



European
University
Institute

MAX WEBER PROGRAMME FOR POST-DOCTORAL STUDIES

**MAX WEBER PROGRAMME
ACADEMIC CAREERS OBSERVATORY**

Report on the Fifth MWP-ACO Conference

**ENHANCING THE EFFICIENCY OF
EUROPEAN RESEARCH FUNDING IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
(IN TIMES OF FINANCIAL RESTRAINT)**

**Wednesday, 24 November 2010
Villa la Fonte, San Domenico di Fiesole, Firenze**



European
University
Institute

MAX WEBER PROGRAMME FOR POST-DOCTORAL STUDIES

Summary

In November 2010, the Academic Careers Observatory (ACO) of the Max Weber Post-Doctoral Programme (MWP) of the European University Institute organized the 5th MWP-ACO conference on ‘Enhancing the Efficiency of European Research Funding in the Social Sciences (In Times of Financial Restraint)’. The conference gathered together academics, policymakers and representatives of European and national funding agencies to discuss how to enhance the efficiency of different national and supra-national research funding schemes.

The conference opened with the presentation of the “Preliminary Results of the Survey on Research Funding in the Social Sciences and Humanities in Europe”, jointly organized by the MWP-ACO with the European Economic Association (EEA) and the European Sociological Association (ESA). The survey confirmed interesting facts about the sociology of the academic profession: persisting ageing and gender divide, as well as national variation in terms of research internationalization. It furthermore unveiled largely unexplored perceptions of research funding opportunities within the European Research Area (ERA). Both national and supranational financing sources display several problems. Despite the heterogeneity on how different national agencies are managed, there is widespread distrust in the evaluation process. As for the Framework Programme and, less so, for the European Research Council, low success rates, cumbersome procedures and high logistical costs are perceived as obstacles to submitting an application. Finally, economists and sociologists seem to agree on the most desirable features of research funding: flexibility, adequate funding, competent and transparent evaluation and the simplification of the application process.

The roundtable on the effects of the 2007-2009 financial crisis on funding opportunities in the ERA followed. Rather encouragingly, and contradicting the widespread perception of those surveyed (more than two thirds agreed that the crisis will have a negative impact), neither the supranational agencies, nor national funding institutions will undergo unbearable cuts. On the negative side, national budgets for research will hardly increase, and there will be more incisive cuts to universities. These developments will engender a number of negative side-effects: national co-funding schemes for ERC applicants on reserve lists are being shut down (Ireland), bi-lateral and multi-lateral projects may be limited (Germany and Portugal), and the impact on the SSH may be more severe than on the hard sciences (United Kingdom).

The presentations on specific national and supranational funding opportunities for young researchers delved deeper into the various application processes, focussing on success rates and evaluation procedures. One of the main themes that emerged during the conference is how to reconcile the trade-off between funding flexibility and its efficiency, a major concern for all researchers. Different opinions surfaced on these two conflicting goals. On the one hand, programme managers may trust the researcher, only if the application procedure and the reviewers are trustworthy as well. On the other hand, such a contradiction may only be apparent, as accountability during the grant’s disbursement is best checked both with *ex ante* screening and *ex post* evaluation.



European
University
Institute

MAX WEBER PROGRAMME FOR POST-DOCTORAL STUDIES

Table of contents

Session 1. Preliminary Results of the Survey on Research Funding in the Social Sciences and Humanities in Europe (jointly organized with the European Economic Association and the European Sociological Association). Chair: Giunia Gatta, Max Weber Fellow	1
Ramon Marimon (Director of the Max Weber Programme)	1
Comments and questions	3
Session 2. Roundtable: How is National and European Research Funding Responding to the Current Financial Stress? Chair: Reuben Kline, Max Weber Fellow	4
European Research Council	
Alejandro Martin Hobdley (European Research Council, ERC)	4
Marie Curie Actions	
Frank Marx (Research Executive Agency, REA)	4
Portugal	
Lúgia Amâncio (Foundation for Science and Technology, FST)	5
Spain	
Clara Eugenia García (Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation)	5
Germany	
Eckard Kämper (German Research Foundation, GRF)	6
Wolfgang Leininger (Technical University Dortmund, TUD)	6
Sweden	
Marianne Wikgren (Swedish Research Council, SRC)	7
United Kingdom	
Stephen Yeo (Centre for Economic Policy Research, CEPR)	7
Comments and questions	8
Session 3. Presentations: Applying for Funding Opportunities for Young Researchers. Chair: Dean Vuletic, Max Weber Fellow	10
European Research Council	
Alejandro Martin Hobdley (European Research Council, ERC)	10
Marie Curie Actions	
Frank Marx (Research Executive Agency, REA)	11
Germany	
Eckard Kämper (German Research Foundation, GRF)	11
Portugal	
Lúgia Amâncio (Foundation for Science and Technology, FST)	12
Spain	
Clara Eugenia García (Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation)	12
Sweden	
Marianne Wikgren (Swedish Research Council, SRC)	13
France	
Marc Ivaldi (Toulouse School of Economics, TSE)	13



European
University
Institute

MAX WEBER PROGRAMME FOR POST-DOCTORAL STUDIES

Session 1. Preliminary Results of the Survey on Research Funding in the Social Sciences and Humanities in Europe (jointly organized with the European Economic Association and the European Sociological Association). Chair: Giunia Gatta, Max Weber Fellow

Ramon Marimon (Director of the Max Weber Programme)

Marimon opened the 5th [Academic Careers Observatory](#) conference by presenting an overview of the Observatory's role within the [Max Weber Programme](#) as a repository for comparative information regarding academic careers in Europe and beyond. In particular, the difficulties in comparing such fragmented systems emerged, hence, the need for updating through reports, also on research funding opportunities in Europe.

The core of Marimon's presentation was the preliminary results of the Survey on Research Funding in the Social Sciences and Humanities in Europe, a comprehensive survey on the perceptions by funding beneficiaries and applicants in the SSH. The survey is an ongoing project, which has, so far, been carried out jointly with the collaboration of the European Economic Association and with the European Sociological Association for, respectively, European economists and sociologists. It will be gradually extended to the other SSH, and possibly to the hard sciences as well. One of the main objectives has been not so much to discover new or counterintuitive findings, but rather to systematically document what is happening within the academic profession.

The presentation was divided into three sections: the sample, the results describing the respondents, and the results regarding research funding. The survey was sent out to 5,416 European economists, members of the EEA or highly ranked in the Research Papers in Economics (RePEc) database, and to 2,180 European sociologists, members of the ESA or who had published during the last five years in the Top 10 journals, ranked by the ISI Web of Knowledge. The response rates were, respectively, 44.0 and 35.1%.

With respect to the survey, it is worth noting that survey error does not disappear, even when social scientists are the respondents, however, the sample is sufficiently large to obtain meaningful results. These are still provisional and preliminary, as parts of the dataset have yet to be studied (e.g. on regional funding). The replies from economists and sociologists are consistent, showing few significant differences across disciplines. In fact, national differences are more pronounced, and consistent with the groupings emerging from ACO's previous comparative reports on the development of academic careers within the European Research Area.

With respect to the sociology of the professions, some facts were confirmed in the survey: the gender scissors problem (the fact that while there is a gender balanced PhD population there is an increasingly unbalanced distribution as one moves up the academic, or research, professional ladder) exists in both sociology and in economics, but in the latter it is more acute. There is a generalized ageing problem within the profession, and this is more severe in sociology. As for the job positions, most respondents work in universities, a higher proportion in sociology than in economics. Finally both samples confirm national heterogeneity in terms of research internationalization: greater openness



to external research is a characteristic of Anglo-Saxon countries, whereas Turkey, Italy and Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) share the bottom three positions. Finally, the time allocation for research diminishes with age and with career advancement, although it increases after 65 and during retirement. In general, women seem to be more involved in research activities than their male colleagues.

Not unexpectedly, the main sources of funding are national, although the balance between National Public and Own Institutional funding is fairly heterogeneous across countries. The sum of both sources is less than 60% only in Italy and CEE (more than that in the other countries). Funding flows across countries are nil in sociology but relevant – although not large – in economics, showing openness of some national systems (Austria, the Netherlands), and also a need to substitute domestic weaknesses (Italy). The reported research budgets not only show heterogeneity across countries, but also among beneficiaries. Researchers in Anglo-Saxon countries get systematically more, and scholars in CEE, Italy and Turkey report much lower available funds. On average, sociologists, possibly due to data gathering requirements, get more funding than economists.

The final, and main, part of the presentation focused on the perceptions on strengths and weaknesses regarding how research funds are allocated by national and EU organizations, and the overall perceived satisfaction by researchers. There is much heterogeneity on how different national agencies are managed (with the UK, Scandinavia, Germany and Turkey at the top and Italy at the bottom) and in the global assessment of satisfaction. As for the stability and regularity of funding, national agencies show heterogeneity, but they usually provide regular funding opportunities. However, there is much distrust in the evaluation process, not only in countries perceived as weak supporters of research funding (e.g. Italy), but also in some countries that receive positive assessments in other dimensions (e.g. UK). Many respondents lament that national funding sources are insufficient to cover the costs of their research. Even successful candidates are often dissatisfied with overall management.

The Framework Programme, excepting the European Research Council (ERC), ranks among the less satisfactory schemes, however satisfaction increases for residents in countries with low satisfaction for their national agencies (e.g. in Italy). If stability and regularity is seen as a minor problem, high procedural and logistical costs as well as lack of confidence in the evaluation procedures (especially from researchers in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian countries) are perceived as obstacles to submitting an application. Among the funds included in the survey, the Framework Programme's funds are most often perceived as redundant, it being the case that an important fraction of successful candidates are dissatisfied.

More surprisingly, there is also low satisfaction with the European Research Council: there are some strong supporters, especially among successful candidates, and sociologists are consistently less enthusiastic. The frequency and stability of ERC calls is fairly well perceived and the application procedure seems to be the least problematic among all research funding sources. Predictably, the main reason for applying for ERC funding is the size of the grants, possibly the most generous among those considered by



the survey. This is, however, possibly negatively related to the application success rates, a major deterrent for researchers looking for funding.

When asked about the most desirable properties in research funding, economists and sociologists substantially agree. They both rank in the four top positions flexibility (in its various dimensions, from budgetary allocation to the possibility of hiring staff), adequate funding, competent and transparent evaluation and the simplification of the application process and other procedures. Hence, a lesson for the funding agencies is that they should trust the researcher and allow her to decide on funding. The main question for researchers is how to effectively obtain this trust. Finally, the survey asked the researchers to evaluate the effects of the crisis-induced financial stress on funding opportunities. The vast majority (more than 70% in sociology) agreed that it will have a negative impact on their research funding.

Comments and questions

A number of questions came from the floor. An important topic of discussion was whether there is a trade-off between grant flexibility and efficiency, first raised by Eckard Kämper. In particular, he argued that there are conflicting goals, as a programme manager can effectively trust the researcher, only if he can trust both the application procedure and the reviewer. Of a different opinion were both Ramon Marimon and Frank Marx, who emphasized that such a contradiction is only apparent, and that it can be overcome through the enforcement of accountability during the grant's disbursement (both with *ex ante* screening and *ex post* evaluation).

A minor concern for Alejandro Martin-Hobdey was that there might be substantial sampling bias. Marimon's reply was that bias is here unavoidable, but that by using fairly large samples and by crossing the responses of various groups of scholars, this can be reasonably overcome. In fact, the degree of consistency of the responses by economists and sociologists is striking.

A topic of concern for the Fellows was whether research funding opportunities at the European level are open to Third Country Nationals. Frank Marx and Alejandro Martin-Hobdey elucidated that both Marie Curie Actions and the European Research Council do not have any restrictions on nationality or country from which you are applying at all. Marx added that Incoming International Fellowships are aimed at top-class researchers active in a Third Country that would come to Europe for a research project. In both cases the applicant does not have to be resident in the EU at the moment of the application, although an EU organization must act as host.



Session 2. Roundtable: How is National and European Research Funding Responding to the Current Financial Stress? Chair: Reuben Kline, Max Weber Fellow

1) European Research Council

Alejandro Martin Hobdey (European Research Council, ERC)

Martin Hobdey presented the current financial situation of the 7th Framework Programme's (FP7) section Ideas, which is run by the European Research Council and which funds grants for starting and advanced researchers. The Ideas programme is part of the FP7 budget, which has been approved by the European Council and the European Parliament for the period 2007-2013 and amounts to 7.4 billion EUR.

Its spending plans, notwithstanding the financial crisis, have not changed. However, there is at present a disagreement between the Council and the Parliament over the Commission's proposal for an increase of 2.91% to the 2011 budget. If no agreement is reached soon, a 'roll-over' of the current budget will apply, meaning that one twelfth of the 2010 budget will be allocated in January. This may jeopardize ERC disbursements that month, but it is not perceived as a major threat as it is expected that the issue will be solved.

One of ERC's problems that emerged due to the global financial crisis is that, given the number of applications (circa five thousand in 2010) and the relatively low success rate (circa 15%), a number of researchers on ERC reserve lists have been in the past funded through Member States' schemes. Due to budget cuts across the European Union's Member States, some of these schemes are now being shut down.

2) Marie Curie Actions

Frank Marx (Research Executive Agency, REA)

Marx confirmed that within the European Union's budget no cuts were applied to the 7th Framework Programme, and that in fact the budget for Marie Curie Fellowships steadily increases (for example, International Incoming Fellowships' total budget rose from 24 million EUR in 2007 to 40 million in 2011). Notwithstanding, the financial crisis triggered a massive increase in applications, from 400 to 4,800 over the same period. This is a direct consequence of fewer funding opportunities being offered by Member States. The greater inflow of applications is matched by an increase in Marie Curie Actions' budget and the enlargement of the unit's staff (circa 30). Hence, the number of individually negotiated projects has decreased. Similarly to the ERC, Marx explained that EU funding is only complementary to what Member States offer. These have to provide adequate working conditions for funding agreements to occur.

3) Portugal

Lígia Amâncio (Foundation for Science and Technology, FST)

During the period 2005-2010, science has been given a high priority in Portugal's budget and financing increased each year. In fact, the government defined specific targets to close the gap between Portuguese and EU research indicators. The percentage of GDP committed to science doubled over the period from 0.8 to 1.71%. A similar increase has been reported with respect to the number of researchers (FTE) per thousand workforce: 7.2 in 2008, while it was 3.5 in 2005 and only 1.5 in the late 1980s, thereby attaining the average OECD level.

The 2010 budget has not been directly affected by the 2007-2009 crisis, however the discussed 2011 budget may see no increase for the first time in 6 years. This may affect the number of doctoral and post-doctoral grants (currently there are 2,000 new PhD and 500 new post-doc positions available per year) in forthcoming calls. Another aspect of Portugal's research that may be slightly tarnished is the participation in ERA-Nets. It is unlikely that Portugal will be able to participate in all calls for 2011 of the 25 ERA-Nets in which the Foundation participates. As for national research programmes, the number of grants has been reduced in the 2009 call and some limitations have been introduced for the next calls, such as the number of grants per Principal Investigator.

4) Spain

Clara Eugenia García (Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation)

García introduced the impact of the 2007-2009 financial crisis on the activities of the Ministry of Science and Innovation (excluding therefore regional sources of funding). The 2010 Ingenio Plan aims at aligning Spain with the strategy of the European Union to reach 3% of the GDP invested in R&D by the year 2010, reducing the gap between Spain and cooperating countries, especially in areas such as IT, health, and private-public partnerships.

However, in 2008, there was a problem with maintaining the level of funding at the Ministry. Of the national economic recovery plans worth EUR 5 billion, 10% was allocated to the Ministry of Science, especially to finance excellence in health sciences (the bioscientific community, cancer and regenerative medicine) and in energy research to develop new environmental technologies. Some of the initiatives were devised for the SSH, but more ambitious projects were difficult to set up at a time of deep recession. The year 2009 witnessed an even greater constraint on the national budget. The Ministry focused on specific instruments to provide better bases for innovation: human resources and basic research. As a consequence of the squeezes, innovation indicators in Spain started backsliding. After mid-2009 and in 2010, the government developed a strategy for sustainable growth with which it financed technology transfer projects and it passed a new law for the mobility of researchers.

The 2011 budget of the Ministry escaped from further cuts, but, at the same time, it will not grow in nominal terms. Human resources remain top priority and a revision of the Ingenio 2010 Plan was initiated. By introducing *ex post* evaluation, the Spanish



government ceased to fund some of the excessively flashy projects previously agreed upon. In general, there is a tendency to support basic research.

5) Germany

Eckard Kämper (German Research Foundation, GRF)

Kämper explained that the German Research Foundation's (GRF) budget did not undergo any cuts and that, on the contrary, its research share is constantly rising. The GRF acts as a proper buffer against the crisis. However, there might be some problems related to the international research programmes the GRF is collaborating in. In particular, the different developments in national budgets may hinder some of these agreements. Among others, he mentioned bilateral (with France and the UK), trilateral (between Germany, Austria and Switzerland, open for all disciplines), quadrilateral (between the ESRC, ANR, GRF and NWO, which created an Open Research Area, where SSH projects can be set up between any of these two countries) and multilateral agreements (such as NORFACE within the ERA-Net on migration issues).

In addition to talking about the effects of the crisis, Kämper continued the debate on the potential trade-off between flexibility and efficiency in funding, stressing that there have been some revisions on GRF funding instruments in the SSH. In particular, there has been some tailored financing for the SSH allowing for teaching buy-outs and the funding of projects with long-term perspectives to up to 12 years (the European Social Survey is funded in this way). A noteworthy addition to the German research scene was the recent institution of a number of Institutes for Advanced Studies, which attract Fellows from all over the world. So GRF has responded to the calls for changes by fundamentally altering some of their financing instruments.

Wolfgang Leininger (Technical University Dortmund, TUD)

Leininger delivered a follow up to the developments in German research funding by stressing three main points. First, there is strong commitment by Germany to its R&D budget, as the Federal Ministry of Education and Research is the only one obtaining a funding increase. Hence, GRF, Max Planck Institutes and other foundations all get more funds through both the Federal Government and the Länder. Second, on a negative note, there is an expected across-the-board 10% budget squeeze for university funding by the Länder (Bavaria and North-Rhine Westphalia are in the process of cutting budgets). This may affect both research and the chances of German institutions' success at EU programmes. Third, the second round of the German Universities Excellence Initiative, sponsored by the GRF and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and which substantially improved the German research environment, will be the test for the entire programme. It will show whether the previously successful universities will retain their comparative advantage and continue to receive this funding, or whether new entrants will displace them. Through *ex post* evaluation procedures, successful prior applicants will compete with new proposals.

6) Sweden

Marianne Wikgren (Swedish Research Council, SRC)

Wikgren started her presentation by emphasizing that the Swedish R&D budget is the highest in Europe, amounting to 3.7% of GDP. The crisis did not affect the budget and there are no cuts in sight. However, there are conflicting trends in Swedish research financing. In particular funding for basic research is concentrated in strong universities and it is getting more competitive. Block grants (10% of which are competitive) are insufficient: in fact an increasing number of researchers rely on external funds. The Swedish Research Council receives 14% of total public funding.

With the 2007 Research Bill, the government indicated 24 strategic areas for basic research funding. Since projects are financed at full economic cost, this has a negative impact on success rates, which are fairly low (only 6% in the SSH for SRC grants). Due to a Bill on Universities' Autonomy, universities are now responsible for employment. Hence, since 2011, the SRC will no longer be responsible for either Junior or Senior Researcher positions, but it will still retain authority over post-doctoral researchers.

However, even though the public budget for research increases, there are some negative effects on the bottom-up process for funding allocation. In fact, the SRC has to be for the first time strategic and map the research areas and identify strong versus weak spots. On a positive note, funding instruments are being designed more effectively to simplify application procedures. The SRC Humanities and Social Sciences Council is also discussing at EU level the possibility of creating a one-stop-shop for the financing of researchers in this area.

7) United Kingdom

Stephen Yeo (Centre for Economic Policy Research, CEPR)

Yeo provided a detailed picture of what is expected to happen with the UK budget in the next couple of years. As a consequence of the financial crisis, fiscal retrenchment is bound to be substantial, larger and more rapid than expected by the previous Labour government and this implies the largest cuts in decades. The current structural deficit (10% of GDP) is planned to be cut to zero by 2015. The overall reductions will amount to 6% of GDP (15% of the national budget), distributed unevenly: health and development assistance will not be affected, hence the rest will experience cuts between 20-30%.

The effects on research funding are mixed. The Seven Research Councils funding individual and collective research projects are under the responsibility of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). The BIS budget (GBP 2.75 billion for the Councils and 1.6 billion for quality-related research from the Higher Education Funding Council for England, HEFCE) will remain flat and ring-fenced between 2010-2015. This means that inflation may trigger a reduction in real terms of up to 10%. Capital expenditures (GBP 450 million for the Councils) will be substantially cut, only marginally affecting the SSH. However, the allocation across the seven Councils has not yet been decided and it is plausible that the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) will be



penalized (an educated guess would be cuts of 5-10%). From a historical perspective, a similar but more drastic fate awaited the Social Sciences Research Council (SSRC) during the Thatcher years (although now the political climate is less hostile to the social sciences than it was in the 1980s).

The picture gets more complicated when considering other types of funding: Block Grants, charities, central government, industry. Block Grants are awarded to universities by HEFCE on the basis of Research Assessment Exercises (RAE). Economic Departments obtained GBP 20 million in Block Grants in 2007. It is yet unclear what their fate is. As for the charities, they also represent a sizeable portion of funding sources (GBP 8.8 million in 2007 to Economics). The picture here is mixed: of the three charities mentioned (Leverhulme Trust, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust), only the first one did well during the crisis. The other two experienced sizeable losses, so annual funding expenditure has been trimmed.

As for the central government budget, this will experience severe cuts; however, whether this will translate into lower funding for research is yet to be seen. The greatest impact will be that government subsidies to UK universities will fall by some 30%. Hence, university funding will have to rely more on student fees (the Lord Brown commission prepared a study on this), contradicting the electoral programme of the Lib-Dems. Fees, currently capped at GBP 3,000 are insufficient for current university funding, hence, the proposal is to triple them. This means that UK academia will start resembling even more the US, where the lion's share of the financing burden is borne by private consumers.

Comments and questions

The audience posed a number of questions. With respect to UK funding schemes, the concern emerged that visas for non-EU citizens may be severely limited. Yeo explained that the current government would like to reduce net immigration by one order of magnitude. However, such a target is difficult to achieve: first, because family reunification is a fundamental right, and, second, because the business community needs foreign labour. Hence, non-EU students and researchers may be most penalized.

Marx raised another concern with the UK. He argued that a change in direction towards short-term profitability (similarly to the US) has taken place. SSH disciplines, with the notable exception of economics, are more long-term oriented and sometimes non-profitable. They might face increasing problems, as the tendency by research institutions to act strategically gains prominence. Marimon remarked that university fragmentation is a major European problem that will be aggravated with the budget cuts. The SSH are doing rather well in the US, especially citation-wise. They have developed a long-term view in their universities that is by and large missing in Europe.

Other Fellows were interested in the long-term implications of the German Excellence Initiative. Repatriation of German researchers abroad is important, however the long-term prospects of these repatriates look grim. The problem is real: in fact, the Initiative limits these positions to six years. After that, researchers are back to the job market facing greater national and foreign competition. Only at Full Professor level, do contracts become permanent after their nominal expiration. This may allow universities to perform



structural changes by cutting redundant positions in certain fields and introduce new chairs in more interesting ones.

Finally, the Fellows argued that more attention should be devoted to the research potential in Central and Eastern Europe. In effect, a large pool of researchers originates from CEE and Turkey. Notwithstanding, Kämper remarked that there is still very little interest in bilateral agreements. Martin-Hobdey also pointed out that these countries may need to focus on a few excellent institutions and/or programmes. Some New Member States, such as Poland, are clearly making progress, especially considered their recent success rates within the ERC.

Session 3. Applying for Funding Opportunities for Young Researchers. Chair:
Dean Vuletic, Max Weber Fellow

European Research Council

Alejandro Martin Hobdey (European Research Council, ERC)

The [European Research Council](#) (ERC) is part of the 7th Framework Programme (FP7) family and complementary to other FP7 supports to research. It favours bottom-up proposals and individual teams. The FP7 'Ideas' programme provides the funding, which amounts to EUR 7.51 billion in 2007-2013. ERC's aim is to favour brain gain and reverse brain drain by retaining researchers in the ERA, repatriating ERA researchers from abroad and recruiting from third countries. The ERC favours independence and freedom for carrying out research anywhere, hence only the host institution has to be located in the ERA. ERC's main activities include two complementary schemes: Starting Grants (StG), aimed to attract and retain the next generation of independent research leaders; and Advanced Grants (AdG), aimed to attract and reward established independent research leaders. The total budget for the 2011 call is approximately EUR 660 million. 15% of this is allocated to the SSH.

StG support innovative research, including that of a multi- and interdisciplinary nature. The target of StG is young investigators of any age or nationality, starting or consolidating their own independent research team or programme. StG can be up to EUR 2 million for a period of up to five years. All disciplines are covered. The application has to be monitored by a Principal Investigator. Candidates for the StG must have earned their PhD 2-10 years prior to the call publication date (the deadline for the 2011 call was 24 November 2010). There are two tracks of StG with comparable success rates: research Starters (PhD awarded 2-6 years before) and Consolidators (PhD awarded 6-10 years before).

The submission of proposals follows a one-stage, two-step evaluation procedure. It is done electronically and consists of two parts: A) administrative forms and B) the scientific proposal itself. Part A contains information on the Principal Investigator, the Host Institution and a detailed budget breakdown. Part B has two sections. The first on the PI (CV and early achievements) and the second containing the full scientific proposal. Additional documents such as the HI support letter and the copy of the PhD have to be attached.

Compared to previous calls, candidates' knowledge of StG requirements is increasing: between 2007 and 2010, the number of applications fell from 9,000 to 2,873, of which 639 in the SSH (slightly more than in 2009), and the success rate moved from 3% up to more than 15%. However, the latter is expected to fall in 2011 due to an increase in the number of applications of about 40%. Host institutions were located in 21 ERA member countries (more than 50% in the UK, Germany and France) and selected candidates were nationals of 39 countries. There is much heterogeneity with respect to the success rates of various nationalities, with Israel, Switzerland and France topping the scale. The gender dimension could perhaps be improved: only 26.5% of all grantees in 2010 were women. This gap is lower in the SSH.

Marie Curie Actions

Frank Marx (Research Executive Agency, REA)

The [Marie Curie Actions](#) are part of the 'People' programme within FP7 and have a total budget of EUR 4.75 billion for the period 2007-2013. They evolved from pure mobility actions to a dedicated programme for structuring training, mobility and career development. The aims are similar to those of the ERC: they encourage researchers to stay in Europe, attract researchers from around the world and enhance international cooperation and transfer of knowledge between research organisations.

The Marie Curie Actions offer employment contracts with full social rights, which are addressed to researchers at all stages of their careers and which provide adequate working conditions and attractive salaries. The evaluation process is more traditional. It is peer-reviewed by international experts: three evaluations are followed by a consensus meeting for all the fundable projects.

There are a number of different dimensions to the 'People' programme in FP7, each of them targeted at different researchers. In particular, Marx mentioned Initial Training Networks (ITN), which are aimed at early stage researchers. Outgoing and Incoming International Fellowships (IIF and IOF) as well as Inter-European Fellowships (IEF) are all individual Fellowships aimed at post-doctoral researchers. Their budget has been steadily increasing and the deadline for the 2011 call is on 11 August 2011.

Germany

Eckard Kämper (German Research Foundation, GRF)

Kämper introduced the research policy and programmes of the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* ([German Research Foundation](#), GRF), which is the national independent agency promoting research at universities and other publicly financed institutions in Germany. The DFG's mission includes the promotion of young researchers to develop their research careers, render them independent and ensure the future viability of science in Germany. The GRF is furthermore focussing on international co-operation, by actively seeking to attract to Germany non-national researchers at an early stage of their career.

GRF provides a number of research opportunities for young researchers who have either completed their PhD at German research institutions, who wish to live and work in Germany or go abroad (Research Fellowships), irrespective of age. Research Fellowships provide post-doctoral researchers with funding for a maximum two-year research period abroad. The Emmy Noether Programme is similar to the ERC's Starting Grant. It provides funding for a junior research group of young post-doctoral researchers for up to five years, and is aimed to attract highly skilled post-doctoral researchers to develop their professorial careers in Germany. Furthermore, in the SSH, there are a number of cross-border projects. The Open Research Area is a collaboration between Germany, France, the Netherlands and the UK devoted to the SSH, and the DACH is a collaboration between Germany, Austria and Switzerland. In both cases it is sufficient to have partners in at least two countries.

As for the selection process, the GRF Head Office examines the application and sends it to anonymous reviewers. The Assessment Review Board, composed of 48 boards elected by the German research community for four years, judges the proposals, based on their quality and the anonymous reviews. GRF's Joint Committee finalizes the decision.

Portugal

Lígia Amâncio (Foundation for Science and Technology, FST)

The [Foundation for Science and Technology](#) is the Portuguese government body responsible for financing and evaluating broader national research programmes. Since 2005, the Portuguese international research statistics have undergone notable improvements. Although before 1974 the SSH were nonexistent in Portugal, they now represent 12% of the total science and technology budget, financing a considerable number of researchers.

FST launched a series of policy instruments for science, technology and advanced training. The latter comprises a comprehensive programme of PhD Fellowships, considerably enlarged since 2006 to about 2000 new Fellowships per year and a programme of post-doctoral Fellowships, granting circa 500 new Fellowships per year. By the end of 2009, over 7,000 Fellowships were actively funded, with an overall expenditure above EUR 140 million. As for scientific employment, a new programme was launched in 2007, to grant post-doctoral researchers 5-year contracts with a yearly budget of EUR 60 million. By the end of 2009, over 1,200 new contracts had been signed by Portuguese universities and research institutions (41% to foreign researchers). Additionally, there are various joint programmes for professional qualifications stipulated between the Portuguese government and leading foreign academic institutions, such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Sloan for the SSH) or the Harvard Medical School.

The annual calls for PhD (one year, renewable up to four) and post-doc positions (one year, renewable up to three) are announced in national newspapers and on the FST website. As for the evaluation process, applications are made online, either in English or in Portuguese. The reviewing panels are exclusively Portuguese. There is a clear scale of Host Institutions, which are ranked by international panels.

Spain

Clara Eugenia García (Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, MSI)

The Spanish research panorama is highly decentralized: government has exclusive power for the general framework for R&D policies, however it is the 17 regional systems that provide most of the funding. Moreover, there is no Spanish research council and the [Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation](#) provides funds for public research, mainly through competitive calls. All proposals are refereed internationally through the National Evaluation and Foresight Agency. A National research plan is drafted every four years.

The 6th National R&D Plan (2008-2011) introduced a new conceptual approach departing from the traditional distribution of National Programmes based on disciplinary boundaries. It is organized into four basic building blocks: i) the building of R&D capabilities; ii) the increasing role of cooperative research and public-private partnerships; iii) areas of strategic concern; and iv) technological innovations.

Among the Instrumental Lines of Action, Human Resources have three programmes for Training, Mobility and Incorporation. The Ministry offers two programmes that are open to non-Spanish researchers. First, the *Ramón y Cajal* (RyC) programme offers experienced researchers the opportunity to join, for up to five years, a Spanish institution to work on a research project of their choice. 231 positions were offered in 2010, with an annual budget of EUR 44.5 million. To be eligible researchers must have completed their PhD 2-10 years before the call and have 24 months post-doctoral experience at an institution other than the host institution. In 2010, 17.7% RyC grants went to the SSH. The overall success rate was 14%.

Second, the *Juan de la Cierva* (JdC) programme offers research opportunities to young researchers within three years of obtaining their PhD to join a research group in the country for three years. This year there were 350 positions available, with an annual budget of EUR 35.3 million. 18.6% of the grants were assigned to the SSH and 26% of all bursaries were given to non-nationals.

Sweden

Marianne Wikgren (Swedish Research Council, SRC)

The [Swedish Research Council](#) offers two types of grant: i) post-doctoral Fellowships to enable researchers with Swedish doctorates (or equivalent European qualifications) to stay at foreign universities; and ii) post-doctoral positions in Sweden, to enable researchers with Swedish or non-Swedish doctorates (PhD or equivalent) to work at Swedish higher education institutions.

To be eligible, researchers must have defended their PhDs no later than three years before the closing date for application. Grants are awarded for periods ranging between 6 and 24 months. The host institution must be a Swedish higher institution or faculty other than the one where the PhD was awarded. The host university assumes responsibility as an employer and decides on employment conditions. The standard grant amounts to SEK 813 thousand. During the Spring of 2010, out of 96 applications in the SSH, only six were granted funding, i.e. a success rate of 6%.

France

Marc Ivaldi (Toulouse School of Economics, TSE)

The [Ministry of Higher Education and Research](#) earmarked EUR 21.9 billion to higher education and research through the 'Investissements d'avenir' plan. Of these, EUR 15.35 billion is devoted to 'poles of excellence' and 6.55 billion to 'projects of excellence'. Roughly 82% of the total budget is disbursed through competitive calls, which started in



June 2010 (until the end of the year) and whose results will be published in March 2011 at the latest.

These calls differ from the standard projects financed by the [French National Research Agency](#) in three crucial aspects: the available sums and the time-spans of each project are more substantial and longer; for the first time, the calls concern institutions and equipment; they reflect the priorities of the 'Investissements d'avenir' plan. Among others, these sums will be devoted to healthcare, biotechnology, laboratories of excellence and institutions for technological research.