

European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe¹

Type of Document: Council Recommendation

Date of document/adoption: 13 December 2023

Policy document summary

The recommendation focuses on keeping skilled researchers within the European Union while also positioning Europe as a desirable location for research talent globally. It redefines the term 'researcher' and elaborates on the various activities they engage in, ensuring a broad spectrum of career possibilities is included. The initiative aims to encourage cross-sector and interdisciplinary careers, as well as entrepreneurship and innovation, by recognizing the importance of diverse career trajectories for researchers, which may include academia, industry, public service, and the non-profit sector.

Disclaimer

This brief overview is intended to summarize the essential points from the EU institutions' policy document that are relevant for research performing and innovation institutions, without providing the full extent of information available in the original document. The focus of the overview is put on initiatives regarding circulation of highly qualified staff, especially researchers, relevant to the European Research Area. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission.

Definition of researchers and of research professions in the European Research Area

The Council's Recommendation attempts to provide a clarity to **definition of researcher** specifying that:

Researchers are professionals engaged in the conception or creation of new knowledge. They conduct research and improve or develop concepts, theories, models, techniques instrumentation, software or operational methods. Researchers may be involved fully or partially in different types of activities (for example basic or applied research, experimental development, operating research equipment, project management) in any sector of the economy or society. Researchers identify options for new research and development activities, and plan for and manage them by using high-level skills and knowledge developed through formal education and training or from practical experience in performing research.

In its Recommendation, the Council further specifies that **regardless of the sector of employment** where the researcher carries out the research activity (academia, business, the public administration, the non-profit sector), the **framing of all researchers** shall be based on the following **research profiles**:

- (a) **R1 - First Stage Researcher:** Researchers doing research under supervision up to the point of a PhD or equivalent level of competence and experience.
- (b) **R2 - Recognised Researcher:** Researchers with a PhD or equivalent level of competence and experience who are not yet fully independent in their ability to develop their own research, attract funding, or lead a research group.

¹ You can access the original document here: [Council of the European Union. \(2023, December 13\). Council recommendation on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe.](#)

(c) **R3 - Established Researcher:** Researchers with a PhD or equivalent level of competence and experience who have achieved a level of independence in their ability to develop their own research, attract funding, or lead a research group.

(d) **R4 - Leading Researcher:** Researchers with a PhD or equivalent level of competence and experience who are recognised as leading their research field by their peers.

On this basis, the Council Recommendation **updates the R1-R4 profiles for researchers** introduced in 2011 with a view to develop a **common terminology** and hence to achieve **comparability and interoperability of research careers** across employment sectors (the common terminology shall be used when publishing job vacancies by employers) and countries. It clarifies that R1 and R2 profiles should be considered as early career researchers whereas R3 and R4 should be considered senior researchers. In addition, the Recommendation specifies that apart from R1, other research profiles shall not be necessarily regarded as career stages on a progressive career path.

In addition to proving the definition of a researcher, the Council's Recommendation attempts to provide a clarity to **definition of research professions** in ERA. It points to the necessity to ensure the proper **recognition of research profession** in Europe and refers to the need to recognize the **multitude of research management roles** that researches and other professionals undertake.

The Council Recommendation sets out (non-exhaustive) the following list of the tasks and activities that researchers and other professionals with a research profession can be involved in:

- (a) streamlining or facilitating the planning, the development, management, administration, communication and valorisation of research and innovation;
- (b) ensuring compliance with policy objectives, funding programme requirements, financial rules and legal regulations;
- (c) improving the efficiency and effectiveness of R&I projects/system;
- (d) enhancing the impact of R&I on the society.

The recognition of the research professions, and interoperability and comparability of research careers

In its Recommendation, the Council has called for ensuring a **full recognition of the research professions** as well as for a **full interoperability and comparability of research careers** across **Member States, sectors and institutions**.

Recruitment and working conditions

Points 11.-15. of the Council Recommendation refer to the recommendations to Member States with respect to establishing **supportive measures for recruitment of researchers and improving working conditions**. These include measures directed towards **countering precarity** (a maximum total duration of fixed-term appointments; incentivizing a maximum threshold of one third of fixed-term appointments, offering permanent or open-ended

contracts whenever permanent or long-term or highly recurrent tasks are being fulfilled), ensuring **adequate social protection (irrespective of the form of employment i.e. permanent, open-ended, fixed-term or grant-based nature of the contract)**, **pension rights** (promote the use of RESAVER pension fund).

Researchers skilled for inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary careers and for entrepreneurship and innovation

In its proposal, the Commission highlighted that the EU Member States are recommended to:

- take appropriate steps to encourage that **doctoral training is adapted for interoperable careers in all relevant sectors** and for the practice of Open Science, including by making use of the European Competence Framework for Researchers (ResearchComp), the Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training, and of any other future initiatives taken by the Commission for the purpose of strengthening transversal skills of researchers
- place a specific emphasis on **schemes aiming to strengthen the skills** needed by researchers from early on in their careers to engage in **knowledge valorisation** activities
- consider measures to mitigate the risks assumed by researchers undertaking an entrepreneurial career, including through the possibility to return to their previous career path
- undertake all the necessary efforts to promote elimination of existing structural and administrative barriers which can hamper or make difficult mobility between sectors, including by supporting the interoperability of careers between sectors, and facilitating temporary or permanent mobility

In its proposal, the Commission highlighted that the EU Member States together with the Commission are recommended to:

- encourage interaction and cooperation, including partnerships, between academia, industry, other businesses, public administration, the non-profit sector, and all other relevant ecosystem actors, and to ensure that doctoral training and targeted training are developed or codeveloped on the basis of the actual skills needs of the parties concerned, including by building on best practice examples implemented under existing programmes at Union and Member States level
- take action to foster an innovation and entrepreneurial mindset in researchers, including the necessary skills for investment-seeking, with the objective of allowing those who undertake an entrepreneurial career path to couple their knowledge production capabilities with knowledge valorisation proficiency, turning innovative ideas into business and fostering innovation and progress
- take action to support the development and provision of targeted training, including training leading to microcredentials and with the support of Individual Learning Accounts, where available, to ensure up-skilling and re-skilling opportunities for researchers with a lifelong perspective and to foster inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary mobility

The proposal highlights that the Commission is recommended to take the following actions in the context of the development of initiatives fostering cross-sectoral circulation of talents:

(a) supporting mutual learning for Member States on the basis of models of inter-sectoral mobility schemes established by the Commission, in three priority areas:

- (1) strengthening academia and non-academia cooperation;
- (2) improving training and lifelong learning for researchers, innovators, and other research and innovation talents;
- (3) boosting researchers' entrepreneurship.

(b) reinforcing inter-sectoral mobility components in existing instruments for researchers' mobility, and complementing them with new instruments, where deemed necessary;

(c) creating awareness on inter-sectoral mobility schemes, via a branch of the ERA Talent Platform referred to in point 32 of this Recommendation.

Career development and progression

The proposal highlights that Member States are recommended to promote and support systems for the assessment and reward of researchers that:

(a) are based on qualitative judgement provided by peers, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators;

(b) reward quality and the various potential impacts of their research on society, science and innovation;

(c) recognise a diversity of outputs (inter alia publications, datasets, software, methodologies, protocols, patents), activities (inter alia mentoring, research supervision, leadership roles, entrepreneurship, data management, peer review, teaching, knowledge valorisation, industry-academia cooperation, support for evidence-informed policy-making, interaction with society) and practices (inter alia early knowledge and data sharing, open collaboration), as well as all mobility experiences referred to in point 25 of this Recommendation;

(d) ensure that the researcher's professional activity meets high standards of ethics and integrity, rewards appropriate conduct of research, and values good practices, in particular open practices for sharing research results and methodologies, whenever possible;

(e) use assessment criteria and processes that respect the variety of research disciplines and national contexts;

(f) support a diversity of researcher profiles and career paths, and value individual contributions, but also the role of teams, collaborative work, and crossdisciplinarity;

(g) ensure gender equality, equal opportunities and inclusiveness.

Balanced circulation of talents and making the Union an attractive destination

Member States are recommended to take action to put in place favourable, attractive and competitive conditions for conducting research and innovation activities, and for the return of researchers engaged in experiences abroad to their home country. Such measures could include, but not be limited to:

(a) incentives to make research activities more attractive, taking into consideration the need for a fair competition for talents;

(b) simplification of legal and administrative requirements for researchers;

- (c) investments in the research and innovation system, including the support to networking within and beyond the Union, to connect and integrate the national research and innovation systems to European research networks and provide higher visibility of national capabilities and high-level infrastructures;
- (d) the exchange of best practices with regard to creating an attractive and competitive research and innovation environment, including as regards the improvement of remuneration, working conditions and services, and the reduction of administrative and language barriers for foreign and international researchers;
- (e) return grants and attractive positions for returning researchers;
- (f) the possibility of having dual positions in institutions established in different Member States, thereby fostering knowledge transfer, collaboration, and preventing talent drain.

The Commission is recommended to take the following actions fostering a more balanced circulation of talents:

- (a) supporting mutual learning for Member States in view of the reform of their research and innovation systems, including through calls for expression of interest to create a community of practice with training and guidance for Member States on the basis of successful pathways and solutions enabling more balanced talent circulation;
- (b) monitoring mobility flows, through an interactive talent circulation map in the observatory on research careers referred to in point 39 of this Recommendation;
- (c) facilitating transnational ties with scientific diaspora communities and facilitating attracting or returning talents, via a branch of the ERA Talent Platform referred to in point 32 of this Recommendation;

Support actions for research careers

In its proposal, the Commission calls for strengthening the EURAXESS portals, services, as well as the international dimension, and development of the **ERA Talent Platform** as an online one-stop-shop for researchers and institutions in all sectors, with a new governance framework featuring binding commitments and a coordination role of relevant national bodies and institutions involved in service delivery.

The ERA Talent Platform should allow:

- (a) researchers to **manage their learning and training opportunities** and their **careers**;
- (b) **research and innovation institutions, employers and funders** to conduct networking activities, better manage their **pools of talents**, collaborate and exchange best practices, while facilitating **talents' attraction and retention** and **improving data** for a better understanding of mobility trends across Europe and beyond.

In addition, the Commission proposal calls for broadening services to include talent development and career management services, with a focus on researchers in all relevant sectors of the society, including academia.

In the proposal, the Commission itself is recommended to ensure links and interoperability between the ERA Talent Platform and other relevant Union and national initiatives, including Europass, ESCO and EURES, to implement the EU login system for authentication, and to provide for an improved governance model of the platform and the underlying network of service centres to better meet the needs of researchers and research performing organisations.

In addition, Member States and the Commission are recommended to acknowledge the importance of the endorsement and implementation of the **Charter and Code for Researchers**. Importantly, the new **Charter for Researchers** set out in **Annex II** to this Recommendation should **replace the Charter and Code for Researchers** set out in Annex to Recommendation **2005/251/EC**.

Member States and the Commission are recommended to encourage the **endorsement and implementation of the new Charter for Researchers** by research employers and funders from all sectors, including through dedicated incentives, in view of making it become a structural tool in support of researchers and research careers.

The Commission is recommended to **adjust the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers**, or any future similar implementation mechanism, to the new Charter for Researchers, and to ensure continuity in respect to the institutions that have endorsed the principles of the old Charter and Code for Researchers and have adhered to the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers.

Monitoring of research careers

In order to monitor research careers in the Union and the implementation of this Recommendation, the Commission and the EU Member States shall utilize a **dedicated observatory on research careers** (in addition to the the overarching European Research Area monitoring systems). Moreover, the Commission is recommended to consider relevant links with the **European Higher Education Sector Observatory** proposed in the European Strategy for Universities and thereby enhance synergies between the European Research Area and the European Education Area.