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MAX WEBER PROGRAMME FOR POST-DOCTORAL STUDIES

**MAX WEBER PROGRAMME  
ACADEMIC CAREERS OBSERVATORY**

**Report on the Sixth MWP-ACO Conference**

**FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN THE  
EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA: PROVIDERS, USERS AND  
PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

**Wednesday, 30 November 2011  
Villa la Fonte, San Domenico di Fiesole, Firenze**



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## Summary

In November 2011, the Academic Careers Observatory (ACO) of the Max Weber Post-Doctoral Programme (MWP) of the European University Institute organized the 6<sup>th</sup> MWP-ACO conference on 'Funding Opportunities in the Social Sciences in the European Research Area: Providers, Users and Professional Associations'. 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 '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), the European Sociological Association (ESA) and the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR). Representatives of the three professional associations were invited as well, and they actively participated in the debate on how to improve the efficiency of European institutions providing research funding. The survey neatly showed that despite notable improvements, both national and supranational financing sources display several problems. Despite the heterogeneity on how different national agencies are managed and very different assessments on behalf of the users, there is widespread distrust in the evaluation process, which is deemed to be insufficiently transparent. European-level agencies were treated separately and they also displayed a different set of problems. The Framework Programme (FP) is burdened by cumbersome procedures and high logistical costs, which are often seen as insurmountable obstacles. Successful candidates perceive the inflexibility of FP schemes as a problem. The European Research Council (ERC) has instead very low success rates, which discourage potential candidates from applying. Finally, economists, sociologists and political scientists agree on the most desirable features of research funding: flexibility, adequate funding, competent and transparent evaluation and the simplification of the application process.

The presentations on specific national and supranational, European 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 was the way research proposals are evaluated. By limiting the pool of applicants only to those who have, for example, already been published in the top journals in their field, which is a common feature of the evaluation process in many of the national and supranational agencies, funding opportunities are often closed to a large section of potential researchers. This issue was discussed and related with the overall question of the representativeness of the data obtained through the survey, given that it employs similar sampling criteria.

The lack of an impact assessment of the research conducted in Europe emerged as the greatest deficit of many funding agencies. While there is a considerable amount of research financed by national and supranational institutions, there remains an open question of what its final impact is: what is this research used for and what does it tangibly produce? An ex-post evaluation system is required for many of these schemes in order to provide feedback, which may be then used to improve the evaluation process, both with respect to the applicants' CVs and to their proposed projects.



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**Session 1. Survey on Research Funding in the Social Sciences and Humanities in Europe (jointly organized with the European Economic Association, the European Sociological Association and the European Consortium for Political Research). Chair: Birgit Apitzsch, Max Weber Fellow**

***Ramon Marimon*** (Director of the Max Weber Programme)

Marimon opened the 6<sup>th</sup> [Academic Careers Observatory](#) conference by presenting the final results of the Survey on Research Funding for the Social Sciences in Europe, a comprehensive survey on the perceptions by funding beneficiaries and applicants in the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

The research project was carried out during 2010-11 by the [Academic Careers Observatory](#) of the [Max Weber Programme](#) (MWP-ACO), in collaboration with the [European Economic Association](#) (EEA), the [European Sociological Association](#) (ESA), and the [European Consortium for Political Research](#) (ECPR). It consisted of three separate surveys submitted, respectively, to economists, sociologists and political scientists, mainly with an academic background. Despite the original intention to analyse all disciplines covered by the Max Weber Programme, it has proved impossible to include both law and history due to the lack of Europe-wide associations.

The researchers from the three disciplines above were invited to answer an on-line questionnaire regarding research funding in the social sciences in Europe. The data comprises more than 3,800 valid responses. The presentation was divided into seven sections, plus the conclusions.

'Part I: The sample and the experience' presents a brief overview of the respondents. The survey was sent out to 5,416 European economists, members of the EEA or those who were highly ranked in the Research Papers in Economics (RePEc) database, 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 and to 12,348 political scientists who were either on the ECPR mailing list or who had published in one of the Top 10 journals. The overall response rate was 19.1 per cent. In order to simplify the interpretation of the results, the data has been grouped by ERA countries, according to their different academic traditions (Anglo-Saxon, Continental, Scandinavian and Central and Eastern European).

'Part II: The sociology of the profession' provides a sociological picture of European researchers in economics, sociology and political science. Four main characteristics were highlighted: the persistency of the gender scissors problem (especially in economics); the aging throughout the academic career (especially in sociology); the preponderance of university positions; and the national heterogeneity in terms of internationalization, where countries with an Anglo-Saxon tradition are much more open than Continental or CEE ones. Additionally, the survey shows that research is a dominant activity, without gender gap, but with decaying intensity throughout the profession, except at the end. Finally, researchers are a highly mobile category, especially in economics. However,

mobility rapidly diminishes after the post-doc stage, particularly outside Anglo-Saxon countries.

'Part III: Research funding: facts and figures' illustrate the sources of research funding. Most research funding is financed at national level, although the balance between National Public and Own Institutional funding is heterogeneous across countries. The sum of both sources is close to 60 per cent in Belgium, Italy and Spain, climbing up to 80 per cent in Scandinavian countries. In Scandinavia and in Germany there is a wealth of National Private funding institutions, providing some 10 per cent of all financing. Some countries – possibly as a response to the low transparency and availability of national grants – rely more than others on research funding at European level. On average, EU funds represent 11 per cent of the whole budget. In Italy and Turkey the share is closer to 17-18 per cent. Finally, countries where local authorities have greater autonomy, such as Belgium and Spain, developed extensive Regional Public research funding.

Moreover, the respondents reported that the highest levels of average annual funding come from the ERC; National Public grants and the EC Framework Programme come next. Over 60 per cent of ERC funds go to political science. The other two sources show no relevant differences among the three disciplines. Unsurprisingly, Full Professors (especially in the fields of political science and economics) receive the most funding from National Public research grants, the ERC, and the Framework Programme. Full professors from the UK, Germany, Belgium and Anglo-Saxon countries are the most successful at getting National Public funding.

'Part IV: Perceptions on research funding' sheds light on the users' perception of research financing in Europe. The majority of respondents report the grant application process to be unnecessarily long or long but reasonable. In terms of factors influencing the decision to apply for a grant, the total size of the grant is the primary consideration. Instead, the primary reasons for not applying are: i) the lack of confidence in the evaluation procedure for the National Public research grants; ii) low success probability of application, and the excessively high procedural and logistic costs for the ERC and the FP. As for the flexibility of usage of the available funds, the respondents deem that the Framework Programme (not ERC) has the least flexible structure, whereas grants from the ERC and from national institutions score more or less equally. The stability and predictability of calls and grants is not assured only for the Framework Programme, as less than half of respondents consider them as stable and predictable. Finally, the share of people for whom the time spent on applications is unacceptably long is roughly twice as large for the FP than for either the ERC or National Research Grants (public).

'Part V: Satisfaction with research funding' reveals very interesting details on the perception of researchers about various funding agencies. Respondents from the majority of countries are dissatisfied with both the ERC and the Framework Programme. With respect to both, Scandinavian and UK scholars have a more negative opinion than researchers from other countries, such as Italy, Spain or Belgium. Moreover, satisfaction conditional on success is flattest for the Framework Programme, meaning that even successful candidates are not fully satisfied. As for National Public research grants, Germany shows full satisfaction, followed by Spain and all the other countries. Italy is an exception, as the majority of respondents are dissatisfied. These results imply that

satisfaction with European funding may be inversely related to the researchers' satisfaction with national agencies. Finally, looking at satisfaction by discipline, economists are relatively more satisfied with all funding sources than either sociologists or political scientists.

'Part VI: Individual agencies' sheds some light on how 11 individual agencies score on a number of dimensions. Several suppositions are corroborated by the data. International openness is very heterogeneous: whereas more than half of the applicants to the Anglo-Saxon agencies in the sample (the Economic and Social Research Council in the UK, the Swiss National Science Foundation and the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research) are non-nationals, their share drops basically to zero in the Continental ones (especially in Italy and Portugal, but also in Germany). Even though the effects are difficult to discern, the positive assessment of the schemes' design seems to go hand in hand with openness. In fact the ESRC and SNSF both score quite high in this respect. Other aspects were, however, not included in the survey and should be further analysed, such as the governance of the schemes, which may crucially affect the results (some agencies are entirely managed by the governments, others are independent, etc.).

'Part VII: Evaluation and recommendations' summarizes the section of the three surveys where respondents were asked to name and rank the most desired properties in research funding. The answers show considerable consistence in the views of economists, sociologists and political scientists. The four key elements are: flexibility of management, fund allocation, research strategy and to hire people; adequate funding; competent and transparent evaluation; simplification of application and procedures. Interestingly, some aspects of funding applications that have been recently stressed by many agencies, such as interdisciplinarity, are missing. Finally, and most importantly, the respondents also agree on the very top of the 10 most desirable, often missing, elements in European Research Funding: 'Trust the researcher: flexibility!'

The presentation concludes with a number of suggestions for improvement and with some serious concerns for the future of European research funding. Despite notable advances by many agencies, there is still ample room to improve efficiency, i.e. flexibility, competent evaluation, and so on. There is consensus in favour of a 'competitive bottom-up approach' to research funding among the respondents. Countries with schemes that 'properly assess and trust the researcher' are also the ones with a more internationally integrated research environment, e.g. the UK. Regarding the Framework Programme and the ERC, perceptions differ by country, but lack of flexibility of the FP (not ERC) is a major concern. As for prospective problems, the financial crisis will generate substantial general cuts in research funding (not only in the SSH) in the future, not reflected in this survey. Major agencies, such as the Framework programme, have refocused their priorities on innovation, which means that specific cuts in the SSH are foreseeable as well.

### Comments and questions

The responses, which came from the panel and the floor, were mainly focused on the survey and the accompanying report. Kicking off the discussion, Luis Sanz Menendez (CSIC/OECD) made four fundamental points. First, he welcomed the evidence



collected on research funding in Europe. However, he also expressed concern over what he termed the limits of the research and the way in which the survey had been implemented. Developing this point, he argued that a 'public opinion survey' of researchers on funding may not equate with the overall picture of public funding available. This related to his second point when he maintained that there was a rather biased collection of data, which should be improved, especially in the areas of political science and sociology. As an example of this bias, he pointed out that the Top 10 journals selected in each profession were American (or at least Anglo-centric), rather than European publications. This demand for a more inclusive sample was supported by his call for a broader reference area. Third, he contended that the concept of research funding should be more qualified in two separate ways. Firstly, the clarification of terms should apply to all countries: for example, funding in Germany equates with extra financing over the salary; in the UK includes parts of the salary as well. Secondly, there should be a distinction between project funding and fellowships as arguably, there is a very different perception from each of these positions when answering questions related to research funding. Finally, he urged the survey researchers not to over-simplify the analysis and to eliminate, wherever possible, excessively small samples, which by definition create various biases.

Maria Agodi (ESA) concurred with Menendez on several of these points, arguing that evaluation of funding practices requires reflexive knowledge. She was similarly concerned about the sampling procedure, which she felt should be further differentiated by country of origin. She also called for a deeper dissection of the results to show, as she put it, what kind of choices are really there and why there are some research opportunities in some areas but not in others. She too highlighted the dichotomy between American and European journals and pointed out that this may skew results as national institutional arrangements differ greatly between the two continents. Crucially however, she related her comments to the structure of the peer-review world by arguing that the organisational culture was key in fully comprehending the survey results. She pointed out that often there was a governmental complex engrained into institutional practices and as an example she referred to the fact that the academic publishing world has constructed a system of 'gate keepers' who maintain these internal structures and principles. Therefore, as a way of critiquing the choice of the Top 10 journal contributors in sociology and political science, she pointed out that the status of a journal often confers certain characteristics, which again, would bias the sample. In contrast, she was adamant that using European journals would be a fairer way to group and analyse the differences in the various processes. Another method, she suggested, may be to use membership in national associations as a way of gathering a broader and more accurate sample.

Luciano Bardi (ECPR) continued the debate on sampling by highlighting specific problems with the ECPR lists, which are partly responsible for the low response rates of political scientists. The ECPR has institutional members, but no physical persons. Such organization has to do with the mission of the ECPR: it was founded in the 1970s when the profession was not widespread, in order to cover various expenses (conferences etc.) for younger researchers. Consequently, the only available lists of people include the participants of ECPR events. Hence, the list is less representative of the ECPR than of the political science community at large, and dormant members are not weeded out. This may improve in the future through the creation of individual contacts (so-called

MyECPR), which will be assigned to active participants. Finally, Bardi pointed out that the survey should be commended for bringing the three organisations together. He agreed that at the European level further pressure needed to be brought to bear on these institutions in order to improve mutual cooperation.

Marc Ivaldi (EEA) also took up the problem with the sample. He pointed out that often a national bias within various national research centres exists, whereby a substantial number of researchers who are not represented or funded by national schemes fall outside the parameters of the survey. He praised the survey for confirming a number of anecdotal speculations: inflexibility of funding, high logistical costs and so on. He pointed to the broader problem of ex-post evaluation of research. The absence of a clear impact factor and the lack of unambiguous criteria to assess the success or failure of various research projects is a major hindrance for European funding agencies. He criticised the current system under which, in order to obtain funding, the potential results of research were tested and evaluated theoretically, with no corresponding assessment of the actual results. This, he maintained, was the inherent bias in the system, which attached criteria to the potential of research rather than to its actual outcome.

Jakub Wojnarowski from the Foundation for Polish Science raised the issue of what were the trends and reforms across the European research funding sector and whether or not any new public agencies had been recently created. This was a valid point, which connected to the previous question of representativeness of the survey, considering that it only invited respondents from some of the largest and most well established research agencies, who they themselves were not always representative of all the researchers in a particular area.

Frank Marx from Research Executive Agency welcomed the survey and the study as precious source of information. He suggested that for future surveys there should be a clear identification of the Marie Curie Actions in the survey (as it is already the case for the ERC grants). Given the importance for Marie Curie funding in FP 7 (4.75 billion Euros) and the objectives of the Marie Curie actions on training, mobility and career prospects of researchers this would be both pertinent and desirable.

**Session 2. Presentations: Applying for funding opportunities for young researchers. The European agencies.** Chair: Tomas Rodriguez Barraquer, Max Weber Fellow.

### **European Research Council**

*Monique Smaïhi* (European Research Council, ERC)

The presentation from the European Research Council was subdivided into three parts. Smaïhi began by outlining the mandate of the ERC and providing some interesting details about the Starting and Advanced Grant schemes offered by the agency. Each of the schemes evaluates its applicants based on the 'excellence' of their work, with a bottom-up, principle-investigator approach. This aims to provide a sizeable and flexible grant, which will make a substantial difference to the viability and success of the research project.

The Starting Grant scheme aims at attracting and aiding the next generation of top scientists, by addressing the problem of plugging the funding gap in early career research. Most awards are granted to those who are between 2 and 12 years beyond the award of their PhD (2-7 starters; 7-12 consolidators, with differentiated evaluation of their CVs). The percentage of working time the Principal Investigator (PI) must dedicate to the ERC-funded project, which is a minimum of 50 per cent of total working time.

The Advanced Grant scheme is aimed at attracting the current top researchers and scientists in the field and funds investigator-driven, breakthrough research at a later career stage. Most of the successful applicants in this scheme were between 7 and 12 years beyond their PhD and tended to be well advanced in their careers and with reputations, which have already been established as leaders in their field of study.

There are three domains (Life Sciences, Physical Sciences and Engineering, Social Sciences and Humanities) and 25 panels. The 2012 call has a budget of EUR 730 million for Starting Grants and EUR 680 million of Advanced Grants. LS, PSE and SSH get 39, 44 and 17 per cent of the total, respectively. Starting Grants finance up to EUR 1.5 million (and up to EUR 0.5 million extra for the PI to establish themselves in the EU or associated country) For Advanced Grants, the sums are EUR 2.5 million plus EUR 1 million, respectively.

The peer review system of evaluating proposals for grants was explained in detail with 86 per cent of panel members across 25 separate panels coming from Europe and associated countries. Currently, Starting Grants follow a single submission: 1 stage, 2 step evaluation. Applications are electronically submitted through the Electronic Proposal Submission Service (EPSS). Deadlines are strictly enforced (end of November for Starting Grants) and all proposals consist of two parts: Part A contains administrative forms, and Part B the scientific proposal itself. Step 1 of the evaluation consists of assigning the proposals to circa 4 panel members. During Step 2 the proposal is also sent to specialized remote experts. Shortlisted candidates are called for an interview.



Between 2007-11 the total number of applicants for the Starting Grant scheme has fallen due to a change in the application procedure, which requires candidates to submit the whole application, although a number of proposals is eliminated on the basis of a first screening. Hence, the success rate for applicants has risen from 3.4 per cent to 11.9 per cent. The Advanced Grants scheme are stable, with a similar number of applicants each year and a relative success rate between 2007 and 2011 of 13.8 per cent.

Switzerland has the highest success rate of the European countries with Slovenia and Turkey performing worst. The United Kingdom was the most popular destination for host institutions (almost 500), with grantees also taking up positions in Germany, France (300 each) and the Netherlands (174), in that order. 38 nationalities applied for grants in the 2011 call with Germany having the highest success rate of 16 per cent followed by the UK with just under 12 per cent and Italy with just over 10 per cent. Great Britain also gained the most researchers, with the United States losing the greatest number of researchers. Per domain, the Social Sciences and Humanities recorded a 9.5 per cent success rate among starters and consolidators.

Of particular relevance was their breakdown analysis of the applicants in the 2011 call into the categories of age and gender. The average age of female grantees was 37 and that of males roughly a year lower. The results were then subdivided between the women who applied (27.8 per cent), those who were called to an interview (22.3 per cent), and those who were eventually awarded grants (21.0 per cent) in the Social Sciences and Humanities.

The final part of the presentation focused on the role of the host institutions. There were 3,814 proposals evaluated from Italian host institutions between 2007-11. Of these, 145 applications have been selected, meaning that the Italian overall success rate is inferior to the average. In 2011, 5 Starting Grants in the Social Science and Humanities. The Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche hosted the highest number of Starting Grants and the European University Institute hosted most Advanced Grants. The last section of the presentation analysed the mobility patterns of grantees. UK grantees tend to stay at home. Italian and German researchers instead are those who move the most, as roughly one third selects a host institution abroad.

## Marie Curie Actions

*Frank Marx* (Research Executive Agency, REA)

Focusing on the Marie Curie Actions, Marx began by outlining the Initial Training Network focuses on the initial training of researchers at the EU level. He emphasised that the involvement of the private sector was essential in the overall objective, which is to improve the career prospects of early stage researchers. The ITN is a host-driven action: organisations first apply for funding and then recruit researchers. Any ITN consortium requires the participation of organisations in at least three Member States or Accession Countries. The participation of the private sector is essential. The Initial Training Network has a joint research and training programme which supports early stage, mainly pre-doctoral researchers in skills acquisition in such areas as entrepreneurship, management, IPR, granting writing and communication techniques.

This is complimented by the Industry-Academia Partnership and Pathways (IAPP) scheme, which aims to open and foster dynamic pathways between public research organisations and private commercial enterprises. The scheme is host-driven, as is the ITN. A successful application for the scheme has at least one research organisation from the public and the private sector respectively and is based at least in two different Member States or Associated Countries. The funding of the projects is divided between two main areas; the salary of the researchers (all employer costs, adjusted for the cost of living, including family obligations of the researcher) and the costs of the project (a flat rate EUR 1,800 per researcher-month, management activities and overheads).

He then explained a complimentary programme known as the International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (IRSES), which aims to strengthen research partnerships through staff exchanges and networking activities between European research organisations and other research organisations from S&T agreements. Projects for this scheme should be the non profit research institutions themselves with a minimum of two institutions in a European or Associated country and another to come from a third country. Marx underlined the currently still very high success rates for IRSES and the importance for Third Countries to make first experiences with EU funding in research.

Most relevant for the academic audience, he proceeded to explain more explicitly the Individual Actions, divided between Career Integrations Grants (CIG), Inter-European Fellowships for Career Development (IEF), Individual Incoming Fellowships (IIF) and Individual Outgoing Fellowships (IOF).

CIG help researchers establish themselves in a long-term position, in a host organization where they already have a post. They receive four years of funding, EUR 25 thousand lump sums. This money can be used for consumables, technicians salary etc. The host organization must be based in the Member States or Associated Countries. IEF give the opportunity to experienced researchers at different stages of their career to move from a Member State or Associated Country to another Member State or Associated Country in order to acquire new research skills or to undertake inter-sectoral experiences. IOF allow experienced researchers to move from a Member States or Associated Countries to a Third Country in order to acquire new knowledge and to subsequently return. IIF create the opportunity to researchers who have been active in Third Countries to move to one Member State or one Associated Country in order to transfer knowledge through mutual beneficial research cooperation.

Funding for these schemes is split between aiding the scholar and separately the project itself. The fellows receive a salary depending on their experience (up to 58,500 EUR/year for researchers with less than 10 years experience; up to 87,500 for more). Additionally there is a mobility allowance of EUR 700-1,000 per month depending on family status. Both are adjusted for the cost of living in the host country. The project receives funding for research, training and transfer of knowledge activities. There is a flat rate of EUR 800 per researcher-month to contribute to expenses related to training activities, research costs, execution of the partnership projects and coordination between participants. Additionally, there are management costs and overheads: a flat rate of EUR 700 per researcher-month subject to country correction coefficient.



The budget for the Marie Curie Individual Fellowships was EUR 72 million (IEF), EUR 24 million (IIF & IOF) in 2007 but has risen in 2011 to EUR 109.85 million (IEF) and EUR 40 million (IIF & IOF). Accordingly, last year the scheme received 5,491 applications, of which 843 in the social sciences and 129 in economics. The deadline for applications is usually in August of each year. The proposal (Part A and B as above) is submitted electronically through the EPSS.

### Comments and questions

Marimon started the discussion on the ERC presentation raising questions about the evaluation procedure. He pointed to the difficulties in establishing 'excellence' across the different disciplines and queried how consensus on this was reached during the evaluation process. However, Marimon stressed the point of the danger of taking 'excellence' for granted, and that in the scenario where the crème were funded, this disadvantaged those who were not already recognised as leaders in their field. Smaïhi countered that the ERC had made a considerable effort to establish stable criteria with equal relative weights in the selection process: 50 per cent PI and 50 per cent project. At the core of this problem was the issue of using publication in the top journals as a criterion for evaluation as it disadvantaged those who had not already fulfilled this requirement. Therefore, the pre-existing career of the applicants is the defining characteristic of their application. It was revealed that a clear tension exists regarding the balance between the potential for excellence among the candidates and the demonstrated ability to perform. This difficulty with the standard of excellent was further problematized by Agodi who pointed to the unintended marginalizing effects of funding candidates who are already considered outstanding in their field. She pointed out that this leads to a hierarchization among applicants, which in many cases may be self-serving for the various agencies.

**Session 3. Applying for Funding Opportunities for Young Researchers. The national agencies.** Chair: Leen Vandecasteele, Max Weber Fellow

**United Kingdom**

*Alexa Mills* (European and Social Research Council, ESRC)

The [Economic and Social Research Council](#), introduced by Mills, has an annual budget of GBP 211 million with more than 100 research investments funded and 35 per cent of research projects graded 'outstanding'. In 2009-10 there were 1,335 applications for small and standard grants, out of which 218 awards were granted.

She elaborated upon the international research strategy of the ESRC aimed to dismantle international borders between researchers and, in particular, encourage researchers from the UK to engage with international research agendas and apply for international funding. As a consequence, the ESRC seeks to develop and embed international perspectives in the projects they fund. They also hope to benchmark the quality of UK social science internationally.

The ESRC provides several different types of funding, which aims at capturing a substantial portion of the social science community spanning the different career stages. The first type is Doctoral Training Centres that fund up to 600 students a year from a range of different countries. With relaxed rules of international eligibility, students are trained in what have been identified as strategic areas of study, such as macroeconomics or quantitative methodologies.

The ESRC Future Research Leaders Scheme is more specific, focusing on helping early career social scientists acquire the skill set to become future research leaders in their field. This requires a programme of research skills to be identified with the collaboration of the host institution which will, taken together, provide the researchers with an opportunity to 'learn by doing' as they become the Principal Investigators and take primary responsibility for the execution of the project. This is a new scheme starting in October 2012. Applications are expected from high-quality candidates from anywhere in the world, with a maximum of four years postdoctoral experience. Researchers can claim up to 60 per cent of their salary under the scheme across three years.

The third funding scheme is the Knowledge Exchange/Follow On Fund, whose objective is to promote the impact of scholarly research in the social sciences on the national and international formation of policy and practice. This differs from the International Partnership and Networking Scheme, the aim of which is to establish sustainable collaborations between scholars in similar fields, including exchanges, workshops and summer schools.

Finally, Mills emphasised a more general point about the ESRC, which was that it encourages in all forms, active collaboration, at every level between researchers in the UK and those in other countries. As a practical way of promoting this, the inclusion of international co-investigators in proposals is strongly supported, with eligibility open to

any academic researcher in any country from an established research organisation of a similar standing to the ESRC.

## Germany

*Eckard Kämper* (German Research Foundation, DFG)

Kämper began by outlining that the [German Research Foundation](#) is intensifying its promotion of young researchers in order to help outstanding scientists and academics. The core aim of the organisation is to help researchers to optimally develop their research careers by gaining early scientific independence and simultaneously ensuring the future viability of science in Germany. In its funding of ‘top talent’ the DFG supports all scientific disciplines, retaining those from Germany and ensuring that those attracted from abroad are supplied with the necessary support from leading research institutions, necessary resources and guaranteed the freedom to pursue excellent research.

The funding is structured in order to create research-friendly and career advancing structures, which foster the optimum conditions for the implementation of innovative ideas. There are two types of structures; those which offer flexible individual funding and those which are custom-tailored excellence programmes, which share the aim of providing researchers with the appropriate funding at each career stage.

All researchers from every country are eligible for funding as long as they have completed a PhD and are affiliated in some way with a German research institution. The main criteria for the selection of projects is the applicants’ scientific qualifications, the originality and overall quality of the proposed project, the research objectives and work programme, what employment opportunities the project would generate and how it would contribute to the scientific environment and the feasibility of the proposal with regard to the funding and staff resources available. There is a clear and transparent selection process, which begins with the initial evaluation of the research proposal by peer reviewers before its assessment by the review board and then approval by a joint committee.

There are a wide variety of opportunities available for researchers under this organisation from individual grants to clusters of excellence with international research training groups and centres, graduate schools and priority programmes. Speaking directly to the audience, Kämper highlighted two programmes, which would be of particular interest to young researchers: a research fellowship which consists of two years of funding for research carried out abroad and individual grants for a 2-3 year projects at a German university. Finally, he also recommended the Emmy Noether programme, which is aimed at highly qualified postdoctoral researchers, enabling them to qualify for leadership positions, especially as university lecturers. This programme generally runs for five years and requires researchers to lead their own, independent research groups in Germany.



## Poland

*Jakub Wojnarowski* (Foundation for Polish Science, FNP)

With a mission statement to ‘support only the best so they can become better’, Wojnarowski gave an overview of the history of the [Foundation for Polish Science](#) since its foundation in 1991. Having become a public benefit organisation since 2005, it is a self-financing, not for profit organisation with a spending plan for 2011 circa EUR 20 million and a total contribution of over EUR 120 million to science in Poland up to 2010. The Foundation is run on strict principles of competitiveness, ethics, a peer-review evaluation process and transparency in its programme and finances.

Similar to the other national agencies, the Foundation focuses on helping young scientists at the crucial stages of their careers, embracing all fields of science (including Social Sciences and Humanities) and supporting both individuals and research teams. Of the several schemes run by the Foundation, the most well known is the FNP Prize which is an individual award of EUR 50,000 to the best Polish scientist in a particular field. Its Grandmaster Programme grants up to three years of support to professors and young scientists, with a total award of EUR 100,000.

He proceeded to outline the other nine programmes of the Foundation, all of which aim to promote young researchers. One of the programmes, the ‘Homing Programme’ aims to repatriate Polish scientists who may have taken PhDs or studied abroad. In the opposite vein, both the Kolumb Programme and the Kwerenda Programme are focused on supporting Polish researchers abroad through the provision of research funding and international fellowships.

Of particular relevance to the gender debate, Wojnarowski elaborated upon the Bridge Programme, which focuses on providing assistance for parents during pregnancy and maternity leave by offering a two year research grant allowing them to keep up with scientific activities.

Wojnarowski also introduced other research funding schemes in Poland connected to the ongoing reform of the funding system of science and higher education. There has been a switch from institutional funding to grant schemes in all disciplines with the focus on younger scientists receiving larger grants through a peer-review assessment process. This is correlated with the rapid increase in funding (0.81 per cent of GDP in 2010), which is mostly due to EU structural funds expenditure on science and academia.

The [Ministry for Science and Higher Education in Poland](#) operates four different grant programmes for researchers; the National Programme for Humanities, which has about EUR 30 million per year at its disposal, the Iuventus Programme which offer research grants for young scientists in all fields (up to the maximum age of 35), the Diamond Programme that allows students to switch directly to the PhD after completing a BA, and the Mobility Plus Programme which is an out-going international fellowship programme for post-docs.

In a similar vein to the European Research Council (ERC), Poland has a National Science Centre, which, funded by the state, offers General Grants, Pre-Doctoral Grants,

PhD-Holders Grants, non co-financed International Grants and Advanced Researchers Grants.

Finally, he also highlighted two schemes, which may be of particular interest to young researchers. The Leader Programme operated by the [Polish National Centre for Research and Development](#) offers grants for young researchers in all fields of science who are at the stage of gaining independence. Newly-launched at the beginning of 2011, the Skills programme is funded by EU structural funds and aims at providing training, workshops and networking for Foundation beneficiaries in three major areas. The first focuses on the professional conduct for group leaders, the second is communicating science and the third is interdisciplinary cooperation. With the involvement of major research institutions, such as the University of Cambridge, the scheme has an initial budget of EUR 10 million and regulates some of the conduct of cooperating research institutions.

### Switzerland

*Marcel Kullin* (Swiss National Science Foundation, SNSF)

The [Swiss National Science Foundation](#) had a budget in 2010 of EUR 580 million which was split between Biology and Medicine, Humanities and Social Science and Mathematics, Natural and Engineering Sciences, each receiving 42 per cent, 24 per cent and 34 per cent respectively. This funding takes place through specific career instruments, which are designed to advance the career of young and promising scientists according to specific needs. 70-75 per cent of the budget is used to finance the salaries of, in descending order: post-docs, PhD students, technicians and auxiliary personnel. Individuals looking to finance their own salary can apply, as can researchers between the levels of PhD and professorships.

The evaluation criteria are broadly similar to that of other national and supra-national funding institutions. The proposed project is assessed according to scientific relevance, topicality, originality, feasibility and the suitability of methods. The applicant must have a proven track record and professional expertise with regard to project funding. As part of their track record they should have demonstrated mobility both in the past and in the future, an affiliation with a Swiss institution and a high amount of qualification and potential for a scientific/academic career.

In a more specific manner, Kullin presented the SNSF Fellowship programme. Although this has a free choice of research subject across all scientific disciplines, it requires Swiss nationality, a relation to a Swiss research institution (a minimum of two years of affiliation) and a research stay abroad. The programme is divided into two categories; prospective researchers and advanced researchers.

There are 450 SNSF Fellowships for prospective researchers every year, with 40 per cent going to women. A local Research Commission makes the selection for candidates who are only three years or less beyond the completion of their doctorate. The scheme offers post-docs of 12-36 months and can-docs of 6-24 months at the end of the thesis. In contrast, the SNF Fellowships for advanced researchers offer post-docs only, for 12-36 months. 120 fellowships are awarded each year, 40 per cent of which go to women. Candidates can be up to five years after obtaining their doctorate, but must have at least

one-year post-doc experience. The scheme for advanced researchers continues the trend in looking for slightly later career stages. It provides conditions for incoming and returning scientists to establish an independent career in Switzerland. There must be a confirmation from the host institution of the candidate and a commitment of integration in the workplace and access to all the infrastructure, guaranteed scientific independence of the researcher, adequate support in the funding of research expenses. For their part, the candidates must have the highest level of qualifications in their doctorate and must be no longer than five years after the awarding of it. They must also have demonstrated research activity of at least 12 months at an institution apart from where they completed their dissertation, usually abroad.

There are two phases in the evaluation of the proposal for the Ambizione scheme; the first phase is the submission and primary evaluation of the proposal by the National Research Council of the SNSF, this is followed by the external scientific evaluation of the proposal before it is either rejected or a grant is offered. 40-50 grants are awarded by the Ambizione scheme every year for the duration of three years and with a contribution that covers the applicant's salary plus extra funding for the project.

The most senior scheme offered is the SNSF Professorships, which aim to create conditions under which the best young scientists can develop their careers in Switzerland. Candidates can be a maximum of nine years post PhD, with at least 24 months post-doc experience, with a minimum of 12 months abroad. It has a similar two-phase evaluation process, also including an interview; with the 40 successful applicants every year granted a four-year contribution to cover a salary and research costs.

The Marie Heim-Vogtlin grant scheme also offered by the SNSF is similar to the Bridge Programme offered by the Polish Science Foundation, as it is aimed at the re-integration of qualified female researchers following an interruption in the career due to a family situation. Even more specifically, the Heim-Vogtlin grant scheme is open to doctoral and postdoctoral candidates who would not have a realistic chance of support through a standard funding scheme. The evaluation of candidates is based on the originality of the research proposal and the qualifications and prospects of the applicants. 35 grants are awarded every year for duration of two years and covering all the costs of the project plus a salary and additional childcare support.

Finally, Kullin provided some general points about the schemes, showing that in 2010 women performed slightly better than men in the prospective grant scheme at just over 68 per cent, but with men scoring higher in the advanced grant scheme at just over 65 per cent. He concluded with a positive outlook on the overall prospects for the SSH with an increase in the SNSF budget for this year and a new scheme aimed at improving conditions for PhD students to begin in 2013.

## Spain

**Luis Sanz Menendez** (CSIC Institute of Public Goods and Policies and OECD Committee for Scientific and Technological Policy, CSTP)

Sanz Menendez, from the [CSIC Institute of Public Goods and Policies](#) and [OECD Committee for Scientific and Technological Policy \(CSTP\)](#) provided an overview of



funding opportunities in Spain. He began with a very general point for all researchers applying for grant schemes, in Spain and beyond, which was that it is important to search for people (professors, teams, institutes, departments) to whom the researchers can associate themselves. The advantage of this he argued was that depending on the city or region, there are a myriad of research projects taking place at any one time. If the researcher had a strong commitment and proposes an exciting project, opportunities can be found. Indeed, considering the highly decentralized nature of the Spanish research funding framework, this is a productive approach. The 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. There are three key national schemes in Spain; schemes to train graduate students during their studies (FPI, FPU), Junior Post-Doc Fellowships (Juan de la Cierva) and Senior Post-Doc Fellowships (Ramón y Cajal).

The FPI (Formacion de Personal Investigador) is designed for PhD students enrolled in graduate programmes in Spain conducting research as part of a team working on a publicly funded research project. However, this is restricted to Spanish students, with just 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 to avoid inbreeding. The evaluation is in two parts, with 80 per cent based on the CV and 20 per cent on the research proposal. In 2010, 17.7 per cent RyC grants went to the SSH. The overall success rate was 14 per cent.

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. Last year there were 350 positions available, with an annual budget of EUR 35.3 million. The evaluation process has three parts with the CV of the applicant worth 40 per cent, the team's CV 40 per cent and the project 15 per cent. 18.6 per cent of the grants were assigned to the SSH and 26 per cent of all bursaries were given to non-nationals.