

**RESEARCH AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE:
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR YOUNG ACADEMICS**

**Thursday, 24th May 2007
San Domenico di Fiesole, Villa la Fonte**

REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE

Part I. Research Funding Opportunities in the Social Sciences and Humanities in Europe

1) “A Historical Perspective to Research Funding by the European Commission”

Michel André (Adviser for Research Policy, Directorate-General for Research, European Commission)

The reason for exploring the history of the EU research funding is to not repeat the same mistakes. In the past the policy of research on a European level has been characterised by a lack of coordination. Over the past years several steps have been taken to overcome this lacking and make research a top priority of the European Union.

Today the European Research Area is a place for organization and research initiative; an area for formulating and developing research ideas and initiatives on a European level; a collective process for scientists, governments, EU policy makers; and above all an expanding and active research area where ideas are carried out as collective processes.

M. André concludes that there is hope for the European Research Area. Even though progress is slow and ideas take long to be formulated, developed and implemented, and problems take long to be addressed and resolved, things are going in the right direction.

2) “An Introduction to the Seventh Framework Programme”

Roman Arjona (DG Research Coordinator with the European Council, Directorate-General for Research, European Commission)

R. Arjona explained that the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) is the EU's main tool for research funding. FP7 runs from 2007-2013 and has the third largest EU budget with 53,2 million Euros, and is open to all (institutions and individuals through the European Research Council). The European Research Area (ERA) is the area for participation in the FP7 for both individuals and companies.

He stressed that it is necessary to invest in European Research to create jobs and growth; it is expected that EU Research area will create 57,000 new jobs

by 2015. The research area is an economic investment, as it is expected that for every euro invested in R&D four-seven euros return in the long run.

Marie Curie Fellowships are the main individual research funding option in FP7. They provide mobility experience and are international and multidisciplinary in form and content.

3) “EU Research Funding for Social Sciences and Humanities under FP7”

Pierre Valette (Directorate-General for Research, European Commission)

P. Valette explained the policy of the FP7 with regard to the Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities. Core research themes that will be funded include social, cultural and economic aspects of society. Proposals must be problem oriented and policy relevant at the same time.

For the first call of applications 38 topics are included. The calls can be seen at the ERC website <http://erc.europa.eu/index.cfm>

4) “The European Research Council: Opportunities and Challenges for a New EU Funding Institution and for Young Researchers”

Andreu Mas-Colell (Chairman of the Barcelona Graduate School of Economics, Professor Universitat Pompeu Fabra and next Secretary General of the European Research Council)

A. Mas-Colell explained that the ERC is taking steps to ensure that European research is not just publishable but “frontier”. There is still a brain-drain to the United States of researchers and the ERC wishes to make Europe the best area for research in the world. On different levels steps are being taken to ensure this. For instance, at state level the German School of Excellence Programme and different graduate schools are being established. At the EU level, the ERC and FP7 are established to foster frontier research in Europe.

The budget of the ERC is 15% of the FP7. Social Sciences and Humanities represent 15% of these 15%.

There are two grant designs. ERC starting grants are thought as a package to help people establish themselves as individual researchers. ERC Advanced Investigator grants are created for more senior researchers with frontier projects.

5) Roundtable discussion (Chaired by Ramon Marimon)

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

1) There seems to be a paradox in the ERC policy. On the one hand, one has to show excellence as researcher in order to obtain an ERC starting grant. On

the other hand, one needs to prove that this grant is most important for becoming excellent.

2) A paradox of the EU research policy is that on the one hand many levels of control exist and researchers and scientific institutions spend too much time at justifying their scholarly activities, but on the other hand no proper evaluation system for the FP7 is being developed. Therefore, it remains unclear how it will be made sure that the research money will be well used.

3) It was raised that since the FP7 defines that research has to be problem oriented and policy relevant, disciplines like history and other humanities will have no chance. It was answered that the rationale behind the EU research policy was that it has to be utilitarian. Disciplines like history would have a better chance with the ERC. It could be remarked, however, that there they have to compete with all other disciplines and thus are neglected.

4) It was discussed what the word “frontier research” implies. The answer was that frontier means new and interesting, and that the research funded by ERC needs to be both.

6) Presentation of MWP Academic Careers Observatory

Arnout Mertens and **Lotte Holm** (Academic Assistants, MWP, EUI)

The MWP Academic Careers Observatory is exploring the structure of academic careers on national levels. The aim of the observatory is to provide a framework for reflection on the situation, problems and perspectives of academic careers in Europe and beyond. As we all know, mobility in academia is becoming increasingly popular and even highly encouraged, and therefore the demand for more accessible knowledge on the academic structure and career possibilities in different countries grows. The Observatory therefore wants to offer a basic understanding of how the academic systems are structured and provide a thorough description of the formal and informal barriers for career advancement.

The newly established website of the Academic Careers Observatory (<http://www.iue.it/MaxWeberProgramme/academiccareers>) offers information on the career curriculum, requirements and barriers for career advancement as well as practical information such as postdoctoral options, salary levels and job and funding resources for academics.

Part II. Comparative Analysis of European Higher Education Systems

7) “Internationalisation of Higher Education Systems in Europe”

Marijk van der Wende (Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, University of Twente)

Both conceptually and practically, internationalisation was for a long time mainly seen as concentrating on the cross-border mobility of individual students and scholars. Over the last two decades it has become a strategy

that increasingly affects higher education institutions and systems, encompassing reform of degree systems, the development of curricula and quality standards, research co-operation, etc. Yet, international mobility remains a very important element. At the start of the 21st century, with globalization and the knowledge economy as major contextual factors, internationalisation in higher education has become more motivated by economic rationales. This reflects the global competition for talented students and highly skilled workers as key resources for the knowledge economy and the emergence of an international market where demand for access to higher education is being met across borders.

In Europe, short-term intra-European student mobility is still increasing, with the ERASMUS programme as a major engine behind it. The Bologna process is intended to facilitate degree mobility across Europe. While research cooperation is increasing, the mobility of researchers is still hindered by regulatory obstacles.

Europe is facing major challenges to enhance intra-European researcher mobility, to prevent further brain drain to the US and to attract more students and scholars from outside Europe. The Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy are the main vehicles or frameworks guiding the European response to these challenges and more generally to the effects of globalisation in higher education.

8) “Challenges for Doctoral Education in the Knowledge Society. Forces of Change and International Trends”

Barbara M. Kehm (International Centre for Higher Education Research Kassel)

The presentation provided an account of the activities and debates of a worldwide network of experts analysing the forces and forms of change in doctoral education. While at the first meeting of the expert network country comparisons were in the foreground, the second meeting discussed actual forces of change (i.e. globalisation, quality concerns, increases in the production of doctorates, contribution to nation building, and societal relevance of knowledge production). A third conference is planned on issues of policy development in 2008. This presentation focuses in particular on reform and policy trends in Australia, Canada, USA and also provide some insight on issues in South-East Asian countries.

Some of the overall problems of doctoral education are that researchers take too long to finish, or do not finish at all, and that they have little knowledge of the job market and their options after completion of their degree.

9) “Public Policy and the Academic Research Enterprise in the US: Some Possible Implications for Europe”

David Dill (Department of Public Policy, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

The Academic Research Enterprise (ARE) defines the basic and applied research, research-doctoral education, and economic development (e.g., technology transfer) activities of the higher education sector. Because of the global reputation of many of its research universities, US policy on the ARE is often considered a model for other developed nations. European nations for example are currently shifting to a greater emphasis on targeted competitive funding of academic research, changing the laws governing intellectual property rights (IPR), and are reforming research-doctoral education. These changes in part emulate US policies and practices, but also respond to underlying economic forces affecting all developed countries. The emerging new frameworks for the ARE in Europe are clearly designed to influence the behaviour of universities and academic researchers. Given these developments, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the current policy framework for the ARE in the US and what implications may they hold for future developments in Europe?

The ARE is highly dependent on temporary residents and the research environment is characterised of being very international. In 2003, 59% of the postdoctoral fellows in the US were temporary residents, and 32% of the PhD researchers.

10) “Higher Education in Europe: Where are we now, and where do we go from here?”

Pello Salaburu (Departamento de Filología Vasca, Universidad del País Vasco)

One of the main problems facing European universities is that, in the years since the Second World War, they have lost competitiveness and can no longer adequately deal with the real challenges confronting higher education in the 21st century. The reform efforts begun in Bologna a few years ago to establish a common framework for studies in Europe was a move in the right direction. But other basic problems remain unsolved: how to organise universities’ internal administration, for example. Or, from a different perspective, the lack of real connection between universities and society: does society see universities as one of its best investments for the future?

It is a problem that European universities are not competing – both amongst each other and with the US. The European Universities still score too low in international ranking surveys and should be much more competitive. There are different reasons for this. Firstly, the US market is more flexible whereas European structures are too bureaucratic and inflexible in structure. This leaves too little time to do research and reach excellence. Secondly, university structures are confusing both within and across borders in Europe. There is no single system for admittance or for structure of education

provided. On the contrary the US has an easy and comprehensible system. Thirdly, these differences have implications for the mobility between institutions. In the US mobility is high whereas it is very low in the European universities both within and across borders. It could therefore be concluded that with more flexibility and easier, more uniform and comprehensible systems in European universities, European research would become much more competitive.

11) Roundtable discussion (Chaired by Andreas Frijdal)

1) Andreas Frijdal stated that the situation for young researchers in Europe has never been as promising as it is today, that there are many more PhD researchers than about a decade ago, and that on average it takes longer in the US to finish a PhD than in Europe. He also mentioned that it is necessary to differentiate between disciplines, as some research areas are much more international than others.

2) Ramon Marimon raised that Europe is well behind the US regarding career development. Despite efforts on the EU level, mobility between countries and institutions is very low.

3) David Dill stressed that one has to be careful with a comparison US-EU. It makes little sense to talk about the US university system in general. It would be more useful to focus on the US research universities to compare. Dill also suggested that the EU, similar to what exists already in the US, should elaborate a ranking of the doctoral studies programmes in Europe to increase competitiveness.

4) Marijk van der Wende and Barbara Kehm stressed that it should not be neglected that rankings of universities are very problematic and do not say much. Moreover, the fact that Europeans do not all speak the same language makes mobility and competition within the EU, and comparison to the US very difficult.

5) Andreu Mas-Colell points at two different aspects regarding mobility, giving the example of Italian economists. Many of them work all over Europe. Statistically, this shows the large mobility and internationalisation of the economics discipline. Yet, at the same time it shows that the Italian academic world is very closed, which forces Italian economists to seek employment elsewhere.

Participants:

Michel André (Adviser for Research Policy, Directorate-General for Research, European Commission)

Roman Arjona (DG Research Coordinator with the European Council, Directorate-General for Research, European Commission)

David Dill (Department of Public Policy, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Valentina Fava (Max Weber Fellow, EUI)

Mark Franklin (Professor SPS Department, EUI)

Andreas Frijdal (Head of Academic Service, EUI)

Lotte Holm (Academic Assistant, MWP, EUI)

Barbara M. Kehm (International Centre for Higher Education Research
Kassel)

Rüdiger von Krosigk (Programme Coordinator, MWP, EUI)

Ramon Marimon (Director, Max Weber Programme, EUI)

Andreu Mas-Colell (Chairman of the Barcelona Graduate School of
Economics, Professor Universitat Pompeu Fabra and next Secretary General
of the European Research Council)

Yves Meny (President, EUI)

Arnout Mertens (Academic Assistant, MWP, EUI)

Pello Salaburu (Departamento de Filología Vasca, Universidad del País
Vasco)

Karin Tilmans (Programme Coordinator, MWP, EUI)

Alexander Trechsel (Professor, SPS Department, EUI)

Pierre Valette (Directorate-General for Research, European Commission)

Marijk van der Wende (Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, University
of Twente)

Other participants:

25 Max Weber Postdoctoral Fellows and PhD Researchers.