Eurodoc: ERA Consultation Contribution
ERA Consultation Contribution (1): Attracting Non-EU Researchers to the European Research Area

On 13 September 2011, the European Research Area Committee (ERAC) held a stakeholder seminar to formally launch the public consultation on the European Research Area (ERA) [LINK 1]. On behalf of Eurodoc, Ludovic Garattini attended the meeting and called for recognising doctoral candidates as professionals. Eurodoc is deeply committed to the ongoing and especially the current pan-European efforts to complete the ERA by 2014.

As the first of several forthcoming Eurodoc contributions to the ERA consultation, this document will address the theme of ‘attracting non-EU researchers to the ERA’ by identifying obstacles still in place and how to best overcome them.


In the written response, Commissioner Malmström highlighted two aspects: (1) the exclusion of non-EU doctoral candidates from the scientific visa provisions (Directive 2005/71/EC) does not imply that they are not considered professionals; and (2) the admissions procedure under the student directive (Directive 2004/114/EC) is not stricter than that of the scientific visa.

Eurodoc welcomes the reaffirmation that doctoral candidates are indeed professionals and strongly support the Commission’s continual efforts to establish pan-European recognition of this status. Yet, at the same time, we feel that there is a contradiction in the Commissioner’s response stating that the treatments of non-EU doctoral candidates are similar, if not the same, in the two directives. The reason for this is because the scientific visa has been formally presented as the ‘fast-track’ procedure for admitting foreign researchers. Moreover, more favourable provisions – such as access to family reunification – have been adopted to attract non-EU researchers (Article 9 of Directive 2005/71/EC).

The Commission, in partnership with the European Parliament and the Council, should consider why it is in the EU’s interest to exclude certain researchers, because of their nationalities, from accessing the provisions in the scientific visa directive. Eurodoc firmly states that this is highly discriminatory and contradicts the EU’s own objectives as set out in the Innovation Union communication (commitment #30): ‘By 2012, the European Union and its Member States should put into place integrated policies ... to attract a sufficient number of highly skilled third country nationals to stay in Europe’.

Eurodoc urges all EU institutions, working together with stakeholders, to amend these two directives in line with the Union’s own objectives. Specifically, we call for recognising doctoral candidates, of all nationalities, as professionals at an early stage of a research career.
ERA Consultation Contribution (2): Recognising PhDs as Professionals

On 13 September 2011, the European Research Area Committee (ERAC) held a stakeholder seminar to formally launch the public consultation on the European Research Area (ERA) [LINK 1]. Eurodoc is deeply committed to the ongoing and especially the current pan-European efforts to complete the ERA by 2014. In this second contribution from Eurodoc to the ERA consultation, we address the question: Why and how will recognising PhDs as professionals enable the completion of ERA?

An attractive research career starts with recognition. For most researchers, this recognition comes when they obtain full-time permanent research posts. Yet the scarcity of such positions, particularly in academia, hampers this development and contributes to the impression that a scientific career is unattractive. Eurodoc has always emphasised that recognition of the profession should start at the very beginning: at the PhD stage.

Recognising doctoral candidates as employees stimulates the research working environment. Senior researchers would benefit from the fresh perspectives of their junior colleagues, and PhDs would be encouraged to explore beyond the current scientific frontiers. By categorising doctoral candidates as ‘students’ merely restricts their capacity to fully contribute to scientific research; it is actually a great barrier to retaining – and attracting future – researchers because many are unable to see themselves as young scientists in either academia or industry.

Ensuring that doctoral candidates find their research environment rewarding is essential to achieving the EU’s target of one million researchers by 2020. Eurodoc urges all European institutions, working together with stakeholders, to promote the full recognition of doctoral candidates as professionals who have taken the first step in a scientific career path and become contributors to the scientific community.

This contribution was written in October 2011 by the career development working group. Please contact the working group coordinator for any questions or further information at career-development@council.eurodoc.net.

References
ERA Consultation Contribution (3): Lifting Barriers and Moving Researchers in the European Union

At the heart of the European Research Area is a very simple idea: the free movement of knowledge. Although the notion of ‘free movement’ is as old as the European Union (EU) itself, the fifth freedom is new. We give attention to researcher mobility because, according to the Innovation Union targets, the EU needs at least one million researchers by 2020 [LINK 1]. We show that mobility is a very risky undertaking for most researchers if these barriers are not removed. In this third contribution from Eurodoc to the ERA consultation, we highlight several key barriers still in place and suggest ways of lifting them.

**Barrier 1: Mobility experience is not recognised**

Mobility experiences – particularly short-term mobility – are often not recognised sufficiently in evaluations of career path development because their effects are less quantifiable than scientific publications. They are generally seen as a ‘good thing’, but, like outreach activities, becoming more mobile rarely translates directly into job security. On the contrary, high levels of mobility (especially at the early stages of a research career) may mask what is actually happening in practice: the proliferation of short-term contracts in place of permanent positions. The lack of demonstrable and direct recognition of mobility experiences is a fundamental barrier to promoting mobility.

There needs to be clear incentives for researchers to be mobile. We propose that these incentives are integrated into assessments of research careers (e.g. for promotion) and funding evaluations.

**Barrier 2: Recruitment procedures are complex and opaque**

The very complexity and opaqueness of recruitment procedures prevent mobility even if the researchers decide to work in another country. Job announcements are usually not circulated widely in advance and are often in a foreign language for both European and international applicants. We recommend that job announcements should at least be made available in English. Rules concerning the recruitment process should be made clear to all applicants at the very start and the process itself should be transparent. This would allow both employers and candidates to know their roles, responsibilities and anticipated outcomes – a fundamental principle of the European Researcher Charter and the Code of Conduct for their recruitment [LINK 2].

Eurodoc has been a strong supporter of the Charter and the Code since the very beginning and played a key role in its development. To show our continual commitment to the implementation of the Charter and the Code through the Human Resource Strategy,
Eurodoc recently signed a letter of endorsement to further promote these principles [LINK 3]. There are, however, many challenges ahead for implementing the Charter and the Code, which remains a voluntary instrument. We recommend that the EU, member states, universities, research institutions and stakeholders work together to make the Charter and the Code a binding instrument. Furthermore, the promotion and monitoring of these principles must be a joint undertaking.

Since the ERA was launched in 2000, the EU has devoted a lot of resources to improving the recruitment procedure, one of the outcomes being the Euraxess job portal [LINK 4]. Although one of the most developed EU instruments in this regard, Euraxess is under-utilised by incoming/outgoing researchers and their employers/funders. If ERA is to be completed by 2014, Euraxess needs to be better integrated with other existing – and more frequently used – job portals.

**Barrier 3: Lack of opportunities and support structures for family members**

Decisions to be mobile for researchers with partners and families are especially difficult. In such instances, if the net benefit of mobility is only for one partner, it is easy to argue against it. **We therefore caution against policies and programmes that stipulate mobility as a requirement for funding or eligibility if there are no support systems in place for partners and families.** To encourage and assist researchers with partners and families to become mobile, we recommend that research or funding institutions introduce robust infrastructures and allocate resources for practical matters such as: support job seeking for partners, kindergarten allocation for those with young children, language courses, accommodation and so on. Posting such information should be only the first step; there must be personnel dedicated to assist researchers navigating these issues. Put simply, institutions must improve their internal structures to assist partners and families of mobile researchers.

**Barrier 4: Insufficient and lack of mobility funding**

Obtaining funding for mobility is a very challenging task. With the exception of the Marie Curie schemes, which are tied to specific institutions (i.e. the institutions administer the grant, which are not portable should the researcher wish to move to another institution), most of the European and national funding schemes have a long list of eligibility restrictions that contradict the notion of free movement. For instance, the grants may only be applicable for travel to a particular region or country, for exchanges between selected sectors, or for researchers of certain nationalities.

In terms of actual cost, funding is often too low. For example, grants are generally applicable to cover the costs of researchers and not their families. This lack of funding is a strong disincentive to become mobile. Early stage researchers face particular challenges in securing mobility funding, which is often not included in their contracts and need to be applied for separately. **Researchers will not be mobile without adequate funding support.**
Funding schemes should be more integrative, taking into account the actual costs related to bringing along family, and securing social security when being abroad. Mobility grants should have no restrictions as to who is eligible to apply and should be portable across institutions.

**Barrier 5: Transferability of social security and pension rights**

Securing social security and pension rights is already challenging for most researchers under (short-term) contract conditions even in their home countries. Within the context of mobility, social security and pension access, and their transferability, are particularly problematic. There is often a lack of information on these issues for researchers, who are likely to be more preoccupied with practical/immediate issues. Early stage and highly mobile researchers are especially vulnerable to differences between national social security and pension schemes. For instance, incoming researchers are frequently asked to start field work or laboratory work prior to sorting out their contract conditions; any injury incurred may not be covered by the hosting institution.

Information concerning social security and pension schemes should be easily accessible and in a comprehensible format for researchers. There must be dedicated personnel who are able and willing to assist researchers on these matters. The EU and all research institutions must work together to enable transferability of social security and pension rights. Furthermore, bilateral agreements between the EU and non-EU countries should be promoted in order to secure the researchers’ rights.

To sum up, the lack of demonstrable and direct recognition of mobility as a part of a researcher’s career, lack of funding and portability of funding, opportunities and mobility schemes for family members, social security and pensions can thus result in researchers viewing mobility as a risk rather than an opportunity or even advantage. Therefore, a more holistic approach jointly pursued by European governments, the EU and public and private organisations employing researchers is needed to ensure that mobility is attractive for all researchers at any stage of their careers.

This contribution was written jointly in November 2011 by the mobility and career development working groups. Please contact the mobility working group coordinator for any questions or further information at mobility@eurodoc.net.

**Entry to the EU is a key barrier for third country nationals**, and Eurodoc has already elaborated the inconsistencies between the admission procedures for junior and established researchers in our first contribution to this series [LINK 5]. We continue to call on the EU institutions and the member states to work together to remedy this discrepancy.
References

LINK 1: p. 9 of the Innovation Union communication

LINK 2: http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/recommendation


LINK 4: http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/

In this fourth contribution to the European Research Area (ERA) consultation, we address the issue of intersectoral transfer possibilities for PhDs between the academic and non-academic sectors. Here, ‘intersectoral boundary spanning’ constitutes an important strategy in the attempt to increase the research intensity of European economies. By facilitating mobility of junior researchers across sectors and fostering the development of transferable skills\textsuperscript{1} of doctoral candidates, ties between academic and non-academic sectors (i.e. industry, business, government, NGO’s, charities or cultural institutions) will be strengthened. This not only enables an intensified knowledge transfer between the sectors and the creation of new opportunities, it also promotes future cooperation between the respective involved institutions. Furthermore, it boosts the reputation of doctorate holders in industry and other non-academic sectors and thereby advances career opportunities of doctoral candidates. All this in turn increases the attractiveness of institutions of higher education as employers.

Intersectoral boundary spanning remains, however, under-discussed in current debates concerning how to increase the overall European research intensity. For instance, although there are already some means of intersectoral boundary spanning such as doctoral training in cooperation with industry or training offers that aim at transferable skills (e.g., communication or project management), these actions are still rather isolated. Eurodoc believes that more efforts should be taken to develop comprehensive and joint strategies in this respect by academia, other sectors and political institutions. To contribute to this much needed debate, we point to two exemplary action fields which should be approached as means of intersectoral boundary spanning: (1) doctoral training outside of academic institutions and (2) transition from academia to the non-academic sector after the PhD.

\textbf{(1) Beside models of PhD training} which include employment at an institution of higher education or other forms of funding that allow a close involvement of PhD candidates in an academic institution (e.g., scholarship, inter-institutional cooperation with non-university research institutions), there is a significant group of people conducting research for their PhD while earning their living outside of the core academic system. In the \textit{Eurodoc Survey I} [Ref 2] a considerable minority (in some countries up to approx. 20\%) of the sample indicated that they are working in the non-academic sector\textsuperscript{2}. For PhD candidates who are not intimately involved in the core academic system (i.e. external PhD candidates), a major challenge is to ensure the quality of their research\textsuperscript{3}. At the

\textsuperscript{1} Definition according to the European Science Foundation [Ref 1, p. 47]: “Transferable skills are skills learned in one context (for example research) that are useful in another (for example future employment whether that is in research, business etc.). They enable subject- and research-related skills to be applied and developed effectively. Transferable skills may be acquired through training or through work experience.”

\textsuperscript{2} That is the public and private non-academic research sector, public and private non-research sector and NGO’s.

\textsuperscript{3} Minimum requirements to enable successful external PhD trainings would be regular supervision, a basic involvement in the academic system (e.g., through workshops or summer schools) and realistic agreements.

\textbf{References:}

1. Eurodoc Survey I
2. Eurodoc Survey II
3. Minimum requirements to enable successful external PhD trainings would be regular supervision, a basic involvement in the academic system (e.g., through workshops or summer schools) and realistic agreements.
same time, these junior researchers naturally develop a broader network outside of academia and acquire experiences and skills that are of high relevance for both academia and non-academia. This brings them into a special position between the sectors, which qualifies them as **potential intersectoral boundary spanners**. Hence, to improve this model of doctoral training would not only ensure research quality and reduce dropout rates, but build up a group of people who could work as ‘mediators’ and ‘ambassadors’ between academia and non-academia in the future.

(2) Career options after obtaining a PhD are not limited to academic research, but also include **transition to non-academic sectors**. A strategy of intersectoral boundary spanning fulfils both the political and market need as positions at institutions of higher education are limited, and a societal and market demand as qualified doctorate holders are of high value in the knowledge-based European economies. From the perspective of PhD candidates, it is considered an important option for their career path. When asked where they want to work after finishing the PhD, many of the respondents to the Eurodoc Survey I [Ref 2] indicated that they would like to work in public or private non-academic research sectors. A lower but still considerable number of the respondents would also like to work in the public or private non-research sector or for a NGO. The **development of transferable skills** during the PhD training is one important factor to enhance employability of PhD candidates in the non-academic sectors. Furthermore, PhD candidates should be provided with opportunities and support to develop networks with non-academia, as networks play an essential role for fluent and successful transitions between the sectors. Further transfer activities that can be derived from such networks are the transition of technology, knowledge and ideas (e.g., business spin-offs) that serve both academia and non-academia.

To summarize, we recommend improving external PhD trainings, strengthening academic – non-academic networks and fostering the development of transferable skills as strategies of intersectoral boundary spanning. Academic and non-academic institutions as current and/or future employers, politics and PhD candidates equally share the responsibility to make these means successful boundary spanning activities.

This contribution was written in November 2011. Please contact either the career development (career-development@council.eurodoc.net) or the mobility (mobility@eurodoc.net) working group coordinator for any questions or further information.

**References**


which take into consideration the special needs of external PhD candidates (e.g., in terms of time need). However, even these basic requirements are not yet guaranteed for every external PhD candidate.

*Multiple responses were possible.*
ERA Consultation Contribution (5): A brief statement on the arts and humanities within the European Research Area

The European Research Area is designed to improve quality of life by making Europe a place where scientific research, technological development, and innovation thrive and address the major challenges of our times. However, the major challenges of our times cannot all be solved by science or the pursuit of technological innovations and the input of researchers representing the arts and humanities should be consulted. The humanities consider the problematic questions of a “scientific” approach towards progress and development. The role of the arts must also be taken seriously as a creative force which transforms the world, constructing new visions of Europe and humanity at large.

The most complicated aspect of these domains is an interdisciplinary advancement that can be reached through dialogue and collaboration. Interdisciplinarity is often commented upon but still remains undefined with regards to its nature and implementation. Eurodoc believes that throughout the ERA the arts and humanities can be a dynamic source of reaching a transdisciplinary consensus, among other goals.

The European Union has been doing an excellent job of nurturing the conditions for outstanding new fields of study. Eurodoc feels that an active, socially-responsive humanities-based research pattern, sensitive to the ebbs and flows of modern Europe, will strategically position her for success in this new century. A visionary critique emanating freely from the arts and humanities must be seen as a key incentive to the diversity of the ERA.

Eurodoc believes in the capabilities and importance of the arts and humanities as a field of inquiry and a site of practice and urges all European policy-makers to be more inclusive of these disciplines in their forward planning.

Eurodoc recommends that the following areas of emphasis be given due consideration leading to action:

1. Establishing policies that will encourage the development of new academic approaches within the arts and humanities by early stage researchers.
2. Staging academic congresses that can strategize ways to unite science and technology, social sciences, and the arts and humanities within an interdisciplinary nexus.
3. Support and develop the opinions and activities of junior researchers in a way that will help shape the pursuit of a diverse (research) society in Europe.

Signed,
Eurodoc Arts & Humanities Network
Eurodoc Interdisciplinarity Working Group
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