

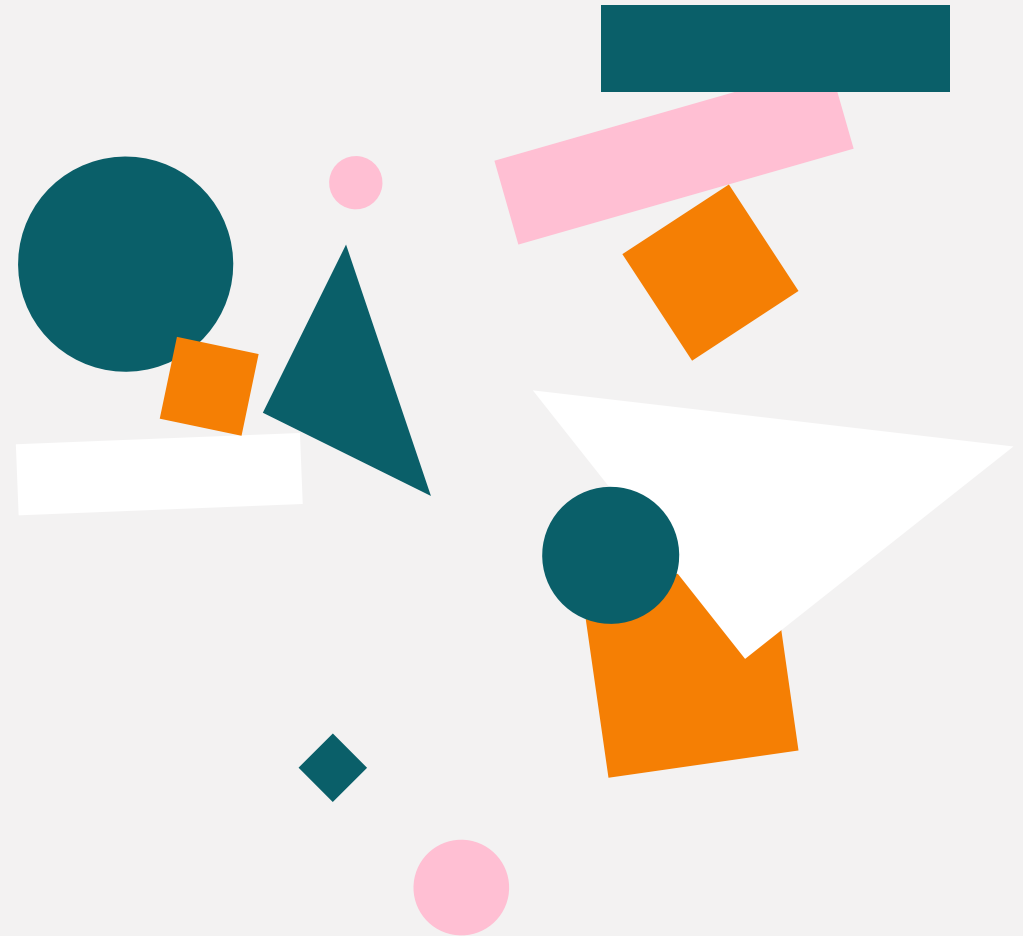


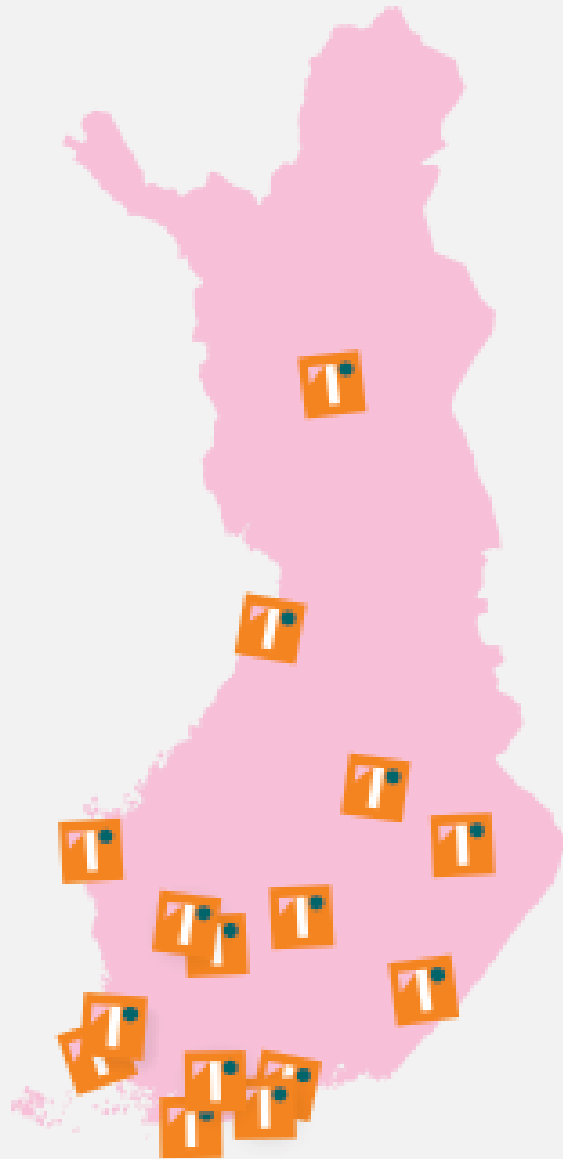
**TIETEENTEKIJÄT**  
FORSKARFÖRBUNDET • FUURT

Doctoral researchers and doctoral  
training in Finland in the 2020s

Dr. Miia Ijäs-Idrobo

Eurodoc conference July 14, 2021





## FUURT survey for early career researchers 2020–2021

- 3rd survey by FUURT on early career researchers in Finland (previous surveys in 2012, 2017)
- Open for doctoral researchers and PhD holders who have completed their PhD max. 4 years before
- In total 1517 respondents of whom:
  - Women 64 % ; men 32 %
  - Finnish nationals 83 % ; non-Finnish 17 %
  - Doctoral candidates 79 % ; PhD holders 19 %
  - Employed at a university 49 % ; working with a grant 23 % ; employed outside university 17 % ; unemployed 4 %
- Since 2010, universities in Finland have founded their own doctoral programmes or schools vs. national/field-specific programmes.
  - Doctoral training in transformation:  
how the developments come into practice?





In comparison to 2017,  
time to complete a PhD has become shorter

Field	Mean 2020	Mean 2017
Humanities	6,8	6,9
Medicine	6,2	6,7
Social sciences	5,8	6,9
Educational sciences	5,4	6,2
Natural sciences	5,0	5,4
Technological sciences	4,8	4,9
<b>All</b>	<b>5,7</b>	<b>6,3</b>

In Finland, time to complete a PhD is not limited but the structure of PhD training is often presented as 4 years of full-time research.

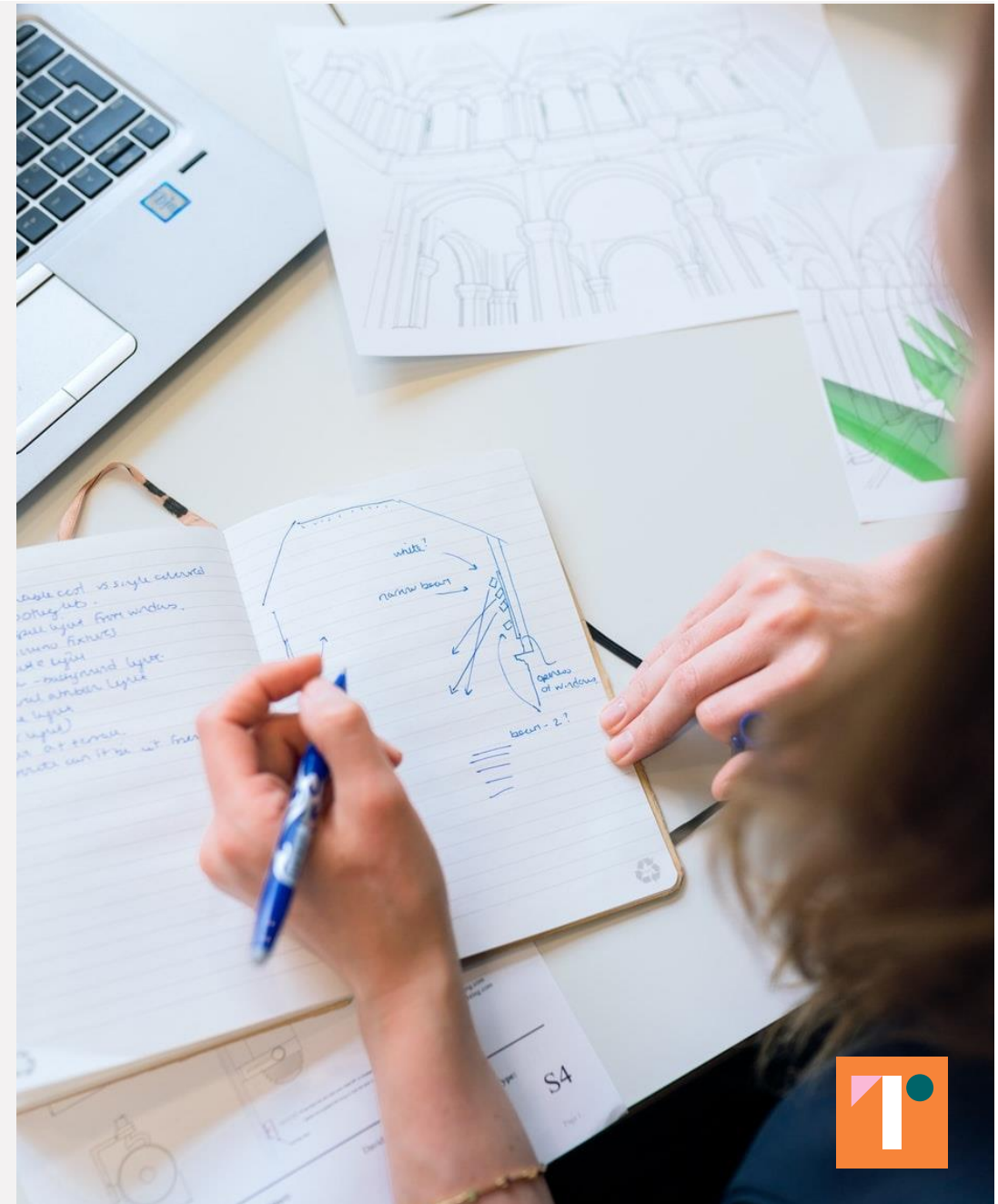


# Research funding continues to be fragmented

In Finland, full time research is usually done **either in employment or under a grant**. Both are often short-term, not enough to secure funding for the whole PhD project.

Number of different funding sources during PhD thesis work:

Number of different funding sources	Share of respondents
None	7 %
1–3 sources	58 %
4–6 sources	20 %
7–10 sources	8 %
More than 10 sources	3 %
Cannot say / not applicable	4 %





## PhD supervision

How often do you discuss with your thesis supervisor?

	Share of respondents
Once a week or more often	14 %
2–3 times a month	25 %
Once a month	21 %
Every other month	11 %
1–5 times a year	26 %
Less frequently than once a year	3 %

Differences exist between different branches of science: when research work is done more often as a part of a group/research team, also supervision is more frequent.

62 % of all respondents are satisfied with the quantity/frequency of supervision;

63 % with the quality/content.

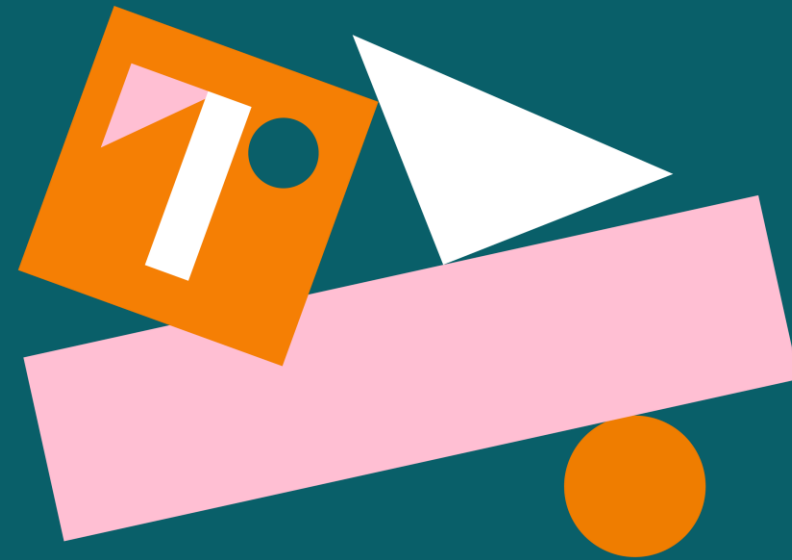


For majority (62 %) of the respondents, the preferred title for those working on their PhD is **PhD/doctoral researcher**. Only 6 % preferred the title "doctoral student".

Why "doctoral researcher"?

- "doctoral/PhD" expresses clearly the job content and career stage.
- "researcher" supports the professionalisation of the early career stage.

Same title is preferred regardless of the type of funding (employment/grant).



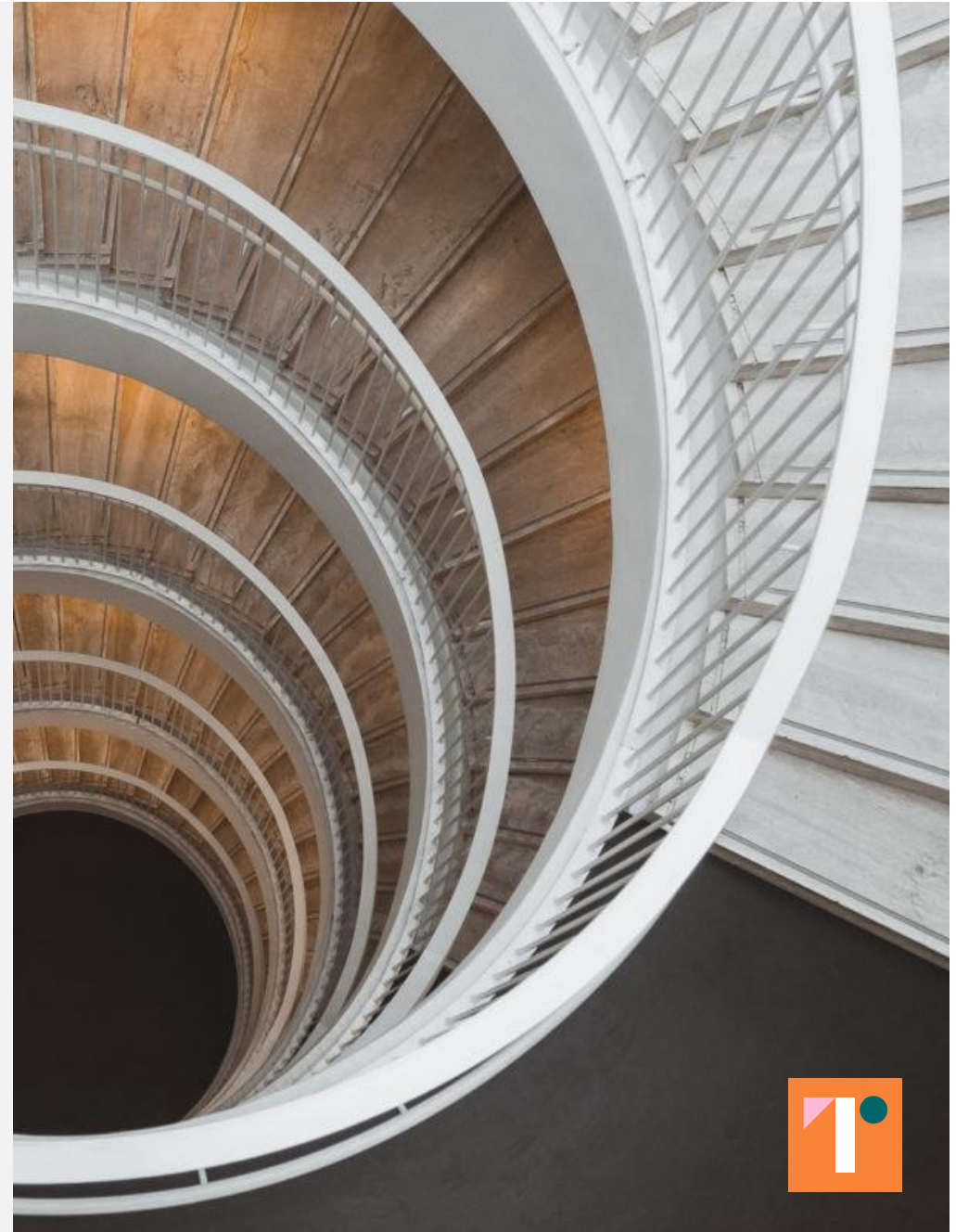
# Career support during doctoral training

When compared to 2017 survey, career support during doctoral training has become more common.

**The main type of career counselling is still discussion with one's thesis supervisor (64 % of respondents).**

Other types of career counselling include e.g.:

- Networking events at university (26 %)
- Career guides and other material (20 %)
- A representative from another university/research organisation in one's follow-up group (19 %)
- Mentoring programme (9 %)



## Mobility and co-operation outside of one's own university during doctoral training

Mobility between organisations during doctoral training is most often international mobility to another university abroad (39 %).

However, PhD researchers are active in co-operating otherwise with actors outside the university sector (65 %).

Did your doctoral thesis or doctoral training include co-operation or mobility outside your own university?	Share of respondents
"I have otherwise co-operated with actors outside the university sector"	65 %
Mobility to another university abroad	39 %
Mobility to a research organisation other than a university (Finland or abroad)	12 %
Mobility to another university in Finland	8 %
Mobility to other than a research organisation (Finland or abroad)	6 %





## Career prospects

For the majority, academic career is the first option, but finding a job or securing research funding seems difficult and too competitive.

69 % answered they are concerned about the uncertainty of their professional career.

56 % had considered changing to the private sector during the past 12 months.

In the future, I am interested in working...	Share of respondents
At a university	86 %
In the public sector, incl. research institutes	85 %
In the private sector	68 %
In the third sector	49 %
At a university of applied sciences	35 %
As an entrepreneur	26 %
Other	3 %





## Key conclusions

- Based on our surveys in 2017 and 2020/2021, **doctorates are completed more quickly** than before, but the **work and research funding remain fragmented**.
- **Career counselling** is taking on new forms, but the most diverse forms of support and career planning are still only available to a relatively small group of early career researchers.
- PhD researchers wish to be recognised as professionals and as part of the work community, **majority prefer the job title "doctoral/PhD researcher"**.
- **Working conditions need still to be improved:** ECRs' knowledge of their rights as an employee or of their status as a grant researcher is still incomplete. Esp. non-Finnish respondents need better introduction to their rights and duties at the work place and of different types of funding.
- **The impact of COVID-19** is visible e.g. in the respondents' readiness to digital/hybrid modes of mobility, but also in the respondents' negative views on the future of research funding.

Senior adviser

**Dr. Miia Ijäs-Idrobo**

miia.ijas@tieteentekijat.fi

FUURT survey report will be published  
in early September both in Finnish and  
in English!

Keep an eye on [www.tieteentekijat.fi](http://www.tieteentekijat.fi)

