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MAX WEBER PROGRAMME FOR POST-DOCTORAL STUDIES

MAX WEBER PROGRAMME
ACADEMIC CAREERS OBSERVATORY

Report of the workshop on

**NATIONAL RESEARCH FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
OPEN TO INTERNATIONAL RESEARCHERS**

Wednesday 11th February 2009
Villa la Fonte, Florence



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Summary

The openness of national funding programmes to international researchers has become relevant in an increasingly global academic market. The Academic Careers Observatory of the Max Weber Programme of the European University Institute invited representatives from national agencies in Europe and the US to participate in a workshop at Villa la Fonte on 11th February 2009 in order to discuss this issue. The speakers provided an overview of national funding schemes in the Social Sciences and Humanities, with a focus on opportunities for young international researchers. The workshop provided both practical information and indications of cross-national trends in funding opportunities.

In particular, it is notable that state institutions share a common interest in preserving the “national” character of funding even when it is allocated to foreign researchers, which usually translates into the requirement that the research be based at a national research institution. At the same time, research schemes like “Money Follows Researcher”, implemented by the European Heads of Research Councils, goes in the direction of guaranteeing the portability of grants across countries.

Within this common framework, however, major differences emerged between countries in terms of the conditions under which non-nationals have access to national funding opportunities. The availability of information in English and its use within the application procedure often signal the openness of national programmes. The rule in continental European states like Italy and France is that applicants are permanently hired by national research institutions, the consequence being that funds will normally go to national researchers. In such contexts, the main opportunity for non-nationals to benefit from national funds is to collaborate with national researchers and teams on specific projects. Gradually, ad hoc “open” research and visiting programmes are being implemented, such as the Italian Future in Research scheme. Nevertheless, the scheme is limited in terms of accessibility for international researchers, as relatively little information is provided in English.

At the same time, some systems which were once in the continental tradition like Spain and Germany are more convincingly opening up. Data on Spain evidences increasing success rates of non-national applicants to a variety of programmes, from postdocs to senior research schemes. For example, the Ramón y Cajal programme provides not only money for research but also a way into the system, as it leads to permanent tenured positions.

The workshop confirmed that countries in the Anglo-Saxon tradition – like the United Kingdom and The Netherlands – tend to offer the highest degree of openness and flexibility in the allocation of funds. Although in most cases research has to be based in the country, competition for grants is open to all. Projects are evaluated on the basis of their quality and the academic qualifications of the candidates. Furthermore, not only in the UK but also in The Netherlands the use of English for both research and teaching offers non-nationals an internationalised working environment.



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Table of contents

Session 1

Introduction to the workshop <i>Ramon Marimon</i> (Director of the Max Weber Programme).....	1
1) Italy <i>Ida Nostro</i> (Italian Ministry for University and Research, MIUR).....	1
2) France <i>Diane Roman</i> (French National Research Agency, ANR).....	2
3) Germany <i>Christiane Schmecken</i> (German Academic Exchange Service, DAAD).....	2
4) Spain <i>David Sayago</i> (Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation)	3

Session 2

5) Denmark <i>Lars Christensen</i> (Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation)	4
6) The Netherlands <i>Jeroen Sparla</i> (Academic Transfer and Careers – Association of Universities in the Netherlands) ...	4
7) United Kingdom <i>Scott Court</i> (Economic and Social Research Council).....	5
8) Central and Eastern European countries <i>Oleksandr Shtokovych</i> (Higher Education Support Programme, Open Society Institute).....	5

Session 3

9) United States <i>Frank Scioli</i> (National Science Foundation).....	6
10) Final Debate: A comparative perspective.....	6



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Introduction to the workshop

Ramon Marimon (Director of the Max Weber Programme)

Prof. Marimon opened the workshop by highlighting the importance for the Max Weber Programme and the Academic Careers Observatory of exploring national funding opportunities for young and internationally mobile researchers. The initiative was conceived with the aims of providing useful information on research opportunities for the fellows and the EUI community, while at the same time getting a broader and comparative picture of the extent to which countries are becoming interested in attracting researchers from abroad and in opening their academic markets and systems. The Max Weber Programme – the largest postdoctoral programme world-wide – every year hosts about 40 researchers in the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH). It provides them with the skills and potential to work and compete in an increasingly trans-national academic market. Click on the following links for more information about the [Max Weber Programme](#) and the [Academic Careers Observatory](#).

Session 1. Chair: Paolo Pin, Max Weber Fellow

1) Italy

Ida Nostro (Italian Ministry for Universities and Research, MIUR)

Ida Nostro presented the programme Futuro in Ricerca (Future in Research, FiR) elaborating on the amount of resources invested in it, its objectives, and specific details concerning requirements and the application procedure. FiR grants total 50 million euros and are provided within the Fondo di Investimento nella Ricerca di Base (Investment Fund of Basic Research, FIRB). Projects can be presented in every discipline and can receive between 300,000 and 2 million euros. Two lines of funding are available: 1) to researchers with a PhD aged up to 32 who have not been permanently hired by any Italian university, and 2) to junior researchers or university teachers aged up to 38 who have a permanent contract with an Italian public university or a public research institute. In both cases, the researcher will be considered the principal investigator. In line 1, the stipend of the principal investigator provided by the university must be at least 10% of the budget for the total project, and it is covered entirely by FiR. In line 2, there can be up to three research units involved, including a principal investigator from line 1. Academic staff, including researchers from abroad and/or private institutions, can be hired within the projects. The total costs of projects in both lines 1 and 2 are shared between FiR (70%) and the host institution (30%). Each project is peer-reviewed by experts in the relevant fields and disciplines, both Italian and foreign. The assessment criteria for projects are: 1) the relevance and originality of the research, 2) the scientific qualifications of the researchers, and 3) the quality and overall coherence of the project. For more information, please check the [FiR web page](#).



Several questions were put by members of the audience, mainly by Italians. Doubts were raised concerning the lack of transparency of the evaluation procedures, the lack of information in English, and the possibility that host institutions and professors influence different aspects of the projects before submission when negotiating their 30% contribution to the research fund. Scepticism was also expressed in relation to the age requirements, which hinder applications from the entire cohort of researchers who are older than 32 and not permanently hired by any institution. Nostro replied with the information that the list of experts had not in fact been decided yet and acknowledged some problems related to the lack of information in English and the limitations imposed by the age requirements.

2) France

Diane Roman (French National Research Agency, ANR)

The ANR is a new public research funding institution established in 2006. The Agency's budget for 2008 was 896 million euros, 15 million of which go to the SSH. About 1,500 projects are funded every year; the average project lasts 36 months and, in the case of the SSH, receives 180,000 euros. Applications should specify one Principal Investigator who must hold a permanent position in a French research organisation. Foreign partners and teams can be included in the application but have to contribute with their own resources. Every year several calls are available in the SSH, divided into non-thematic, thematic and bilateral programmes. Among those open to international researchers is Chairs of Excellence, which offers visiting short or long term professorships, to both junior and senior academics. Thematic calls in the SSH cover different aspects of the disciplines. Calls for 2009 put emphasis on linkages between the SSH and the natural sciences and engineering. Thematic calls for 2010 focus on "Territories and governance" and "Creation: actors, objects, contexts". Bilateral calls are open in collaboration with Germany, the UK, the US, Argentina and Japan. For more information, see the [ANR website](#).

Some questions were put to the speaker by the audience. One of these concerned the possible overlap between the ANR and the National Centre of Scientific Research (CNRS), the latter being the traditional research funder in France. Roman replied that the two institutions are in fact complementary, and that the CNRS can itself apply to the ANR for funding.

3) Germany

Christiane Schmeken (German Academic Exchange Service, DAAD)

DAAD is the German national agency that promotes international academic exchange and cooperation. With an overall annual budget of 300 million euros and 55,000 scholarships awarded every year, DAAD has offices and centres in many countries. It devotes 62 million euros to scholarships for foreign researchers, including young academics, based in Germany. Grants are both short- and long-term, supporting both



doctoral (1,000 euros monthly allowance) and, more recently, postdoctoral studies. Grants are also available for visiting scholars (1,840-2,240 euros). Applicants are evaluated on a number of criteria, including their qualifications and references, their research project and their German/English language skills. They must not have been in Germany more than one year at the time of application. There are specific calls open every year in the sphere of SSH through a number of channels: specific lines of research (Study and Research Scholarships of Today for the Mega-cities of Tomorrow), exchange programmes with specific countries, or invitation by German institutions. A number of specific opportunities – both within public and private institutions and foundations – were presented during the workshop: information on these can be found on the [DAAD website](#).

4) Spain

David Sayago (Spanish Ministry for Science and Innovation)

Spain has developed a range of research opportunities for foreign scholars at both the state and regional levels, and there is evidence of an increasing interest by non-Spaniards in using these opportunities. The regional programmes require researchers to be based in the region providing the grant. At the state level, there are at least three programmes open to non-Spanish researchers. First, the Juan de la Cierva (JdC) programme offers research opportunities to young researchers within 3 years of their PhD to join a research group in the country for 3 years. This year there were 350 positions available and the annual salary was 33,360 euros. So far, 35% of beneficiaries have been non-Spanish. Over four years of the programme, 10% of beneficiaries have been active in the SSH. Second, the Ramón y Cajal (RyC) programme opens the way into a permanent position in Spanish academia to scholars not based in the country and with an established record of publication and reputation. 250 positions were offered this year, with an annual salary of 44,370 euros (15,000 at start up). Although most beneficiaries are Spanish (80%, 25% of which coming from abroad), in the last call an increased number of foreign researchers were admitted to the programme. 10% are from the SSH. Both the JdC and RyC schemes are provided by the [Spanish Ministry for Science and Innovation](#). Third, the Junta para la Ampliación de Estudios (JAE) scheme managed by the [Spanish Council for Scientific Research](#) offers researchers within 10 years of getting their PhD the opportunity to join a team in Spain and work on a specific research project. Besides these three programmes, opportunities are available in both Catalonia and the Basque country within the [ICREA](#) and [IKERBASQUE](#) programmes respectively. Furthermore, in Catalonia the Beatriu de Pinós scheme provides 2-year postdoctoral grants of 34,188 euros per year (about 40 positions are available every year).

Session 2. Chair: Miriam Ronzoni, Max Weber Fellow



5) Denmark

Lars Christensen (Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation)

In Denmark, the Danish Councils for Independent Research provide funding in a variety of disciplines. There are two ad hoc Councils dealing with the Social Sciences and the Humanities respectively, which in 2009 had overall budgets of 16,2 and 22,1 million euros. Among the funding priorities of the Councils are postdoctoral programmes which are also open to researchers from abroad. Up to 20% of the applicants to the Councils are non-Danish. There are two rounds of applications for postdocs every year, in early March and September. The quality of the research and the academic qualifications of the researchers are the only criteria for evaluating applications. Grants are awarded for 1-3 years. The Young Researchers Award provides a lump-sum grant of €27,000 for research-related expenses; in 2008, 3 grants were awarded by the Danish Social Science Research Council and 4 by the Danish Research Council for the Humanities, several of them going to researchers with a PhD obtained outside of Denmark. Besides these, another possibility of doing research in Denmark is to become part of a research group which has, or is applying for, funding in the country. Academic positions in Denmark are advertised at <http://www.workindenmark.dk>. For other information, please visit the website of the [Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation](#).

6) The Netherlands

Jeroen Sparla (Academic Transfer and Careers, Association of Universities in The Netherlands)

The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) provides funding to researchers from all nationalities under a number of programmes. In particular, the Talent Schemes aim to attract academics from abroad in all disciplines working on any research topic. Among these is the Money Follows Researcher (MFR) scheme, which was established in 2005 by the European Heads of Research Councils (EUROHORCs), of which NWO is part. The MFR seems particularly interesting in that it aims to guarantee the portability of the grant across research institutions which are members of the network. Other funding programmes target academics with different levels of experience. Rubicon targets young researchers in order to provide them with international experience. Veni, Vidi and Vici focus respectively on experienced postdocs, assistant/associate professors, and associate/(starting) full professors. Other NWO programmes are open to all scientists in Dutch universities and offer funds through both open and thematic calls. Of the latter, there are currently 13 themes. Specific schemes support exchanges and visiting opportunities, including bilateral programmes with Germany and Belgium, and also Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and China. There are five institutes in The Netherlands which provide postgraduate education, among which are the Institute of Social Studies (ISS), the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS), the Maastricht School of Management (MSM) and the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education. Please visit the [NWO website](#) for more information.



7) United Kingdom

Scott Court (Economic and Social Research Council)

The Economic and Social Research Council provides different funding schemes for researchers at different stages of their careers. Postdoctoral grants are available to researchers with no restriction based on nationality for a period of either 1 (full-time) or 2 (part-time) years. Applications from priority disciplines and “discipline hopping” are encouraged. 10 fellowships of 2 years are available in macroeconomics. Two-year Mid-Career Development Fellowships are available for established researchers with 5-15 years experience of active research, with an emphasis on multidisciplinary research and specific career steps associated with the research in question. The ESRC Research Grants Scheme supports broad and possible multidisciplinary research with an international character of the highest quality involving talented researchers. A new opportunity has recently been opened for young researchers within the International Training and Networking Opportunities programme, supporting mobility and exchange. Please visit the [ESRC website](#) for more information.

8) Central and Eastern European countries

Oleksandr Shtokvych (Higher Education Support Programme, Open Society Institute)

The Higher Education Support Programme (HESP) of the Open Society Institute (OSI) focuses on the SSH and supports individuals and institutions at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in a wide range of countries in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. However, it also connects to the broader international academic community by offering scholarships, mentoring programmes, and hosting and partnership schemes. Research funds for individuals are distributed primarily through the Academic Fellowship Programme (AFP), the Central Asia Research and Training Initiative (CARTI), and the Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching and Student Initiatives (ReSET). Within the AFP, researchers from the target regions but based abroad are offered fellowships to return to their regions. Scholars from outside the target regions of the HESP can still participate in some specific lines of action of the above-mentioned programmes. Academics with expertise in specific fields of concern for fellows within CARTI can be mentors with CARTI International Scholars. At the moment more than 70 scholars from Europe, North America and Asia are CARTI International Scholars. Those interested in taking part in the programme should send a CV and a statement of research interests to the CARTI Office. Another important opportunity offered by OSI to researchers from around the world is the Open Society Fellowship: those interested in knowing more about this funding scheme and related research priorities should contact OSI. Please see the [OSI website](#).

Session 3. Chair: Anna Cichopek, Max Weber Fellow



9) United States

Frank Scioli (National Science Foundation)

The National Science Foundation (NSF) administers a budget of about 5,000 million dollars (2008), of which more than 200 million are devoted to research in the field of social, behavioural and economic sciences. Two separate divisions – of Social and Economic Sciences (SES) and Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences (BCS) – deal with research in SSH. Themes promoted by the SES and BCS focus heavily on interdisciplinarity and the connections between the social and the natural sciences, and are often co-funded by several research partners in a cross-divisional perspective within the NSF. The type of support provided by the NSF spans from typical research grants to postdocs and grants for training and research. These grants target research based in US research institutions. Non-US nationals have a chance of benefiting from these funds by, among other ways, either being invited by US investigators to work on specific projects or becoming co-principal investigators within new collaborative research projects aiming to develop new ideas from scratch. The NSF collaborates with the European Commission, which in turn supports US scholars participating in research carried out at the European Science Foundation. For more information, please visit the [NSF website](#).

10) Final debate: a comparative perspective

At the end of the discussion, the speakers and the audience debated the question of the openness of national funding opportunities in a cross-national and supra-national perspective. Schmecken observed how the procedure for doing research in the US appears smoother than in most European countries, which normally impose a number of requirements through the application procedure. The emphasis of national agencies on linking research to their own countries was also stressed: states want research to be based in the country, to be done with their national researchers, and to be focused on national themes and priorities.

Different aspects of the relationship between national and European institutions and funding was also debated. A comparison between state agencies and the European Research Council (ERC) managing the IDEAS Programme was made, highlighting, for example, the fact that state agencies still provide most research funds while the ERC performs well in terms of openness and the evaluation of research projects. The territorial aspect of ERC grants was also underlined, whereby funds delivered by a truly European entity are nevertheless spent “locally”. In addition, speakers raised the issue of actually centralising research funding within a common and over-arching European framework and institution. The question of success rates in obtaining funds at the national and European levels was also discussed.

Finally, the need for more diverse treatment and evaluation of research across disciplines was raised by the audience. In this respect, for example, there is a clear difference in terms of resources invested between law – for which only a limited infrastructure is needed to carry out research – and more cost-intensive sciences and disciplines.