

Dual Career Opportunities for Doctoral Candidates and Early Stage Researchers

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Introduction

Dual career couples are “couples where both partners are highly qualified and who intend to continue progressing their career”¹. Just as for other academics, such concerns are quite common among researchers, and an increasing number of higher education institutions (HEIs) are concerned with the implementation of dual career opportunities. Unfortunately, doctoral candidates (DCs) and early stage researchers (ESRs) are rarely included in these worthwhile endeavours.

In this paper, we emphasise the significance of dual career opportunities for DCs and ESRs and provide suggestions on how dual career opportunities could be utilised for this important group of researchers.

The significance of dual career opportunities

Despite its importance for gender equality and promotion of mobility in academia, the concept of dual careers has not been researched extensively in Europe². However, it is increasingly recognised as an issue with important implications for work-life balance, diversity at the workplace, international mobility and career development. According to recommendations of the European Commission, an overall strategy for gender mainstreaming in research should “ensure that researcher mobility measures incorporate the gender dimension (e.g. taking into account dual careers, work-life balance issues)”³.

If HEIs and research centres in Europe want to attract diverse and talented scientific workforce, they will need to take action. Some exemplary institutions in Europe have started addressing this issue, for example in Germany⁴, at ETH Zurich in Switzerland⁵, at Technical University of Denmark or at the University of Bergen in Norway. However, as encouraging as these

¹ See <http://www.dcmd.org/index.php/startseite-13.html>

² See Rusconi & Solga, 2007; Ackers, 2004; Harvey, 1998

³ EC, 2012, p. 43

⁴ For the Dual Career Network Germany see: <http://www.dcmd.org/index.php/44.html>

⁵ http://www.facultyaffairs.ethz.ch/dualcareer/index_EN

examples are, **more European countries and institutions need to introduce dual career services**, and their visibility for European researchers needs to be increased.

Dual career opportunities are of special importance to young female researchers as “women tend to gradually drop out of the research profession and most of them before the post-doctoral phase.”⁶ Studies in the US and in Europe have shown that female scientists often prioritize their partner’s career over their own⁷. Furthermore, female early stage researchers tend to follow their partner⁸ and decide to undertake posts based on their partner’s location decisions so as to allow them to simultaneously fulfil family and career objectives⁹.

Moreover, dual career services - where they exist - mostly address established or senior researchers only. DCs and ESRs are at the beginning of their professional career and simultaneously at an age when starting a family is a natural desire for many. However, combining a research career with a family life still seems impracticable for many, especially for female researchers. To tackle female drop-out of the research system and to ensure every researcher has the opportunity to have both a research career *and* a family life, innovative structural and institutional measures like **dual career opportunities need to be available at all stages of the research career**.

Dual career opportunities for doctoral candidates and early stage researchers

Eurodoc encourages national and pan-European institutions to consider the following recommendations to support dual career couples in academia and enable family-compatible international mobility of DCs and ESRs¹⁰:

Recommendations for HEIs

- Consider dual career services a strategic issue at the institution aiming at researchers of all career stages
- Develop tailored dual career services for researchers at different career levels
- Combine dual career services with other mobility, work-life balance and equality measures
- Ensure maintenance of transparency and fairness; develop quality standards and evaluation criteria
- Increase visibility of dual career opportunities and collaborate with neighbouring institutions

⁶ EC, 2009, p.128

⁷ Shiebinger et al., 2008

⁸ Harvey, 1998; Clark & Withers, 2002

⁹ Ackers, 2001; Nerad & Cerny, 1999

¹⁰ Cf. Schiebinger, Henderson, & Gilmartin, 2008; McNeil & Sher, 1999; see also Tzanakou, Tschaut, Lundemo, & Lee Hansen, 2013; Tschaut, Tzanakou, Lundemo, & Lee Hansen, 2013

Recommendations for funders

- Support HEIs with dual career services by including it as a positive criterion for evaluation of mobility and equality programmes, especially when early stage researchers are eligible for the service
- Set further incentives and provide initial financial means for HEIs to implement dual career services

Conclusion

There are many benefits entailed when research and higher education institutions adopt strategies where dual careers are considered: Institutions would become more attractive to excellent young researchers and generally more competitive at international level. They would increase diversity and equality among their staff (especially regarding recruiting of female staff). Mobile researchers would profit from a smoother transition to the new workplace, which enhances their willingness to invest in the institution and develop strong organizational commitment.

With such positive effects, dual career opportunities for early stage and advanced researchers should become a standard service at every institution. The recommendations listed above are a starting point that HEIs, funders, dual career networks and other stakeholders should take into account in their endeavours to provide young dual career couples in higher education and research with opportunities to have both a career and family life.

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