

The Rise of the Post-Doc as Principal Investigator?

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What I will do in my presentation on 30 November for the Max Weber Programme, is to

1. Summarise the highlights from the report *"The Rise of the Post-Docs as Principal Investigator? How PhDs and Post-Docs May Advance Their Career and Knowledge Claims in the new Europe of Knowledge"* (2006). The summary is intended to give an overview of the enabling and constraining conditions for post-docs as they emerge in the European Area of Research. The full report is available for a free download at: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=891041>

Abstract: The European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area are still under construction. Their foundations, however, are visible and already affect what the next generation of researchers can and cannot do. While it is unclear when, and to what standard, construction will be completed, the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers clarify the expectations of policy makers and major stakeholders. One significant scenario is the rise of the post-doc as principal investigator. This would signal profound change in the governance and funding of research since hitherto the post-doc has been understood primarily as an assistant (to a professor's chair or on a research project).

This report considers the new knowledge and skills PhDs and Post-Docs need to acquire to advance their career and projects more independently – in science and engineering as well as the social sciences and humanities. Potential changes in funding and status are discussed as well as changing relations with supervisors and mentors. Because of European flagship awards for post-docs as well as mobility fellowships, a significant number of post-docs are already principal investigators. Details of these flagship post-doc awards and fellowship are outlined. The report then discusses what doctoral students and post-docs might do individually and collectively to follow in the footsteps of the pioneers. A list of the most valuable online resources is provided.

2. Outline and explain why I think that post-docs primarily need to be aware of the following issues:

- a) How their performance will be evaluated and measured over time by selection committees that are looking at their applications as they move towards principal investigator status and tenure;
- b) What post-docs need to do themselves in terms of career planning (mentors, publications, service, visibility) and research programme development (funding, collaborators);
- c) That peers are much more important than post-docs often think – i.e. research collaborations may enable post-doc researchers to leverage joint awards as co-principal investigators; or, else, a principal investigator forms a team with other younger investigators.

3. Present a call for application to a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme aimed at mobile post-docs in Europe. The CPD programme is a systematic effort to help along post-doc researchers in their quest to become independent – inside the academy but also in knowledge-intensive industries and services. A first cohort of 20 will be recruited by January 2008 and will meet for a first training event in May 2008. The following criteria will be applied in selecting applicants:

- At least one completed and submitted application for a post-doctoral research or mobility grant;
- International experience through a degree programme or mobility fellowship;
- Awareness of the importance of principal investigators for the knowledge economy and information society.

International or interdisciplinary pairs and groups that have some track record of collaboration are encouraged to apply together.