

# STRENGTHENING RESEARCH CAREERS IN EUROPE

## Career pathways at LERU universities

Katrien Maes, LERU

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## LERU and research careers

- ❖ It is crucial that some of Europe's best intellects are attracted to research careers, and that they are given every opportunity to grow in confidence, capacity, ambition and creativity.
- ❖ Europe needs talent from its universities more than it needs technology.
- ❖ The attractiveness of research career paths is critical to the success of research universities.
- ❖ A research career must offer unique opportunities for well-supported, creative freedom and personal satisfaction.

*“Harvesting talent: strengthening research careers in Europe”*  
(LERU, 2010)

## Priorities for research careers

### Policy objectives

1. To attract highly talented graduates from an international pool
2. To support researchers realising their potential for creativity and innovation
3. To maximise benefit to knowledge, learning and society

### Framework conditions

1. Appropriate research environment and researchers' independence
2. Attractive research career framework

# FC 1: Attracting and developing talent

## Research environment

- ✓ highly creative with large horizons
- ✓ scrutiny and transmission of ideas
- ✓ cross-discipline connections and opportunities
- ✓ international links
- ✓ access to good facilities

## Independence and responsibility

- ✓ their own area of research (maturing talent vs. delivering projects)
- ✓ early responsibility
- ✓ longer term fellowships

## FC 2: Careers need practical support

1. Well-structured career opportunities
2. Well-designed employment and posts
3. Well-financed positions
4. Well-supported career development
5. Shared responsibility for research careers



# 1. Well-structured career opportunities

- **Challenges**

- Short-term horizon (discontinuity, serial post-doc, ...)
- Inflexible external research funds

- **Principles**

- Transparency
- Articulation and coherence
- Added career value

- **Good practice from LERU universities**

- (Re)designing the academic career track
- Bridging grants, soft exits, equal opportunities

## Transparency in career structures

- Give clear guidance and expectation within an institution (duty to the researcher)
- Help those who might consider moving between institutions (enhance mobility)
- Understand differences between our institutions (benchmarking, aid policy formulation, share practice, contribute to funding discussions)
- If flow rates are known institutions can assess other aspects (e.g. career development)
- Translational device >> facilitate cross-national comparison

## Nomenclature (phase II researchers)

**Belgium (Flanders):** Doctor-Assistent (AAP), Praktijkassistent (BAP),  
Postdoctoraal Onderzoeker (FWO-BAP)

**Finland:** Postdoctoral researcher, University instructor

**France:** Boursier de recherche, CNRS-chercheur (CR2 / CR1), Maître de conférences (*France*)

**Germany:** Wissenschaftlicher Assistent (ehem. C1),  
Nachwuchswissenschaftler, Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter (*TVL 13 / BAT IIA*),  
Forschungsstipendiat, Lektor, Akademischer Rat auf Zeit (A13/C1),  
Akademischer Oberrat, Leitender Akademischer Direktor

**Italy:** Assegnista di ricerca, Professore a contratto, Ricercatore non  
confermato, Ricercatore confermato

**Netherlands:** Onderzoeker, (Junior) Universitair Docent, "Veni"  
grantholder



**Sweden:** Postdoc, Adjunkt (Junior Lecturer) with PhD,  
Forskningsingenjör, Forskarassistent, (LAS-) Forskare, Lektor

**Switzerland (French-speaking):** Assistant (A3), Maitre-assistant,  
Professeur assistant

**Switzerland (German-speaking):** Lehrbeauftragter, Lektor,  
Ambizione-Stipendiat, Postdoc, Assistent, Wissenschaftlicher  
Mitarbeiter

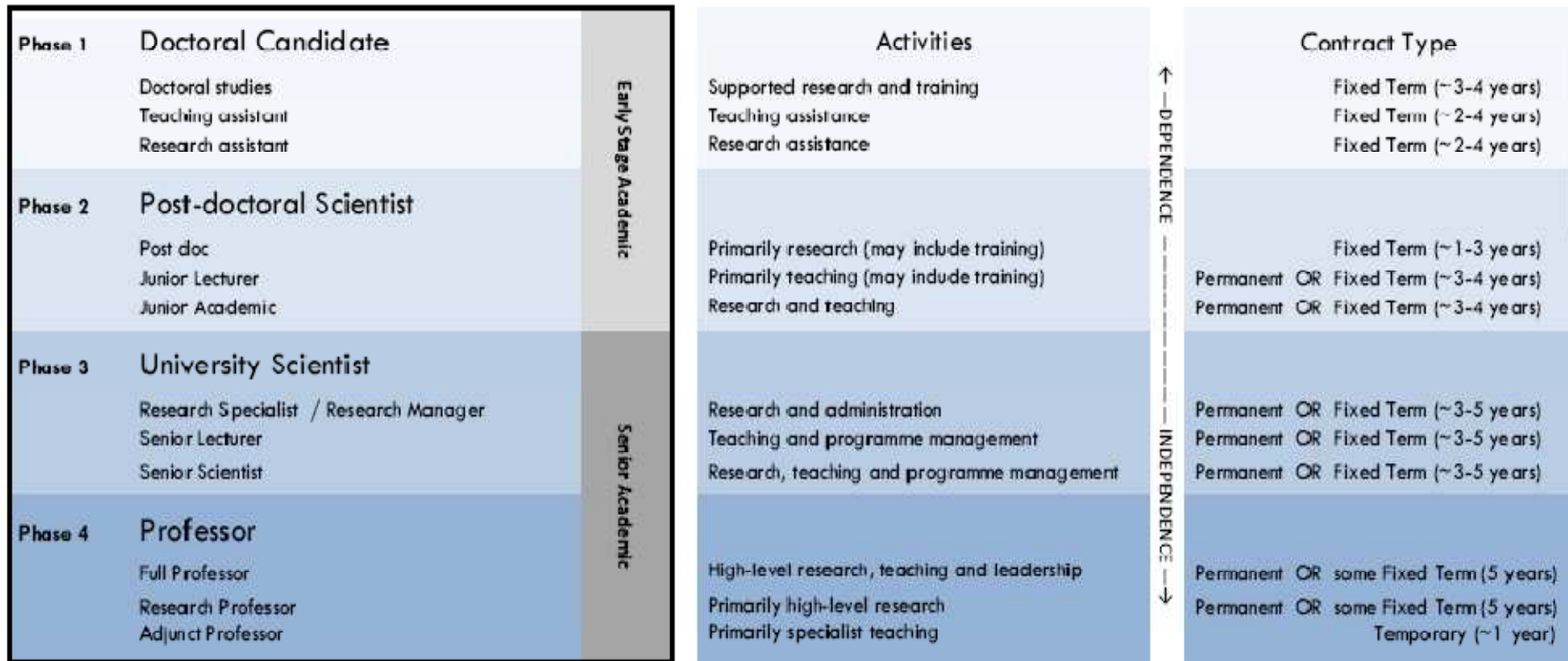
**UK (England):** Research associate, Junior research fellow,  
Postdoctoral research officer, Clinical researcher, Clinical  
lecturer, Clinical tutor, Temporary lecturer

**UK (Scotland):** (Postdoctoral) Research associate, (Postdoctoral)  
Research fellow, Postdoctoral researcher, Teaching assistant

***50 titles in 9 countries***

***Does this facilitate mobility and readability?***

# Four-stage career framework



## Doctoral Candidate Stage

- ✓ Well-defined but plethora of funding and appointment arrangements even within single institutions
- ✓ A supervised researcher, frequently participating in a structured programme or working collaboratively in a larger team
- ✓ May have student status, and/or be employed by the university
- ✓ May have limited teaching or research responsibilities beyond their doctoral work

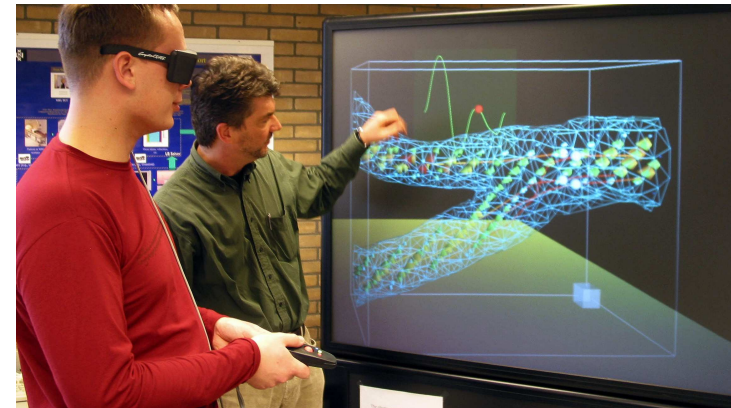


## Post-doctoral Scientist Stage

Broadly two types of employment:

### 1. Typical “post-doc” (1-3 years)

- usually employed in a project led by a more senior researcher
- generally on a non-renewable short-term contract



### 2. Entry-level academic position

- may be teaching or research-focused
- usually highly competitive
- may be time limited (2-6 six years), although in some systems they lead (often automatically) to a permanent position and/or academic promotion

## University Scientist Stage

A wide variety of types of position

- ✓ fewer available
- ✓ limited by funding prospects or by tight regulation of academic employment

Can be:

- **high-status independent research fellowships**
  - may or may not be accompanied by a permanent university appointment
  - often strictly age- or time-limited, creating a strong up-or-out pressure which cannot always be adequately accommodated



- **long-term scientific staff members**

- have limited research independence and few promotion prospects
- generally employed under a fixed-term transitional appointment
- may become effectively permanent

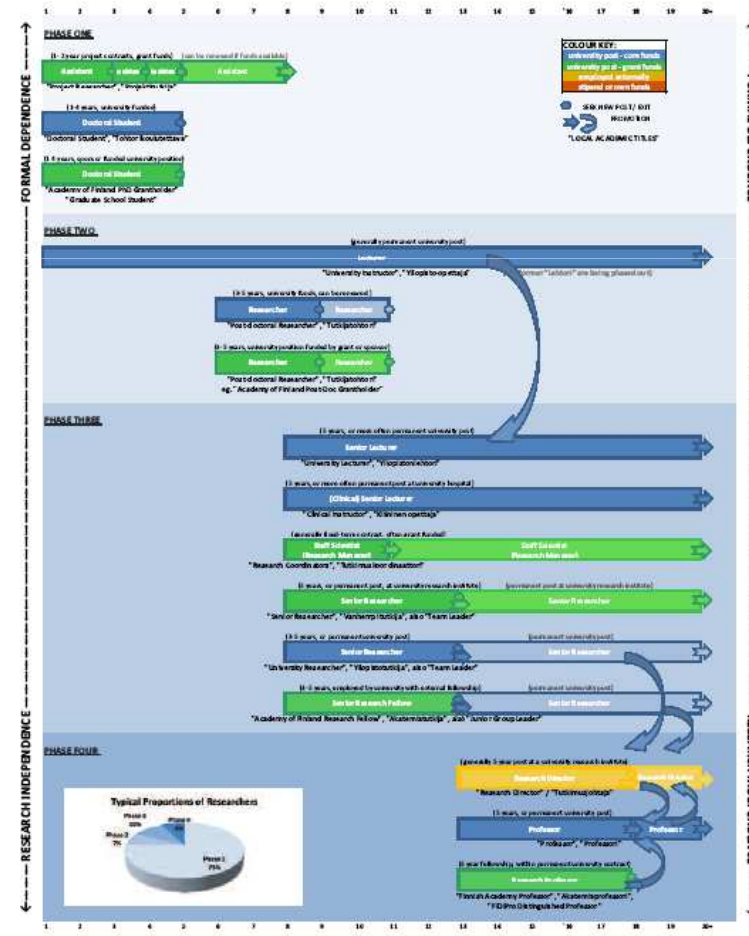
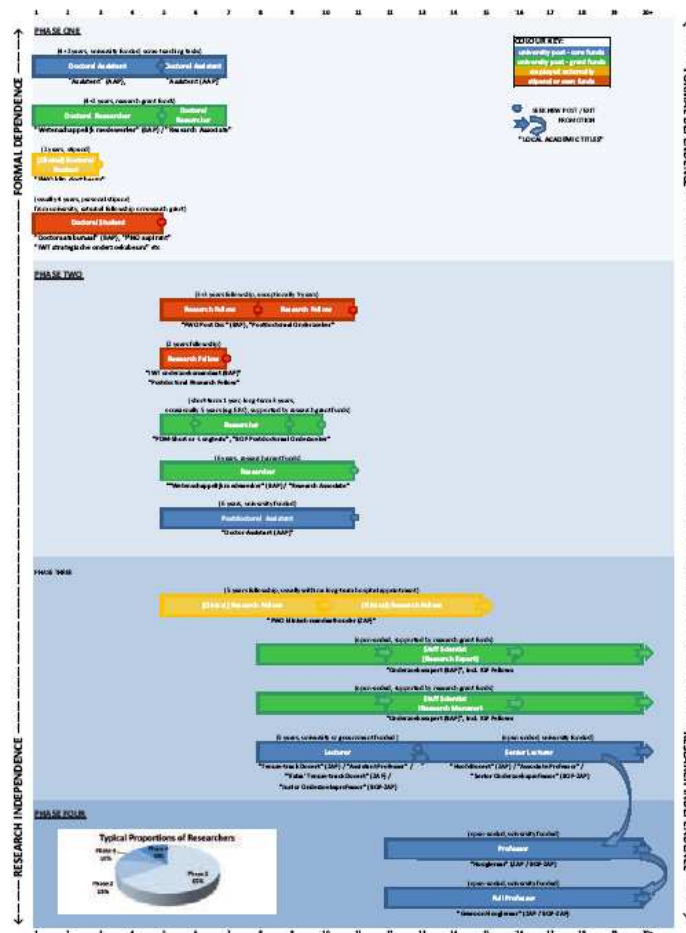
## Professor Stage

- ✓ Usually characterised by full tenure, but can also be high-level professorial fellows on short-term teaching contracts or multi-year specialised research grants
- ✓ Often characterised by different grades of seniority and responsibility, and sometimes with complex appointment and promotion procedures





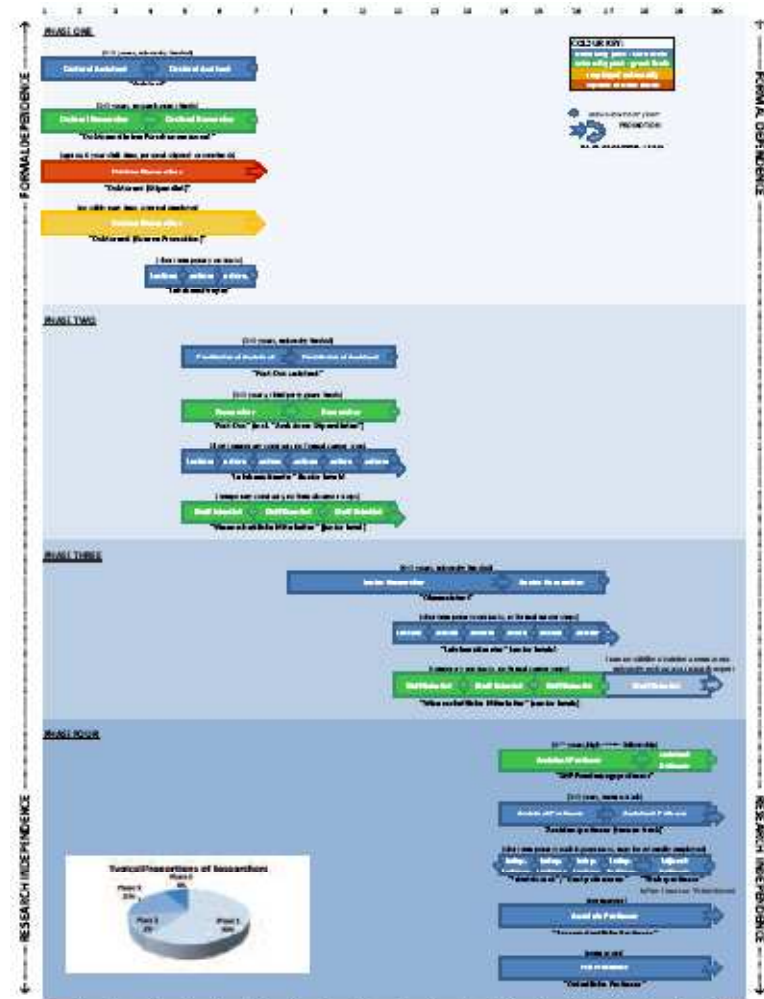
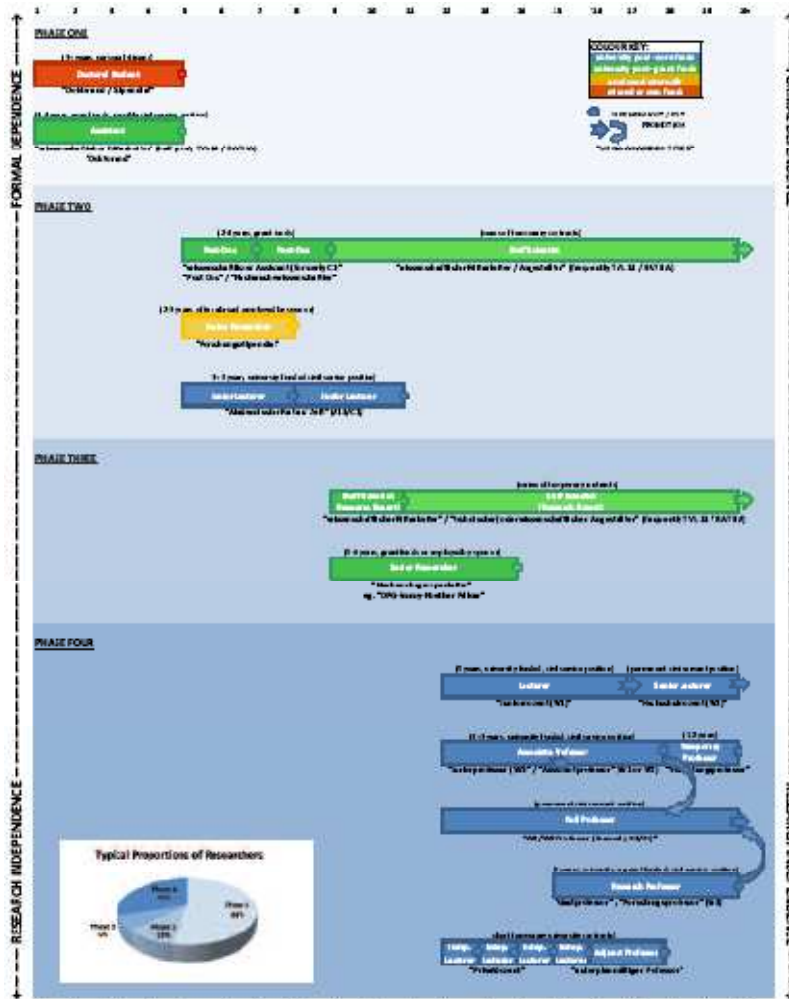
Belgium (Flanders) **Academic career maps** Finland



Germany

# Academic career maps

Switzerland





## 2. Well-designed employment and posts

- **Challenges**

- Constrained by tradition and external funding conditions
- Lack of transparency and consistency for researchers
- Lack of autonomy militates against fit-for-purpose

- **Principles**

- Clearly defined objectives and roles for research posts
- Consistent and transparent recruitment and promotion
- Independence and responsibility

- **Good practice from LERU universities**

- New types of posts (tenure-track, research manager)
- Clearly defined terms of employment for post-docs
- Interaction between central and decentral policy

## 3. Well-financed positions

- **Challenges**
  - Lack of Full Economic Costing
  - Formula funding based on teaching not research
  - Funders have a short-term horizon
  - Tightly regulated remuneration
- **Principles**
  - Investing in people and careers; long-term benefits
  - Preserving flexibility to seize opportunities
  - Assessing long-term financial options when hiring
- **Good practice from LERU universities**
  - Supplements or special packages for young researchers' needs and for senior academics
  - Minimum salary levels for post-docs

## 4. Well-supported career development

- **Challenges**

- Take-up and impact of career support
- Addressing the needs of senior academics
- Value of non-academic route

- **Principles**

- Realistic career perspectives ('early warning')
- Start early and continue throughout
- Formal and informal career support/advice; institutional and subject-specific

- **Good practice from LERU universities**

- Tracking researchers' progress, exit interviews
- Setting targets, milestones, performance reviews
- Extensive 'transferable skills' training

## 5. Sharing responsibility for research careers

- **Challenges**
  - Dispersed responsibility within universities and across funders and other stakeholders
- **Principles**
  - Close communication and coordination among universities, funders, policy makers at national and EU levels
  - Need for individual, institutional and inter-stakeholder action
- **Good practice from LERU universities and others**
  - LERU career pathways, LERU Model Code of Practice for Research Employment
  - Concordat (UK), RDF/DRD (Vitae)
  - European Charter & Code, HRS4R
  - ESF report on research careers

## Whose responsibilities?

### Universities

- creating and managing the environment
- supporting researcher independence
- creating and implementing policies and support process

### Research funders (RCs, EU, Business, Charities)

- prioritise long-term well-funded fellowships
- ensure good grant conditions especially for early-stage researchers
- require support policies as conditions of funding

### National and EU policy makers

- devise appropriate processes and patterns of funding
- work to remove barriers to mobility (pensions/career pathways)
- bring stakeholders together (EC)

### International networks such as LERU, EUA and others

- promote good policy development and spread good practice



*Thank you for your attention!*

*Contact: [katrien.maes@leru.org](mailto:katrien.maes@leru.org) - [www.leru.org](http://www.leru.org)*