



European
University
Institute

MAX WEBER PROGRAMME FOR POST-DOCTORAL STUDIES

Report of the conference on the

**MAX WEBER PROGRAMME
2ND ACADEMIC CAREERS CONFERENCE**

**ACADEMIC CAREERS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES &
HUMANITIES: NATIONAL COMPARISONS AND
OPPORTUNITIES**

Friday, 30th November 2007
Villa la Fonte, Florence

Summary

The Max Weber Programme 2nd Academic Careers Conference, November 30, 2007, as part of the MWP Academic Careers Observatory (ACO) initiative, provided an excellent opportunity to deepen our understanding of the diversity of academic career patterns across different national academic contexts. The speakers - professors and academic career advisors from Europe and the US – largely focussed on issues of interest for young researchers, such as the degree of openness of different academic systems, research funding opportunities, etc.

With respect to **accessibility and mobility**, the Conference emphasized three different models. One is the open and competitive Anglo-Saxon model. At the opposite pole, we find the Continental European model which, while securing civil servant positions, is usually less accessible and less merit-based. A third model comes from the Scandinavian countries: it provides security but also focuses on merit, while filtering access via personal contacts, physical presence in the country and, in some cases, knowledge of the language. A fourth model is provided by Central and Eastern European countries, where higher education is still going through a major change; unfortunately, there was not enough time to cover such a complex transition in the Conference. What emerged is that some countries like Spain and France are trying to move from the Continental to the Anglo-Saxon model by reforming legislation, opening spaces of autonomy for academic institutions in the recruitment process, and establishing international research centres. However, with respect to the latter trend one needs to consider also negative drawbacks in terms, for example, of isolation and instability of research centres or university departments pursuing excellence in a still highly regulated environment.

Concerning specific **disciplines**, it emerged that the field of Economics shows – broadly speaking – greater openness vis-à-vis, for example, the domain of legal studies, in which knowledge of the national language and legislation may be a barrier to access.

Academic positions in different national contexts have different requirements concerning **research and teaching**. In the UK, these are detailed in the job advertisement. In France, one can distinguish between “research-focused” and mixed “research/teaching” career patterns. Interestingly enough, teaching duties in the UK are sometime perceived as a constraint on research, as academic reputation is increasingly built upon one’s publication record.

The relationship between **women** and academia is still problematic. The focus was on “leaks” in the career “pipeline” in Economics due to procedural and cultural reasons.

With respect to **funding**, speakers gave information on websites and national public and private institutions that offer jobs and scholarships. Data were provided on the selection process and outcome of applications under the “Ideas” thread of the FP-7. Although still heavily focused on “hard sciences,” the European dimension of research represents a new funding opportunity for young researchers in the social sciences and humanities.

We invite you to go through the whole report and find out more about these and other issues tackled by our speakers, hoping that you will find them both valuable and useful.

Table of contents

Welcome: “Academic Careers in the ‘European Research and Higher Education Area’ and the MWP Academic Careers Observatory Initiative”	
by <i>Ramon Marimon</i>	4
Part I. The Academic Market in Europe and the US	4
1) “The Attractions and Distractions of an Academic Career in the UK, and How to Be Competitive in the UK Academic Job Market”	
by <i>Frances Meegan</i>	4
2) “Academic Careers in Spain”	
by <i>José Gines Mora</i>	5
3) “Career Structure and Barriers for Young Researchers in Scandinavia”	
by <i>Kamma Langberg</i>	6
4) Questions and Discussion	6
5) “Academic Cultures and Career Paths in the US: Facts, Trends, and Opportunities”	
by <i>Daniel Denecke</i>	8
6) “The Academic Profession in the Social Sciences in France: Towards a Change of the Rules of the Game?”	
by <i>Frédéric Samicki</i>	8
7) “Academic Careers in Italy”	
by <i>Daniele Checchi</i>	9
8) “The Status of Women in the Economics Academic Profession”	
by <i>Lisa M. Lynch</i>	9
9) Questions and Discussion	10
Part II. Post-Doc and Funding Options	10
10) “The Rise of the Post-Doc as Principal Investigator”	
by <i>Chris Armbruster</i>	10
11) “Funding Opportunities for Post-Doctoral Fellows at the European Level”	
by <i>Alain Peyraube</i> (with a comment by <i>Antony Molbo</i>)	11
12) Questions and Discussion	12
13) Roundtable: National Funding Possibilities	13

Welcome: “Academic Careers in the ‘European Research and Higher Education Area’ and the MWP Academic Careers Observatory Initiative”

Ramon Marimon (Director of the Max Weber Programme)

Prof. Marimon introduced and discussed the EU Agenda and related issues of modernization, competition, excellence and mobility in the EU academic sector, stressing also problems related to the low investment rate in the sector compared to countries like the US and Canada. He re-focused the public’s attention from the general level down to the individual viewpoint, referring to the importance for researchers of issues of career, reward, incentives, barriers to EU national academic job markets and their different degrees of openness/closure. He moved then to present the Max Weber Programme Observatory on Academic Careers, which aims to support the mobility of researchers by providing a variety of information. As its name indicates, it also provides a unique source to study the degree of openness and integration of the European Higher Education and Research Area. The Observatory’s website presents information and data on questions such as funding opportunities, career patterns and salary patterns. See <http://www.eui.eu/MaxWeberProgramme/AcademicCareers/Index.shtml>.

Part I. The Academic Market in Europe and the US

Given that academic careers continue to vary greatly between states despite the homogenisation of the higher education system, the first part of the conference focused on some of the major European countries as well as on the US. That countries like the Netherlands or Germany were not explicitly included in the analysis does not mean they are not important. It was for practical reasons or for reasons that were beyond the control of the organisers that not all of them were covered.

This first session enabled to understand what the main differences between the countries are, and why from an international perspective some countries are more attractive than others.

1) “The Attractions and Distractions of an Academic Career in the UK, and How to Be Competitive in the UK Academic Job Market”

Frances Meegan (Career Advisor, LSE Career Service)

Frances Meegan defined the UK academic system as “competitive but accessible.” She touched upon several issues and provided much practical information and data on different career patterns. In particular, she distinguished between the lecturing and research tracks of the career, and provided statistics on professors and researchers broken down by age and gender. She reviewed different types of contract

(fixed/indefinite), discussed questions of work stability, presented different salary ranges for different positions, and commented on satisfaction surveys done among researchers and professors. Frances Meegan stressed that doing a Post-Doc after a PhD has become a common step for PhD researchers, which allows them to focus on publishing. Publishing, especially in peer-reviewed publications, is highly valued by employing universities, not least because it allows them to rank higher in the RAE system. The attractiveness of the UK academia for foreign students lays in the fairly open and transparent recruitment process, especially at the entry level positions of the career. With respect to these positions, Frances Meegan underlined the importance of showing either a good record of research and publications, or a research potential. Evidence of the latter can be provided by candidates through, for example, good reference letters. Frances Meegan also addressed some points of dissatisfaction among professors and researchers in the UK academia, such as the increasing workload and control by university authorities, as much as longer delays before getting a permanent civil servant position.

2) “Academic Careers in Spain”

José Gines Mora (Director of the Centre for the Study of Higher Education Management, Valencia University of Technology)

Prof. Mora traced the changes in the Spanish academic career system and dynamics from the early Napoleonic model of pre-1983 through the 1983 reform and the most recent innovation implemented in 2001 and 2007. Over these passages higher education has become more open and dynamic, quality has increased and working conditions have generally improved. More funds are available and they are tied to output and targets. However, Prof. Mora addressed some serious problems that the reforms have not been able to solve, such as the bad university governance, the predominance of teaching vis-à-vis research positions and the inadequate treatment of the non-tenured academic staff. Concerning the latter, Prof. Mora illustrated the different positions, especially at the entry levels and non-civil servant position, underlying the long time that passes between the moment one enters the system (as an intern or an assistant) and is hired as a “doctor contracted” with a regular contract. This is not a civil servant position and was introduced as an incentive for universities to hire. However, universities have not used this type of contract because of the financial burden on the recruiting institution (35% of the salary goes to social security). Entry level position salaries are not high but incentives and opportunities are offered to people to increase their earnings through collaborating with projects, providing consultancy or exploiting other regional incentives for mobility. Concerning university governance, Prof. Mora observed that it is hard to understand “who is your boss?” because there are “too many employers” and responsibility is shared between the central government, the regional government and the university itself. Equally problematic are the present lack of proper assessment at each department level and the lack of consequences of any positive or negative evaluations given to the staff. Concerning this and other issues, Prof. Mora expects some improvements when the new 2007 reform will become operational. Lots of tenured professors are expected to retire within some years, which should free new positions for a number of qualified researchers.

3) “Career Structure and Barriers for Young Researchers in Scandinavia”

Kamma Langberg (Danish Centre for Research Analysis, University of Aarhus, Denmark)

Kamma Langberg illustrated academic career features and problems in Denmark, Sweden and Norway. The system in these countries is open and competitive in theory but still dominated by informal rules and agreements in practice. Kamma Langberg provided interesting statistics on researchers employed in both the public and private sectors broken down by gender. Many researchers and professors actually go back and forth from the public to the private sectors and foreign universities. The amount of research and teaching at university is quite balanced at the moment but separate career tracks may emerge in the next years as it is now in Sweden. The Scandinavian academic context offers advantages related to the excellent welfare systems (although taxes are high at higher positions) and some excellent research environments. At the same time, access to the system is limited by language barriers and the dominance of temporary positions (including of tenured contracts). New positions are advertised internationally and on university web sites: Denmark advertises widely on different websites, while Sweden centralises advertising in single university portals. In practice, however, universities often recruit people whom they already know and open positions to renew contracts to people already working at the university. Concerning non-nationals, universities rarely recruit people who are not already in the country. In order to compete for Post-Docs and other positions, a non-Scandinavian must have at least a PhD in English and be ready to learn the language of the country within a relatively short period of time. Kamma Langberg advised researchers who want to go and start a career in Scandinavian countries to network with Scandinavian academics in conferences, to present papers and posters, and to approach departments and professors working on issues in which one is specialized. There are also some differences between one discipline and another. In the area of history, the system show some openness (in particular to European History). Law requires the knowledge of the country language in order to understand legal texts. Some research centres working on political sciences are relatively open, but also in this case it is advisable to be already in the country to increase one’s chances of recruitment.

4) Questions and Discussion (Chaired by Arnout Mertens, Academic Assistant, MWP, EUI)

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

1) Prof. Marimon commented on the opening in Spain of special research centres, like at the Pompeu Fabra University or the Department of Economics at the University of Alicante, among others. However, precisely because these public universities or departments are more open, recruiting people from abroad, they have to continuously face regulations (on salaries, etc.) and a local non-competitive environment which makes it difficult to stabilize leading research groups facing international competition. Experiences, like the Ramon y Cajal post-doctoral program have been very positive and have attracted many researchers to Spanish universities and research centres, but the national system should be properly reformed, to make it more open and competitive.

- 2) Michele Grigolo asked the panellists to elaborate more on the concept of “research potential” of young researchers and how it can be demonstrated at the moment of applying for a job. Frances Meegan stated that research potential can be detected in the quality of the PhD, reference letters, statements concerning past and future research, and the capacity to organise conferences. Prof. Mora focused on the evaluation procedure introduced by the 2007 reform, which has introduced high standards concerning publications and teaching experience. He regarded the lack of teaching experience as a major problem, which barred brilliant researchers with good CVs from getting positions in the Spanish academia. Kamma Langberg stressed the importance of having a (nearly) completed PhD in the area of interest with respect to the applied position. This quality should be certified by the supervisor. She also mentioned the importance of publications and papers, conference organisation and previous research assistantship experience, while teaching experience was regarded as a plus but not as strictly necessary in some cases.
- 3) Andreas Frijdal asked about competition between universities and the private market in the recruitment of talents. Frances Meegan reported that many researchers indeed find the private market more suitable for them because, for example, of the possibility of directly influencing policy-making. She herself marketed job opportunities in the private sector, and expected competition to increase in the future. Prof. Mora did not find such a competition going on in Spain, due to the industry mistrust of people raised in an “intellectual” academic environment.
- 4) One question concerned the different degrees of specification of academic job requirements. In the UK, essential and desirable requirements are always very detailed in the single application forms. In Spain, requirements are centrally dictated by the law and need to comply with it. In Scandinavian countries, requirements are specified in the application form posted on university web sites.
- 5) Another question from the audience concerned the tension between, on the one hand, productivity and pressure to publish and, on the other, the instability of many positions. Frances Meegan suggested that one should first establish a solid academic reputation through publications and then aim at a permanent position.
- 6) Concerning the difference between academic and non academic publications, it was suggested to structure information in the CV according to the priorities of the employer. Special visibility should be given to academic publications; non-academic publications can be listed under a separate heading. Frances Meegan suggested that, in case one does not have any publications, the application should highlight his/her writing skills. Prof. Mora stressed that the lack of publications may be a problem in the area of Social and Political Science concerning visibility and ranking in the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI).
- 6) Concerning reference letters, the audience asked whether one should get letters from people in higher positions or from people with whom one has good relations. Frances Meegan suggested that out of three letters one should seek a balance and that in any case there should be at least one “big name” among the referees. One should also think of external PhD examiners as potential referees.

5) “Academic Cultures and Career Paths in the US: Facts, Trends, and Opportunities”

Daniel Denecke (Council of Graduate Schools, Washington)

The US system is similar to the UK's because it is decentralized. All US universities are essentially global as a consequence of their intense international collaborations and exchange programmes. Daniel Denecke focused on the increasing opportunities available in the country for non-US researchers thanks to the increasing number of Joint and Dual Degree Programmes, the changes introduced by the Bologna Process in the evaluation of international credentials, and the growing concern over “global citizenship.” This has led

to ever more non-US researchers recruited by US universities. In the case of doctoral studies, foreign students have actually filled gaps left by national students. At the same time, one needs to consider restrictions in place after 9/11 and problems related to getting a VISA to come and work in the US. However, universities usually operate in support of applicants and ‘lubricate’ the bureaucratic procedure. There exist also “undercurrents of protectionism and provincialism” below official talks of global citizenship. Concerning specific steps one needs to take in order to make a career, one has to consider the growing importance of Post-Docs in the area of political sciences and humanities, some of which are of the same good quality that previously characterized only Post-Docs in mathematics and science technologies.. However, Daniel Denecke also stressed the growing portions of part-time positions offered by the academic market, and that most of the retirements expected in the past years did not happen mainly for the economic convenience of professors to stay in place. The positions available in the US are similar to the UK's, starting from the PhD up to Full Professorship. An average of five years passes between the Post-Doc and an Assistant Professorship, and between the latter and a Tenured Assistant Professorship. To move through these positions, one needs a good record of research, teaching and service. Concerning publications, one has to balance quality and quantity. 33% of acceptance in peer-reviewed journals is a good asset. Citations, especially for the social sciences, are also important.

6) “The Academic Profession in the Social Sciences in France: Towards a Change of the Rules of the Game?”

Frédéric Sawicki (Director, Lille Centre for Politics and Administration)

Prof. Sawicki talked extensively about the French system and its prospected changes from a closed to a more open and competitive academic job market. Presently, researchers and professors work either at a university (the most frequent case in the area of social sciences and humanities) or at a research institution. There are therefore two main career patterns: one is focused on both research and teaching (*enseignant-chercheur*) and the other only on research (*chercheur*). Most of them are civil servants; temporary contracts are an exception. Recruitment procedures are normally long, complicated and controlled by commissions composed by experts of the discipline in which the job positions are opened. This means that higher academic authorities are not in control of the selection and recruitment process. Each discipline selects its own experts, both at the national level (by actually controlling people's right to apply for jobs in the discipline)

and at the local, university level. At the end of the selection process, only well-known candidates succeed and are finally recruited. However, the system is expected to become more open following the decentralisation approved by the new government, which allows universities wider autonomy in the recruitment. Finally, another problem of the present system is the mismatch between the declining number of jobs in the academia and the growing number of Ph.D. researchers, especially in the areas of humanities and social sciences.

7) “Academic Careers in Italy”

Daniele Checchi (Dean of the School of Political Sciences, Department of Economics, University of Milan)

Prof. Checchi described the Italian situation as being characterised by both centralisation and closure. Rules, funds and salaries concerning research, academic activities and recruitments are dictated by the state, and no bargaining is allowed on salaries. Little use is made of temporary contracts with the exception of few private universities (Bocconi, LUISS and Bozen). To remedy the phenomenon of “brain drain,” the law provides that up to 10% of the staff in a single department can be hired directly from a foreign department in equivalent positions. The positions of assistant professor, associate professor and full professor are permanent. Post-Docs are known in Italy as “*assegni di ricerca*,” which last for two years (renewable once). Post-Docs offered to foreign students have increased in line with EC rules. Some private institutions usually connected to banks offer visiting positions, but they are disconnected from universities. The recruitment procedure starts from the publication of the job opening in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* and ends with oral and/or written exams depending on the position. Once passed the exam, there is only an evaluation after three years: in practice, according to Prof. Checchi, it is impossible to lose the job and salary advancements are fixed and tied to seniority. No official assessment of research is done, but promotion depends on publications, to which both research funds and academic reputation is related. Openings for professorship positions have been stopped for two years, but new openings for assistant professorships are expected in the near future. It is not clear yet whether examining commissions will be local or national and if they will include foreign members. The openness of the system to non-Italians varies depending on the degree of international competition of the discipline, the measurement of candidates’ production in terms of ranking of journals, publications in English and whether members of the selection commission have studied abroad. Based on his own experience and perception, Prof. Checchi found a declining degree of openness moving from Economics to Sociology, Political Sciences, History and Law.

8) “The Status of Women in the Economics Academic Profession”

Lisa M. Lynch (William L. Clayton Professor of International Economic Affairs, The Fletcher School, Tufts University; Fernand Braudel Senior Fellow, EUI, and Chair of the European Economic Association Committee on the Status of Women in the Economic Profession)

Lisa Lynch introduced the audience to the work of the American Economic Association's Committee on the Status of Women in the Economic Profession (CSWEP). The Committee was established to remedy the lack of openness and visibility of women in academia in the area of economics. With respect to this, the CSWEP has operated in different directions, functioning as a jump start for career by organising special sessions in national and regional meetings and supporting mentoring programmes. The Committee also collects and analyses data on women in academic positions and spreads information through a newsletter and annual reports. Although the 36th Committee's report found a positive trend in women doing their PhD in economics, it also evidenced "leaks in the pipeline," meaning that many women do not reach the final stage of the academic careers (up to full professorship). Leaks have been explained considering a mix of procedural and cultural issues. Lisa Lynch also presented data disaggregated by sex concerning occupation in the private sector.

9) Questions and Discussion (Chaired by Heather Jones, Max Weber Fellow)

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- 1) Prof. Sawicki stressed economic unbalances in the French academia between public universities and the "grandes ecoles:" the former get about 7,000 euros per student each year, while the latter get the double. He observed that there is strong opposition in the country to the decentralisation process, which is expected to increase the power of the director of each university and to limit that of the recruiting expert commissions.
- 2) The panellists further elaborated on the issue of women's participation in their respective academic contexts. Prof. Checchi held that there is room for expansion and that there are increasing demands on the system. He differentiated between different fields of economics. Concerning labor economics, women's enrolment rate moved from 1% of the early 1980s to the present 15%. However, there are almost no women in the area of economic theory. He also observed the difficulty for women to combine family and career duties: in Italy this could be a problem, especially if the woman ends up with a job and a position better than his husband's. Prof. Sawicki considered that presently tenured positions are awarded at the age of thirty. The new system would award tenured positions (only) at a later age, which may disadvantage women as many of them are occupied with maternity duties in their thirties and can concentrate less on their career. Daniel Denecke reported also that women and minorities have a different time-clock for Ph.D. completion in the US, between 5 and 12 years.

Part II. Post-Doc and Funding Options

10) "The Rise of the Post-Doc as Principal Investigator"

Chris Armbruster (Founder and Executive Director, Research Network, 1989)

Chris Armbruster first summarised 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). He stated that while the European

Research Area and the European Higher Education Area are still under construction, their foundations 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).

Secondly, Chris Armbruster explained why he thinks that post-docs primarily need to be aware of:

- 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.

Thirdly, CA presented 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.

11) “Funding Opportunities for Post-Doctoral Fellows at the European Level”

Alain Peyraube (Scientific Director of the Ile-de-France Region at the CNRS, Paris, Member of the ERC, Scientific Council)

With a comment by *Anthony Molho* (European University Institute, HEC Department)

After a general overview of the EU Framework Program n.7 (FP-7), **Prof. Peyraube** focused on the “cooperation” and “ideas” areas of the program concerning Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS). Within the area of “cooperation,” large and small “collaborative research projects are funded” (respectively up to € 4 and € 1.5 million per project), as much as “support actions” (up to €1 million). Within “ideas,” Prof. Peyraube concentrated on the state of funding and applications by the European Research Council (ERC), which is responsible for evaluating and funding “ideas” projects.

Prof. Peyraube regarded “ideas” as the most appropriate grant source for researchers at an early career stage because it was designed to support individuals and projects selected purely on the basis of the criteria of “excellence, autonomy, efficiency and transparency.” “Ideas” projects may be supported by individual grants that are “flexible, light and

portable.” They need not be multinational and have limited administrative requirements. Information on the composition of the ERC Scientific Council was provided, and similarly on the ERC starting and advanced grants. Starting grants vary from 100,000 to 400,000 euros per year, for a period of up to 5 years. They support early stage research and are open to investigators of any nationality (both inside and outside the EU among the countries associated with the programme), who are currently situated between 2 and 9 years after the completion of their Ph.D. Between 250 and 300 projects will be funded for Year 1 (2007) [some 50 in the Humanities and Social Sciences domain]. Advanced grants support investigators at all the following stages (2008).

Special attention was devoted to the 1,363 applications for starting grants for 2007 in the HSS. 5 HSS panels are responsible for the evaluation of these projects. Each panel is competent for different disciplines and is guided by specific key words. Data on applications (9,167) and projects that passed the first stage of evaluation (559), broken down by nationality, were provided. Most applications came from Italy (1,610) followed by the UK (1,103). Most of those who passed the first stage of selection were from the UK (102), while Italy ranked fifth (49). Prof. Peyraube admitted some failures in the program, especially concerning the very low number of applications coming from non-EU countries such as the US (150), Canada (23), Australia (15), Japan (9), China (6) and India (3). Further information and data were provided on France, thematic and non-thematic programs, bilateral programs in HSS, as well as the grants allocated under all of them.

Prof. Molho, who is a member of the SH-5 ERC panel that selected candidates in “Memory, history and archaeology,” provided very interesting and critical insights into the applications received by the European Research Council in the area of social sciences and humanities, and on the Council’s project standards in these disciplines. In particular, he addressed the poor quality of many applications in terms of “the translation of a good idea into a good analytical project.” To remedy this, universities should provide the adequate services to support the drafting phase of the project, including providing critical feedback on the first project draft. Universities that have set up this type of services (Central European University, Basel University) actually deliver projects with better quality. He underlined also the variety of “English dialects” used in such applications. He furthermore worried about the limited number of the applications, suggesting that the ERC failed to give publicity to its funding opportunities and/or that applicants were somehow discouraged from applying. Prof. Molho also criticized the unified standards for applications imposed by the ERC on the area of social sciences and humanities. In particular, he argued that projects were needlessly stretched and inflated to adjust to the maximum duration and funding available for projects. Very long and expensive projects may be necessary for research in the area of the “hard sciences” but not in social sciences and humanities. In the same vein, he contested the ERC’s focus on “groundbreaking” research, a characteristic that – for how it is meant by the Council - can hardly be found in fields such as History. He suggested that different project standards and requirements should be defined in relation to the type of research carried out in different disciplines, as is the case in the US.

12) Questions and Discussion (Chaired by Giesela Rühl, Max Weber Fellow)

During the session, several issues were raised and further clarified by the conference participants:

- 1) Arnout Mertens underlined the tension between the fact that applications for postdoctoral grants often seem to fail on the basis of the quality of the project (as Prof. Molho experienced in the ERC panels) and the recent stress on the necessity of a career development plan, mentors etc. (as Chris Armbruster did). Chris Armbruster stressed that competition is indeed a pre-requisite for good research: evidence of this is provided by the better performance of UK universities – including in the ERC – which are used to compete.
- 2) The audience requested further insights into the poor success rate of Italian applications in the ERC: they are the most numerous applications but rank only sixth in terms of success rate. Prof. Molho underlined that most Italian applications failed precisely because of poor drafting skills.
- 3) Prof. Marimon distinguished a correlation between, on the one hand, the limited research funding available at the national level in certain states (UK and Italy) and, on the other hand, the high number of applications to the ERC coming from these countries.
- 4) Further discussion concerned the question put by Prof. Molho of the ERC's blanket imposition to all disciplines of unified procedures and standards that respond better to the needs of "hard sciences," which pointed to the need to differentiate between different research areas.
- 5) The audience contested the low funding going to the social sciences and humanities. Prof. Peyraube underlined that the funding for the ERC programme is 15% for the Humanities and Social Sciences sector, which can already be counted as a success.

13) Roundtable: National Funding Possibilities

After the series of 25 minutes-presentations, a roundtable was held to inform the audience about postdoctoral funding possibilities in Europe and the US, and about the accessibility to such funding for foreign candidates. Chaired by Andreas Frijdal, head of the Academic Service at the EUI, the roundtable was formed by Frederic Sawicki (France), Chris Armbruster (Germany), Frances Meegan (UK), Jose-Gines Mora (Spain), Kamma Langberg (Scandinavia/Northern Europe) and Daniel Denecke (US). During the 10 minutes they each had at their disposal, the speakers distinguished between various types of postdoctoral fellowships, special programmes for women, briefly presented the procedures of application, stressed – if needed – recent changes in the system and gave some advice.

Concerning the UK, Frances Meegan pointed out the difference between different types of Post-Docs advertised as such. Some of them are very research-oriented and purely intended to give young scholars a kick-start by allowing them to publish (at universities like Oxford and Cambridge). Some Post-Doc Fellowships are actually more about teaching than research. Funding is also offered by private institutions, although these institutions usually prefer candidates to have a loose or strong association with a UK university and some experience in project management. As regards the US, Daniel Denecke observed that much of the country's research funds support the "hard sciences." In the area of humanities and social sciences, some opportunities are made available by major libraries and foundations. However, with respect to these opportunities Denecke stated that attention needs to be paid to possible citizenship



restrictions. Furthermore, the private character of these funding sources presupposes that there must be “harmony” between the researcher’s and the institution’s perspectives. Prof. Mora, talking about the *Ramón y Cajal* and *Juan de la Cierva* Programmes, stressed with respect to the former that presently 20% of the participants are non-Spanish nationals. Prof. Sawicki highlighted that in some French programmes it is hard to find foreigners because of the language barrier. Andreas Frijdal briefly recalled the audience that actually the Dutch system is very open to foreign researchers and that language is rarely a barrier to access for them given the amount of work done in English by Dutch universities.

At the end of the conference, the floor was given to the audience for a last round of questions and discussion. Topics that were touched upon included the possible links between the ERC and national funding institutions, changes in labour legislation in the area of research, international mobility and mobility within countries, the importance of age (only few countries, including France, have age deadlines), the social and practical problems that go with high mobility (not all countries are child-friendly or easy for partners to find a job).