



## The Scientific Visa: World's First Legislative Effort Supporting Researchers' Mobility

The European Commission's 'Researchers in Europe 2005' Initiative<sup>1</sup> is an effort devoted to raising the profile of European research. Specific objectives are to:

- bring scientific researchers closer to the public;
- attract young people to careers in science; and
- increase Europe's attractiveness as a place of work for researchers.

The European Commission has proposed a Directive and two recommendations to improve the environment of researchers' mobility to and within Europe, and this background document provides an explanation of the reasons for, the benefits of and the expected next steps for the Directive.

This document is part of a series of fact sheets dedicated to special topics linked to these objectives, including:

- Researchers Careers;
- The European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers;
- The European Researchers Mobility Portal;
- The European Network of Mobility Centres.

An abundant supply of highly qualified researchers for science and technology is not only a **necessary condition for advancing science** and supporting innovation, it is also an important **factor for attracting and sustaining investment in research**.

To achieve the goal of making Europe the most competitive knowledge-based society and the objective of investing 3% of GDP in research and development, Europe needs at least another 700,000 researchers, in addition to replacing ageing research personnel.<sup>2</sup> Increasing the quality and quantity of researchers is, therefore, one of the European Union's most urgent priorities.

### ***Attracting the best talents from all over the world***

In order to enhance the EU's attractiveness and foster careers in R&D, the European Commission adopted a proposal on 16 March 2004 for a Directive and two recommendations introducing a "scientific visa." The purpose of the proposal was to **facilitate the access of non-European researchers** to the European Union.

Based on close co-operation between the Directorate General for Research and the Directorate General for Justice and Home Affairs, the "scientific visa" proposed by the European Commission constitutes a **first legislative step** in the efforts for improving the environment of researchers' mobility. It is expected that this proposal will be adopted by the Council of Member States in September 2005.

<sup>1</sup> The "Researchers in Europe 2005" initiative (June – November 2005) is a campaign consisting of more than 50 events throughout Europe, all designed to promote better awareness of the lives and careers of researchers. A highlight of the initiative is European Researchers' Night, **Friday, 23 September 2005, in Brussels and in cities across Europe**. Dozens of national, regional and local organisers of scientific events will host activities and exhibitions. Most are free and open to the public. See <http://europa.eu.int/researchersineurope> for full details.

<sup>2</sup> For Key figures 2005 for science, technology and innovation See: [www.cordis.lu/indicators/](http://www.cordis.lu/indicators/)

### ***A fast-track procedure for the admission of researchers***

The "scientific visa" concept will enable the creation of a specific residence permit for third country researchers, independent of their contractual status. Accredited research organisations will play a major role in this process, as they will have to certify the status of the researcher in the host country which will acknowledge the existence of a valid research project, as well as the researcher's scientific skills, financial means and health insurance.

Once a Member State grants a residence permit to the researcher, he/she will be free to move within all European Union Member States for the purpose of the scientific project.

In addition to the much faster administrative procedure for delivering the residence permit (immigration authorities of Member States will be required to deliver it in 30 days), researchers will have the possibility of submitting applications for residence permits directly to the authorities of the host Member State if they are legal residents in that country.

Moreover, if a researcher wishes to extend his or her stay in another Member State it will no longer be necessary to return to the country of origin to submit an application.

### ***Acceleration of the implementation of the Directive and supplementary issues***

The two Recommendations which should be adopted with the Directive invite the Member States to accelerate, on a voluntary basis, the implementation of the Directive and to cover supplementary issues.

The **first Recommendation** (together with the rules on exemption/acceleration of the procedure to deliver work permits for researchers, and easing of the procedure of the residence permit) covers issues like **family reunification**<sup>3</sup> and **operational co-operation** between Member States and the Commission.

The **second Recommendation** on short-term visas is based on the consideration of researchers as *bona fide* travellers for whom it is suitable to **facilitate delivery of uniform visas**, where necessary (e.g., to participate in conferences, seminars). It also covers rapid delivery of short-term visas (including multiple ones), adoption of a harmonised approach for supporting documents to visa applications, and reinforcement of consular co-operation.

### **First-of-its-kind "Scientific Visa"**

The Directive and the two Recommendations are expected to be adopted by the Council in September 2005. Their adoption would constitute the **only example in the world of a legislative effort in favour of researchers' mobility** and would support the simplification of the European working environment for mobile researchers.

For further information on media opportunities and the facilitation of interviews:

**Antonia Mochan**

Spokesperson for EU Commissioner for Science and Research

Tel: +32-2/296 9921

E-mail: [antonia.mochan@cec.eu.int](mailto:antonia.mochan@cec.eu.int)

For general information about the Researchers in Europe 2005 Initiative:

<http://europa.eu.int/researchersineurope>

# # #

**EuroNews**

is an official media partner of "Researchers in Europe 2005"

<sup>3</sup> A Directive was adopted on the topic of family reunification in September 2003, and should be transposed into national law by October 2005. The Directive mentioned here is designed to be complementary.