

EuroScience Open Forum - ESOF2014 SESSION

## New concepts of mobility to foster career development and gender balance in Europe



*Glyptotek Hall, Carlsberg Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark  
Sunday 22 June 2014, 10.30-11.45*

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## Session Programme

- 10.30 **Welcome** to participants and introduction  
Beate Scholz • Scholz - Consulting Training Coaching
- 10.35 **Input statements** by 3 session participants on  
**European policy and researcher mobility**  
Conor O'Carroll • Chair of European Research Area (ERA) Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility
- The role of virtual mobility**  
Laura Marin • Swedish Research Council
- Intersectoral mobility for women**  
Gianna Avellis • Marie Curie Fellows Association & InnovaPuglia
- 10.55 **Preparation** of round table discussions
- 11.00 **Round table discussions** in 3 concomitant rounds centered on key questions:
- Appraisal of different mobility concepts**  
*Chairs and Rapporteurs*  
Gianna Avellis • Marie Curie Fellows Association & InnovaPuglia  
Antonella di Trapani • Marie Curie Fellows Association  
Maria Manuela Nogueira • European Science Foundation
- Mobility patterns by women researchers**  
*Chairs and Rapporteurs*  
Maria Bostenaru Dan • Marie Curie Fellows Association & Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism  
Ria Chmielowski • Marie Curie Fellows Association & Luleå University of Technology  
Magdalini Theodoridou • Marie Curie Fellows Association & University of Cyprus
- Virtual mobility**  
*Chairs and Rapporteurs*  
Laura Marin • Swedish Research Council  
Conor O'Carroll • Chair of ERA Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility  
Cornelia Soetbeer • Volkswagen Stiftung
- 11.20 **Conclusions** from round tables and wrap up



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The organisers would like to **thank all session attendees** who contributed to a lively and productive discussion whose findings can be found below.

Special thanks go to **Dr. Cornelia Soetbeer** from the Volkswagen Stiftung, Germany, who accepted to lead a round table discussion on virtual mobility.

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## Findings and Conclusions

Summarised by Beate Scholz



### Virtual mobility

*Chairs and Rapporteurs* Laura Marin • Swedish Research Council Conor O'Carroll • Chair of European Research Area (ERA) Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility Cornelia Soetbeer • Volkswagen Stiftung

**Lead questions** How could virtual mobility be supported at best? • What are, ideally, the outcomes of virtual mobility? • In which way could virtual mobility be adequately appraised in peer review or selection procedures?

- Virtual mobility options support inclusion, e.g. of researchers with disabilities or from less favoured regions.
- High speed internet access and additional technical infrastructure are pivotal to realise virtual mobility concepts.
- Virtual supervision of doctoral candidates is another variant of virtual mobility.
- The social component matters: short term visits and virtual mobility should work together.
- Evaluation should respond to the outcomes of virtual mobility. Further discussions on to proof the value of virtual mobility.
- Co-authorships are double-edged: They may be results of virtual mobility, but perhaps less valuable to the individual researcher. Disciplinary differences are crucial.



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## Appraisal of different mobility concepts

*Chairs and Rapporteurs* Gianna Avellis • Marie Curie Fellows Association & InnovaPuglia  
Antonella di Trapani • Marie Curie Fellows Association Maria Manuela Nogueira • European Science  
Foundation



**Lead questions** How do research funders and universities handle different mobility concepts in peer review or appointment? • What are individual researchers' experiences? • Are there any examples of promising practice that others might learn from?

- Difficulties to validate interdisciplinary mobility as well as intersectoral mobility persist.
- Many active researchers still rely on geographical mobility concepts.
- Geographical mobility may imply moving out of and then back to one's home country.
- More training, including different mobility concepts, is needed to prepare academics for different career paths.
- Good practice in acknowledging intersectoral mobility exists in the Nordic countries, specifically in Finland.
- Defining a set of indicators on how to address different mobility experiences in peer review is an urgent requirement.



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### Mobility patterns by women researchers

*Chairs and Rapporteurs* Maria Bostenaru Dan • Marie Curie Fellows Association & Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism Riia Chmielowski • Marie Curie Fellows Association & Luleå University of Technology Magdalini Theodoridou • Marie Curie Fellows Association & University of Cyprus

**Lead questions** Which opportunities and challenges do women researchers face as a consequence of different mobility patterns? • What should research organisations do in order to provide equal playing fields? • How could women researchers benefit from intersectoral mobility?



- Partnership issues are still key for women's decisions for or against geographic mobility. It is easier to move when being alone but easier once there if there is somebody to support.
- Cultural or societal prejudices of different communities may be seen as strong inhibitors of women's mobility (also when moving back).
- Children are usually no major mobility obstacles.
- Disruptions remain the biggest challenge in women's research careers.
- Encouragement to intersectoral mobility could keep women in research as an alternative to (or in addition to) physical mobility.
- Dual career agencies are essential to guide mobility patterns by women researchers.
- Mentors or role models are also crucial in helping women researchers in their career choices.

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## Annex: Notes from round table chairs and rapporteurs

### Virtual mobility

Laura Marin • Swedish Research Council

- From researchers' perspectives, virtual mobility is just a reality, not a problem.
- Should be supported through supporting the right equipment / infrastructures.
- Focus should be on the positive effect of virtual mobility in cooperation and how to incorporate this in the evaluation systems.
- Evaluation systems / peer review is not flexible enough.
- The virtual mobility effect and outcomes should be better reflected in the evaluation systems.
- Co-authorship as indicator should be treated carefully as it can be a hindering issue in individual evaluations (e.g. for fellowships).

Conor O'Carroll • Chair of European Research Area (ERA) Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility

- Virtual mobility can work but face to face contact is critical in building trust and working across cultures.
- Combined with short visits, virtual mobility can indeed work as well as physical mobility.
- Access to high speed internet and familiarity with social media is key.
- Virtual mobility can bring equal access to researchers with physical disability who find it difficult to travel.
- It can facilitate researchers on maternity/paternity leave in maintaining their networks.
- It can enable researchers in regions where money is scarce to access high quality laboratories and collaborate internationally.
- Virtual mobility should be seen as a driver of equal opportunities.

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### Appraisal of different mobility concepts

Gianna Avellis • Marie Curie Fellows Association & InnovaPuglia

- A fair and transparent evaluation is needed. It is important to incentive mobility through adequate evaluation criteria.
- It is difficult to find information on industry or public sector opportunities while staying in academia. Therefore there is a need for training in academia between industry and public sector.
- Include gender balance in evaluation committees and family support practices to enhance mobility.

Antonella di Trapani • Marie Curie Fellows Association

We concentrated on intersectoral mobility mostly because it is the most difficult to acknowledge by the review panel for appointment positions in universities or by research funders.

In general it is very difficult, almost impossible, to move back to doing research in academia after many years in science management, publishing, patenting, industry...

However this kind of mobility should be seen as an added value and not being penalized, and intersectoral mobility thus should be favoured and considered an excellence, as it increases the skills, knowledge, experience... thus it should be an asset, and not a problem.

In order to promote and acknowledge this kind of mobility we need a set of qualitative and quantitative indicators to appraise it, and evaluation criteria at level of peer reviews and appointment panels.

While the quantitative indicators seem a bit unrealistic due to the difficulty to quantify the mobility experience with a point system, the panel concluded that a qualitative assessment of the mobility experience could be added in a peer review panel.

Examples of personal experiences from the panel discussion:

- One science manager wished to go back to research but was finding difficult, almost impossible, to do this after having left the bench 7 years ago.
- On the other hand, there was a good example from a Professor at Örebro University in Sweden and Hanken School of Economics and Business Administration in Finland who mentioned she had changed sectors between government and university several times and this was not an hindrance in her career, as in Finland and Nordic countries in general there is recognition of intersectoral mobility.

Maria Manuela Nogueira • European Science Foundation

- The most difficult mobility pattern to evaluate, both from the individual researchers' and the research funders' point of view, is *inter-disciplinarity* because it is difficult to assemble a panel of experts with all required expertise.
- In all researchers' experiences, it was extremely positive to be mobile *geographically* and to go abroad, seen as very positive to come back to the country of origin but preferably in a different research environment than the one where the PhD was done, or at least, following a different research line.
- A promising practice is to develop collaborations with other countries (*virtual mobility*), especially with the country of origin, with the potential perspective to go back.

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## Mobility patterns by women researchers

Maria Bostenaru Dan • Marie Curie Fellows Association & Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism  
Participants from the UK, Germany, Greece (living in UK), Ireland (consortium of research staff associations), Natalia Balcazar (MCFA).

### Question 1

- Mobility: opening of Eastern Europe to higher quality research.
- Opinion in Germany: mobile researchers bring back knowledge.
- But if somebody has been too long abroad, it is difficult to go back.
- From here question: **what time is suitable to go abroad** (too long, you are out).
- The above apply for men and women - what is specific for women?
- Virtual mobility might be more suitable for women.
- Specific for women: partnership issues (difficult to find a partnership or to maintain a partnership if mobile).
- Partnership issues influenced the way women could work throughout history, also pioneer women had to have support from partner. It is a **cultural change** still going on.
- Leads to question 2.

### Question 2

- Organisations could help with **partnership issues**: find work for 2 researchers: possibilities for a partner in the advertisement or afterwards. Share (half jobs for each partner).
- Who is a leader? <> women **mentors**. Why stop at the second best for gender issues?
- Important: **role models** - institutions could promote them.
- Integrate in the group even with family (meetings outside work time).
- Men open to think in another way.

### Question 3

- Give more tools to women about how things work outside of academia.
- Industry might be reluctant to short mobility of staff.
- NGOs are still industry (point of view of the Commission)?



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Riia Chmielowski • Marie Curie Fellows Association & Luleå University of Technology

Pros:

- Moving to new location regularly can re-set one's personal clock, re-charge one's batteries, and prevent "burnout". Can be seen as "the fountain of youth" as one is always the "new kid on the block", and so one may feel younger than one's old classmates who were left behind.
- Increased opportunity to learn new skills and to gain experience with new and different research tools and equipment.
- Opportunity to leave behind any mistakes one may have made in one's last research project and start anew.
- Easier to build an international network for collaboration.
- The presence of the internet makes it easier to obtain enough information in advance of moving to more easily decide if it is a good idea, and it makes it easier to keep in touch with friends, family, and colleagues who are left behind.

In between:

- The decision to move somewhere new is easier to make on one's own in that no one else's preferences need be consulted. However, settling into the new location can be easier if one brings along a partner/family to help.
- Some think that moving children to a new country is bad as they will lose their friends. However, the two of us at the table whose parents had done so (repeatedly!) both felt that it was a good thing in that it taught us to be resilient, adaptive, and that there are wonderful people everywhere on earth so that we will find new friends when we get there.

Cons:

- Disruptive/loss of support network
- The time needed to get set up (additional visa paperwork/find apartment/phone/bank account/etc.) in the new location can negatively impact the time/energy available for research.
- Some of us experienced lots of help from our colleagues at the new institution for these set up tasks.
- Others complained that their university offers no such support at the post/doc level.
- Extra challenges are faced when mobility is from 1st world to 3rd world countries (and probably vice-versa, but our table had experience only the one direction).

Observation:

- If one is afraid to move to a new location they may also not really be fit for the life of a researcher, where one needs to be bold and take risks.

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Magdalini Theodoridou • Marie Curie Fellows Association & University of Cyprus

Due to lack of time, mainly geographical mobility was discussed:

- Society prejudice is one of the main problems women still face when participating in geographical mobility programmes. Unfortunately this takes years. An example was given by a lady who recently moved to Germany and since her husband followed her without having already received a job offer, they had difficulties even in renting a flat and convince the owners, since the woman, and not the man, would be the part of the couple who would have income from the very beginning. In general, partner (and not kids) seems to be the main issue a woman is called to face along with mobility.
- Additional financial support (e.g. family allowance) does not seem to be enough in order to overcome all obstacles. Dual careers agencies could play a crucial role in helping partners to continue their careers (find a new job, language lessons etc.) and their services should be applied not only to established scientists but also to early stage researchers, post-docs etc. Grants to women that have interrupted their careers for a period of time and want to come back to research is also a good idea (example from available grant in Switzerland).
- Intersectoral mobility could be highly beneficial and should be encouraged since scientists only then have physical experience of both academia and the real market and this can be very useful in overcoming the commonly faced obstacle of knowledge transfer from academia to industry, for example.