

**Outcomes and recommendations of the conference  
„Researchers in Europe without Barriers“**

Prague, April 28-29, 2009

The conference “Researchers in Europe without Barriers” was organized by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, with substantial support of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and the European Commission, as one of the main events of the Czech Presidency to the Council of the EU in the domain of research and development.

The conference supported the presumption that highly qualified human resources in research are the cornerstone to the prosperity and competitiveness of Europe. Researchers are the key element to the realisation of the “fifth freedom” – the free movement of knowledge.

It further developed the idea of free movement of knowledge in the sense that for more profound exploitation of research potential identifying of scientific talents at their early stage and their further development by means of appropriate talent support programmes is crucial – **“through opportunities to excellence”**.

Even though Europe produces more science and engineering graduates than USA and Japan combined, it not self-evident that Europe in the years to come will be able to attract and keep enough researchers that are well trained and highly mobile. Global competition for the best talents is rising and demographic developments already lead to shortages. In view of creating a genuine single European market for research it is therefore necessary to open more positions for researchers, focus more on the attractiveness of European research to young people and on bringing up, gaining and retaining more researchers in Europe.

Member States together with the Commission in partnership have to focus on improving researchers' career prospects, employment conditions and the work environment in research, improving their knowledge and skills in line with the actual needs and demands of the society and economy, as well as establishing balanced "brain circulation" based on seamless mobility between institutions, sectors and across borders.

Following the endorsement of the European Partnership for Researchers by the Competitiveness Council as a framework for Member States and the European Commission to work together on these issues, this conference was the first opportunity to bring together a wider range of stakeholders concerned to discuss the principles of the Partnership, their roles and inputs and possible future actions to be taken.

The conference built upon the latest initiatives such as:

- The renewed Lisbon strategy
- The European Council Conclusions (March 2008 – to remove barriers to free movement of knowledge)
- The Ljubljana process and the Vision of ERA – the Fifth freedom
- The Commission Communication “Better careers and more mobility – the European Partnership for researchers”
- The Council Conclusions from September 2008 on the Commission Communication “Better careers and more mobility – the European Partnership for researchers”
- EC Communication “New skills for new jobs”
- EC Communication “Mobility, an instrument for more and better jobs: The European Job Mobility Action Plan (2007-2010)”
- The outcomes of the French Presidency conference “Young researchers in Europe”
- The report presented by Ministers Gago and Biltgen at the December 2008 Competitiveness Council on the status of researchers.

Based on the panel presentations and discussions within the three workshops, **the EU Presidency wishes to note the following main points:**

- ✓ The European Partnership for researchers is largely recognised by the Member States and the European institutions as a common framework and timeframe for a balanced approach to the improvement of careers perspectives and researchers’ mobility in Europe. The Commission and Member States have identified the main issues and suggested solutions. Now is the time to step up actions in a timely and coherent manner and to make real progress.
- ✓ Actions on human resources in research need to be firmly rooted in the national policies (such as National Reform Programmes, national RD policies, etc.), while being coherent with European initiatives (such as Ljubljana process and ERA Vision 2020) and better coordinated with other relevant policies both at national and European level (e.g. employment and higher education) and to complement each other.
- ✓ Scientific culture in which evaluation is based not only on the publication record, but to a large extent also on creativity and originality of ideas should be fostered.
- ✓ An active approach and commitment is needed on the Member States’ level by identifying gaps and bottlenecks in national policies, drafting, adopting and implementing National Action Plans and optimising funding.
- ✓ The role of the renewed ERA Steering Group for Human Resources and Mobility as a platform for mutual learning where good practices can be identified and exchanged and where appropriate common guidelines on how to address certain issues can be developed should be fully deployed.
- ✓ The principles put forward in the report presented by Ministers Gago and Biltgen were identified as promising perspective for reaching an adequate

status for researchers guaranteeing an appropriate work contract, reception in society, adequate salary and full social security coverage during the whole research career.

- ✓ All relevant stakeholders, universities, research institutes, national funding organisations, industry, and various European and international organisations such as EUROSCIENCE, ESF, EUROHORCS, ALLEA, EURODOC, EUA, LERU and others should be involved in the policy making and working together on the principles of the Partnership. The success of the Partnership depends on the commitment and actions of all parties concerned.

### **Workshop No. I: Creating better environment for researchers in Europe: Implementation of Partnership**

The first workshop focused on the preparation and implementation of National Action Plans in selected countries and optimizing the research climate at the national and European level. The workshop identified following outcomes and recommendations:

- ✓ The attractiveness of ERA depends on the uniqueness and excellence of diversified research in Europe. Europe still shows an imbalanced distribution of centres and networks of excellence as well as access to Community programmes, which should be addressed through the improvement of cooperation tools.
- ✓ Partnership is a "two way street", where all relevant stakeholders have to be heard.
- ✓ The adoption of the Partnership in Member States is linked with the identified four main axes and supported by the implementation of the Charter and the Code. The principle of variable geometry in implementing the actions identified in the Partnership should apply as the conditions in different Member States vary significantly.
- ✓ Actions in individual Member States can and should be supported by international organisations (by various initiatives such as e.g. EURODOC survey).
- ✓ The significance of EURAXESS as a tool for linkages and a valuable instrument in the implementation of the Partnership was appreciated.
- ✓ The implementation of Partnership should go hand in hand with reforms of the higher education system in Member States.
- ✓ The main message from the discussion was: ACTION, PLEASE!

### **Workshop No. II: Fostering talents for research in Europe**

The second workshop addressed important topics such as institutional and national experience with raising up, attracting and retaining talented researchers, creating favourable conditions for their professional growth, development of researchers' perspectives inside and outside academia, stimulating science programmes for high school students and their

teachers, tools for identifying young talents, ensuring equal chances for all gifted young scientists in Europe, building ERA on "bottom-up" principles by supporting stays of young European post-docs in quality European research institutions, etc. The workshop identified the following outcomes and recommendations:

- ✓ Based upon the principle "every talent counts" develop tools for identifying scientific talents at their early stage and through the implementation of a wide range of talent support programmes (e.g. by research-based education, national and international scientific competitions, summer schools, after school activities, "Youngest academy", etc.) further develop their talents – "through opportunities to excellence".
- ✓ Young researchers should be immersed into "international education", to experience various cultural and scientific backgrounds and see different approaches to research.
- ✓ Early stage researchers should get the chance of better career development opportunities including more autonomy based upon regular evaluation, adequate salary dependent upon their performance and support to free movement throughout Europe to where their talents can be best developed.
- ✓ Mobility should be perceived as a valuable instrument for upgrading of research careers and arrangements should be made at national and Community level to better adapt the specific mobility patterns of researchers and facilitate their reintegration upon the return to home organization (e.g. encourage the portability of grants).
- ✓ Universities and research organizations should guarantee smooth return of women after their maternity leave and use wide range of tools to enable their reintegration (e.g. flexibility in terms of hours and location of employment - part time jobs, virtual laboratories, improved childcare services, etc.).
- ✓ Well established and successful promotion schemes (such as ERC starting grants, Marie Curie programmes, etc.) should be reinforced and open to more young researchers.
- ✓ Judging applications of young researchers for Marie Curie programmes should be carried out not only by a publication record but also to a large extent through personal interviews.
- ✓ To prevent de-motivation of young scientists, Member States should consider financing at national level successful projects which did not pass in such prestigious international competitions as ERC starting grants etc.
- ✓ Short-term stays should be applied in Intra-European Fellowships in order to enable researchers to learn new methods and start international collaboration.
- ✓ Successful fostering of talents requires a "personalized" approach to the young researcher/management interface including a greater input of young researchers into institutional decision-making.
- ✓ Regional, national and international joint graduate programmes which include experience in different working environments and overcome the lack of critical mass should be supported.

### **Workshop No. III: Development of research skills and entrepreneurial mindset.**

Within the third workshop the conference discussed topics related to developing research and entrepreneurial skills in cooperation with industry, industrial PhD programmes, role of EIT in promoting academia-industry training, cooperation and mobility, importance of mastering the knowledge of intellectual property rights, the growing importance of research infrastructures for attracting talented researchers and for specialized education of researchers. The workshop identified following outcomes and recommendations:

- ✓ Fully employ the principle of the knowledge triangle (education-research-innovation) through various schemes such as EIT, JTIs, research infrastructures, science parks, spin offs, etc.
- ✓ Member States are encouraged to establish doctoral programmes that would help develop special skills (e.g. awareness of IPR) and entrepreneurial mindset which influence the employability of researchers outside the academia, tackle the complexity and diversity of research careers and facilitate the commercialisation of research results. In these programmes doctoral students should be attached to a commercial institution and divide their time between the institution and the university (e.g. industrial PhD programmes, Doc - career programmes, etc.). These programmes also motivate companies to prioritise research and innovation activities.
- ✓ Doctoral studies should be based on different models than the undergraduate studies and should concentrate on research methods and applications of science.
- ✓ Availability of access to unique research infrastructure is essential for attracting young people to science and for their professional growth.
- ✓ New Member States should examine all possibilities to support the construction of research infrastructures and carry out specialised training of researchers by the use of Structural Funds.
- ✓ Mechanisms catalyzing academia-industry and interdisciplinary mobility should be put in place at Member States level.
- ✓ Services providing information on funding opportunities, IPR, knowledge transfer, etc. should be established within higher education institutes.

-----

*"Conclusions normally come at the end of a process. Last year's Council conclusions on the ERA-initiatives signify **a new beginning**. Framed in the Ljubljana Process for research, also launched in 2008, they imply **a shift to a higher gear** to bring about the European Research Area faster and in full, in partnership with Member States".*

*(Taken from the Commissioner Potocnik's speech at the conference Researchers in Europe without Barriers, Prague, April 28, 2009).*