment of, and on standards in a doctoral programme to facilitate international recognition of doctoral degrees within Europe. The proper assessment for the result of the doctoral process is the quality of the research work as evaluated by peer review, not the performance in coursework.

Eurodoc took the initiative to issue a **Statement of standards in the assessment, expectations and outcomes of doctoral programmes in Europe**[6]. This document is intended to provide a **basis for common standards** the definition and assessment of doctoral programmes in the ERA and EHEA.

[5] http://www.eurodoc.net/file/2004_eurodoc_charter_supervision_training.pdf

[6] http://www.eurodoc.net/file/0706_ed_descriptor.pdf

(4) Sharing knowledge

21. Is there a need for EU-level policies and practices to improve and ensure open access to and dissemination of raw data and peer-reviewed publications from publicly funded research results?

Yes, indeed there is a need for EU-level policies on scientific publications to optimise the exploitation of scientific knowledge and to make research evaluation based on scientific publication more transparent. The systems currently in use to disseminate scientific information have been conceived, maintained, improved and criticized by taking into consideration the perspectives of many of the groups involved, yet rarely those of scientists at the very beginning of their career. Since early stage researchers account for a large portion of first authors of scientific journal articles around the globe and across disciplines, it is essential that to take the **young researcher's perspective on scientific publishing system** duly into account.

In this context, we want to point your attention to a discussion paper distributed on the European Commission conference on the scientific publication system in mid-February 2007:

Scientific Publication and Open Access – A Young Researchers Perspective, edited by Daniel Mietchen and Wolfgang Eppenschwandtner[7]

23. Are there specific R&D-related issues, such as the grace period, joint ownership regimes and the research exception that need to be looked at from a European perspective?

Ownership of Patents and Young Researchers

There is a clear tendency to argue that Intellectual Property Rights should be attributed to research institutions rather than to single researchers. However, it has to be stressed that a research institution or funding institution can **only rightfully claim ownership** or partial ownership of a patent **if it has provided appropriate conditions and proper remuneration** of researchers involved in the research project leading to a patent, including young researchers.

There is a need for strong incentives for researchers to exploit their innovations in spin-off companies. We are also concerned on the practice that supervisors and senior researchers claim unjustified co-ownership.

Patenting and IPR service should pay special attention to young researchers, every doctoral candidate should have the opportunity to be trained in the basic principles of the patenting system. These issues need to be addressed in a Code of Conduct or in the Charter on Intellectual Property Rights and more generally in the policy debate on patents.

24. What conditions should be created to promote innovative approaches in the way that science and technology is communicated, taught, discussed and valued by Europeans, and taken up for evidence-based policy-making?

Researchers in society

Researchers themselves are rather naturally ambassadors of research and science as being embedded in their social and regional environment. The importance of research will be much more valued by the citizens of Europe if everybody knows a researcher in the personal network of friends and acquaintances. This adds another argument towards the **general policy aim** to **remove social barriers** and **make higher education** and **researcher's careers accessible to people irrespective of their social and geographical background**.

Give speech to young researchers in science communication,

When communicating science to a wide public, it is important to convey a truthful image of research reality. In particular, it is important to grant young researchers (and female scientists) a commensurate

[7] http://

share in science communication activities. It has to be avoided that research results are just presented by the head of the research unit who considers a TV interview as a matter of prestige.

Doctoral programmes and the link between science, policy and society

The doctoral cycle should be included in an overall strategy to foster the links between science, policy and society. It is an illusion to believe that all doctoral candidates are devoted as full-time researchers to research activity only. Many **people are based in policy, administration, education, development or technology and pursue their research work as part-time activity.** They gained some experience in their non-academic profession which they would like to put to use in research.

In the UK, there are formalised doctoral programmes known under the fairly inappropriate name[8] "Professional Doctorates" for that purpose. In this answer, we will rather suggest to use the notion **"Profession-reflecting Doctorate (PrD)"** to describe the same phenomenon.

It is important that clear definitions on the role, on expectations and outcomes are being established for all such doctoral programmes. The relation to existing doctoral programmes and non-doctoral postgraduate higher education has to be clarified[9]. "[T]he core component of doctoral training is the advancement of knowledge through original research[10]" for any doctoral programme, so the focus has to be on research, not on vocational or continuing *education*. For the latter purpose, there are already post-graduate master programmes. Universities have to accept new challenges for the organisation of doctoral programmes; especially they should recognise experiences gathered in profession.

Eurodoc is already working on innovative doctoral programmes in the context of the Bologna Process and the project DOC-Careers. We would appreciate increased attention and support from the European Commission to context of the ERA and efforts to strengthen the link between science and society.

Increased Attention to Scientific Conferences in the ERA.

Scientific conferences provide a lubricant to the gears of the ERA. It is the place where new developments are being presented to a wider audience, future partnerships are being initiated and also speculative ideas are being discussed with selected peers offside the official schedule. Conferences also play a considerable role in research training. This is even more obvious for dedicated concentrated summer schools and workshops.

There seems to be no coherent European policy on scientific conferences. There are some support schemes and initiatives from the European Science Foundation and COST, for example, but it needs to be much more developed and streamlined. In particular, we suggest the following actions:

- Scientific conferences should provide **special offers for young researchers** to address their **training needs** and to ensure that they are being **properly integrated in the scientific community**.
- **PhD fair day at European science conferences.** Mobility between Master and PhD level is still low in Europe. One reason is that contacts at personal level play a major role in the "matching" of future doctoral candidates and prospective supervisors. In scientific conferences researchers from all over Europe (and more broadly from all over the world) come together – they are at the same time also potential supervisors and employers. So why not use this occasion to bring together the interested student population at master level and the participants of scientific conferences to talk about job perspectives and subjects for doctoral theses?
- **ERA day at scientific conferences.** Conference organisers should be encouraged to invite research policy actors to engage in discussions with the researchers which are present. Such sessions could be added to the end of scientific conferences. Candidates for research policy actors

[8] Research clearly is a professional activity in itself – there are no non-professional doctorates (not to think of the term unprofessional doctorate!). Suggestions for a replacement include profession-reflecting doctorate (PrD) or vocational doctorate.

[9] Under any circumstances, it has to be avoided that doctoral candidates which are not in a PrD programme are considered as those who are "just good for work in academia".

[10] Salzburg Bologna Seminar on doctoral programmes

participating such extra sessions are members of the European Commission, national science policy actors, but also members of researchers' organisations like Eurodoc. Commensurate financial incentives should be provided for conference organisers and invitees.

This way, European initiatives like Charter for Researchers and the Code of Recruitment for Researchers which are very laudable but still too little-known could be carried over to the grassroots. Also, policy actors could take the feedback from the research community as inspiration for future policies thus helping to bridge the gap between researchers and science policy actors.

Visibility for the European Research Area – Highlight Major ERA Conferences and European Research Capitals

At the moment, the European Research Area is mainly concept of policy makers at European level; it has not yet arrived at the grass-root in a wider scale. Still many researchers associate the joint European Union research policy as yet another funding source, just "money from Europe". Also, in the context of increased global competition in R&D, it is very important to give the European Research Area **visibility**, to convey the good message of a vivid European research landscape to the world.

We suggest marking major **official ERA Conferences** as milestones, as regular fixed points in the calendar of the European Research Area. These conferences should not artificially be engineered from the scratch. In contrary, existing initiatives should be elevated and be labelled as major ERA Conferences and in consequence be granted much more support.

Currently, there are two established candidates for such regular major ERA conferences:

1) **Euroscience Open Forum.** Taking place each second year, the EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF) is an open platform for debate and communication for the science community of Europe and the world promoted by Euroscience. It presents and profiles Europe's leading research trends in the sciences, humanities and social sciences. By bringing together researchers across disciplines and from all around Europe, Euroscience has created ESOF to promote the European Research Area.

2) **EURODOC Young Researchers Conferences**.

   The aim of the EURODOC conference is to provide the framework for young European researchers to meet with European political and economical leaders and to engage in fruitful discussions on the construction of the European Research and Higher Education Areas. Moreover, given the participation of young researchers from all over Europe and from multiple disciplines, the Eurodoc conference constitutes a unique occasion for interdisciplinary communication and networking. Eurodoc conference is open for all young researchers.

These existing conference initiatives should be strengthened. There should be much more financial and structural support (especially conference grants) while respecting the autonomy of the patron organisation (Euroscience resp. Eurodoc). The content of these conferences must in any case be defined by the organisations themselves applying their well-established and recognised procedures.

It should best be combined with the idea of nominating **European Research Capitals** analogously to the highly successful European Culture Capitals. This special honour should include the commitment to provide financial and local organisatorial support for the major ERA conferences. European Research Capitals gain the opportunity to present themselves as research intensive cities and regions at an international forum. Satellite conferences covering specific scientific topics should complement the major ERA conferences. They are being organised in same city or better in the same region, to add a (ideally cross-boarder) regional dimension.