



MO FORUM ON RESEARCH CAREERS

ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

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**MO FORUM ON RESEARCH CAREERS,
ANNUAL ASSEMBLY 2008**

**Presentation of
Working Group
RESEARCH CAREER STRUCTURE
& DEVELOPMENT**

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Presentation of Working Group “Research Career Structure & Development”

The aim of the subgroup is to review the research career structures and development in different member countries through survey questionnaires and hearings, and to produce a forward-look type of report with recommendations to be presented to the ESF Governing Council in the autumn of 2009.

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Questions asked dealt with:

- National Structure for Research Careers
 - Structure/Funding
 - Demand/Supply
 - Gaps/Bottlenecks/Challenges
 - Harmonisation/Supranational Approaches
- Mobility
 - Obstacles
 - Openness to Foreign Applicants
 - Public-Private Partnerships
 - Integration of out-of-field experience
- Charter & Code
 - Job Status
 - Employment Conditions
 - Soft Factors
- Best Practice Examples

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Questionnaires (or written or oral reports addressing some of the same questions) have been received from Finland, Italy, Poland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, LERU, Luxembourg and Turkey.

More responses are needed to achieve sufficient coverage (especially Southern Europe and new member states).

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A number of common themes:

- Highly competitive and structured research career tracks for the best talents are available in many Member States (by funding organizations and Research Performing [RPO's]).
- European universities in general have been less successful in establishing such career tracks, and suffer from a number of common problems which include
- (1) lack of transparency in recruitment,

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- (2) short term contracts with low job security and lack of adequate social security and pension rights,
 - (3) badly structured, inappropriately funded and poorly supported post-doctoral positions, and
 - (4) overall low predictability of research career compared to many other professions.
- > decreased overall attractiveness of research careers in Europe.

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New Member States *versus* former EU-15: a country like Poland is in a position to provide high job security combined with low flexibility and salary levels as well as very little competition between researchers, the EU-15 states surveyed so far seem to offer rather opposite conditions: low job security, high flexibility and competition.

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Gaps, bottlenecks, obstacles

Imbalanced structure: ‘postdoc cloud’ (Sweden),
lack of positions for mid-career researchers
(LERU, Germany, many others)

Predictability/Tenure Track (missing in most
countries); small moves: Germany, Sweden)

Lack of transparency, career planning, autonomy

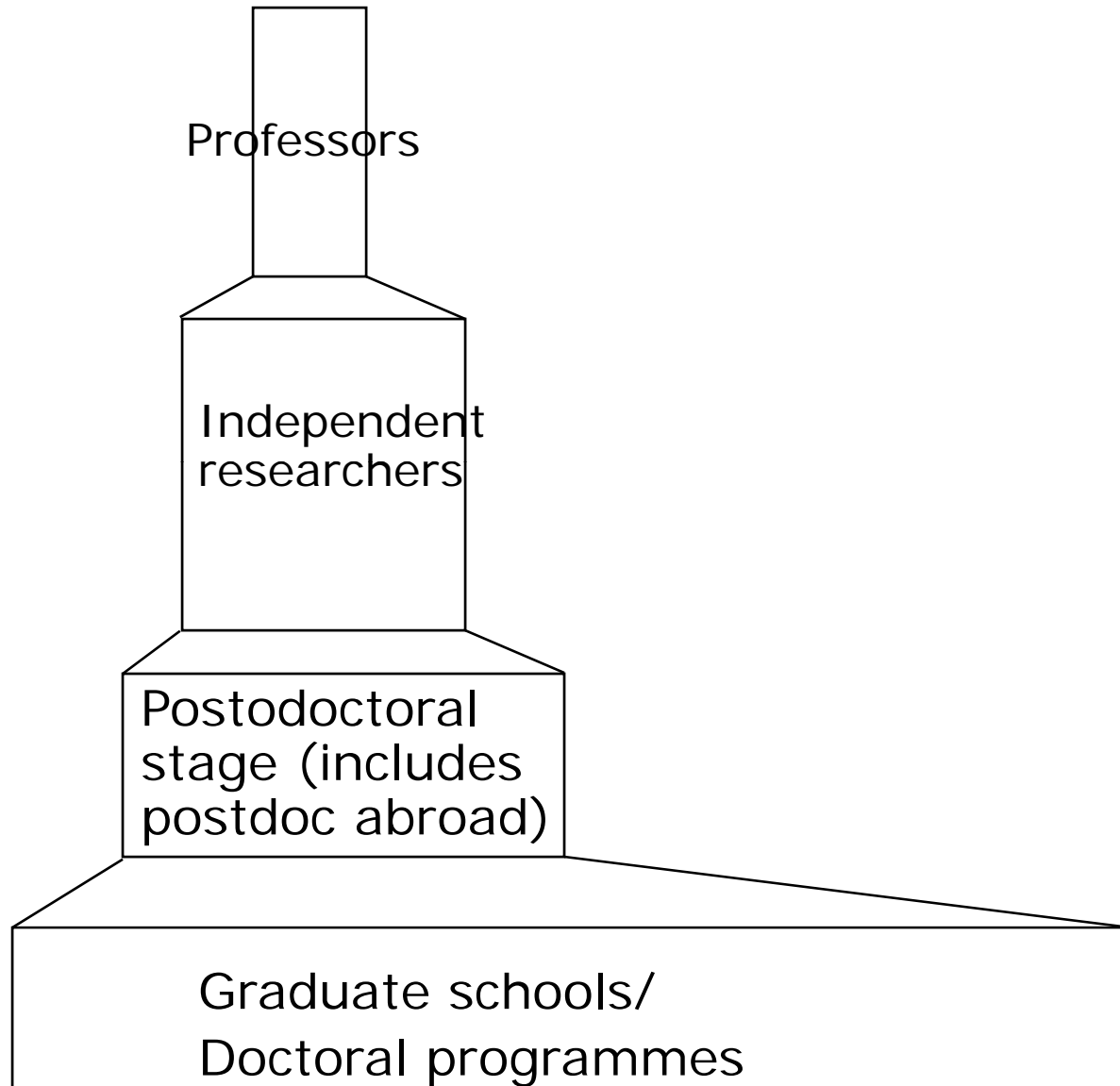
Ratio of fixed-term *versus* permanent positions
(without competition the latter may not provide
the correct initiative either)

Special attention to transition phases (where
decisions about future career alternatives are
made)

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Research career is rarely viewed as an entity:

- What happens outside the highly competitive and structured research career tracks for the best talents ?
- Where do the other researchers go?
- Most countries lack the knowledge base needed.
- How are the needs of industry taken into account in doctoral and postdoctoral training programmes?



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Mobility - Additional problems

International mobility insufficient (re-integration, dual career couples, family issues, pensions, social security, poor harmonization of career structures)

Insufficient intersectorial mobility despite specific programmes (divergent appreciation of merits achieved, publication records, IPR issues all make return to academia very difficult)

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Role of soft factors and research environment considered increasingly important

- atmosphere
- rights and responsibilities
- code of conduct
- research infrastructure

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EC: Charter & Code

Signing *versus* implementation (UK: The Concordat);

(Indirect) impact on recruitment policies, definition of rights & responsibilities of trainees & mentors;

A gradual shift from stipends towards salaries (except in international positions);

Pension scheme for researchers on stipends (Finland) “Stipends with a backpack”

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Improvements needed:

Transparency also means an understandable research career structure (“typology” or “taxonomy”) for comparability;

“Need for a common European language to describe the diverse pathways of academic progression (LERU)”;

Learning from successful and competitive Research Performing Organizations (RPO’s)

Need for a European Handbook for Researchers?

Learning from best practices (positive and effective developments in member countries)?

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Finally: our thanks to all those who have contributed to the survey.

Hearing of stakeholders, especially young researchers.

Role of ESF in clarification of European research career structure and in removal of its major bottlenecks and obstacles?