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European Union

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From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

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Subject: Measures to support early stage researchers, raise the attractiveness of scientific careers and foster investment in human potential in research and development

- Council conclusions (adopted on 29/11/16)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on 'Measures to support early stage researchers, raise the attractiveness of scientific careers and foster investment in human potential in research and development' as adopted by the Council at its 3503rd meeting held on 29 November 2016.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON 'MEASURES TO SUPPORT EARLY STAGE RESEARCHERS¹, RAISE THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF SCIENTIFIC CAREERS AND FOSTER INVESTMENT IN HUMAN POTENTIAL IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT'

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

RECALLING:

- its Resolution of 10 November 2003 on the profession and the career of researchers within the European Research Area (ERA)²;
- its conclusions of 18 April 2005 on reinforcing human resources in science and technology in the European Research Area³;
- the conclusions of the European Council of 13 and 14 March 2008, which called upon the Member States to remove barriers to the free movement of knowledge by creating a 'fifth freedom' based on, inter alia, enhancing the cross-border mobility of researchers, as well as students, scientists and university teaching staff⁴;
- its conclusions of 30 May 2008 on family-friendly scientific careers: towards an Integrated Model, which recalled the crucial role of research and technological development policy for Europe in the context of the Lisbon Strategy⁵;

¹ Early stage researchers would cover profile R1 - First stage researchers (up to the point of PhD) and profile R2 - Recognised Researcher (PhD holders or equivalent who are not yet fully independent), as described in the European Framework for Research Careers adopted by the ERA Steering Group in Human Resources and Mobility (SGHRM) in 2011.

² OJ C 282, 25.11.2003.

³ 8194/05.

⁴ 7652/1/08 REV 1.

⁵ 10212/08.

- its conclusions of 1 and 2 December 2008 on the definition of a '2020 Vision for the European Research Area'⁶;
 - the report of Ministers Biltgen (LU) and Gago (PT) of 18 May 2009 on a European partnership to improve the attractiveness of RTD careers and the conditions for mobility of researchers in Europe⁷;
 - its conclusions of 2 March 2010 on European researchers' mobility and careers⁸ and its conclusions of 1 December 2015 on research integrity⁹ and gender balance;¹⁰
 - its conclusions of 29 May 2015 on the European Research Area Roadmap 2015-2020 highlighting the role of human capital in the advancement of the ERA and the necessity to strengthen comprehensive human resources strategies and the empowerment of young researchers by providing them with attractive career pathways;¹¹
 - the European Parliament resolution of 9 September 2015 on women's careers in science and universities, and glass ceilings encountered¹²;
 - its conclusions of 27 May 2016 on The transition towards an Open Science system¹³.
1. NOTES that new generations of researchers and scientists are key for Europe's future research and innovation, and will play an important role in a modernised research environment to better address societal and economic challenges.

⁶ 16767/08.

⁷ 10003/09.

⁸ 6833/10.

⁹ 14853/15.

¹⁰ 14846/15.

¹¹ 9351/15.

¹² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0311

¹³ 9526/16.

2. ACKNOWLEDGES that there are important barriers for early stage researchers in entering, remaining and fully contributing to the scientific community and in this regard WELCOMES the aspirations young researchers have identified in the Bratislava Declaration of 19 July 2016¹⁴. STRESSES the need to support early stage researchers in their careers, to foster their talent and to offer them attractive career development opportunities, including for intersectoral public-private sector mobility and international mobility, dual-career opportunities and PhDs in cooperation with industry, while improving the attractiveness of scientific careers for young people.
3. With the aim of empowering and creating better conditions overall for early stage researchers at both European and national level, CALLS UPON the Commission and the Member States to work together to raise awareness about existing initiatives aimed at improving early stage researchers' opportunities and career prospects, irrespective of their gender, and to explore new ways of supporting early stage researchers, also taking into account the best national practices on how to encourage researchers to choose and pursue this career path¹⁵.
4. REAFFIRMS that gender issues are of particular importance in the context of scientific careers, including for early stage researchers, and INVITES the Commission and Member States to continue supporting and implementing gender equality actions and policies and to promote effective work-life balance. CALLS UPON the Members States to promote best practices and policies that seek to dismantle barriers to the advancement of women in research and enhance the diversity of the research community and CALLS ON the Helsinki Group together with the SGHRM to follow up on these issues.

¹⁴ <http://www.eu2016.sk/data/documents/bratislava-declaration-of-young-researchers-final.pdf>

¹⁵ Examples of best practices: <http://declaration.mimuw.edu.pl/best-practices/>

5. ACKNOWLEDGES the important role the European Research Area (ERA) as well as mentoring, funding schemes and networking initiatives¹⁶ can play for the benefit of early stage researchers. INVITES the Commission and the Member States to step up their efforts in making the European Research Area fully operational, notably in removing the remaining barriers to an open labour market for researchers and in further developing attractive working conditions for researchers, including supporting early stage researchers within their national action plans and involving them in the design and implementation of a fully functioning ERA.
6. REAFFIRMS that open, transparent and merit-based recruitment in compliance with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers¹⁷ is essential and INVITES the Commission and Member States to continue raising awareness of the EURAXESS portal and the RESAVER scheme. CALLS ON the Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility to follow-up on these issues.
7. INVITES the Commission and Member States to foster and adequately reward all types of mobility, including virtual mobility, while taking into account the need to close the research and innovation divide across Member States and regions.
8. ENCOURAGES the Commission to examine the possibilities of reinforcing and if necessary adjusting the existing support to the needs of early stage researchers, such as those provided by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions.
9. WELCOMES the set-up of fellowship programmes by several Member States, including programmes that give the opportunity to future applicants to the ERC calls to visit research teams of current ERC grantees.

¹⁶ Such as the COST programme <http://www.cost.eu/>

¹⁷ OJ L75, 22.3.2005.

10. TAKES NOTE of the Commission Communication on a 'New Skills Agenda for Europe'¹⁸ and the accompanying proposals¹⁹ issued in June 2016. and NOTES the importance that early stage researchers' skills and competences should be suited for an evolving research environment, including industry, and for fuelling the knowledge-based economy.
11. STRESSES the need to equip the new generations of researchers with the relevant set of skills giving emphasis to the use of digital technologies, entrepreneurship and knowledge transfer as well as research integrity and open science. REAFFIRMS the importance of a high-quality training for research, in particular doctoral training.
12. TAKES NOTE of the Commission's intention to review the Higher Education Modernisation Agenda and the potential this review can have in improving the synergies between higher education and ERA and addressing the issues relevant to early stage researchers.
13. CALLS UPON the Member States to:
 - a) further promote science, research careers and the importance of early stage researchers in society,
 - b) encourage strengthening science education in all types and levels of curricula, based on best practices and research results, respecting the autonomy of higher education institutions,
 - c) encourage universities and research institutions to establish clearer and more structured career paths, to foster transparent recruitment procedures via instruments such as the 'Open, Transparent and Merit based Recruitment toolkit', to ensure that the new generation of researchers in Europe be trained to become creative, critical, autonomous and responsible risk takers, pushing the boundaries of frontier research, notably through the uptake of the Innovative Doctoral Training Principles from an early stage of education,

¹⁸ 10038/16.

¹⁹ 10205/16 and 10209/16.

- d) promote mentorship activities of senior researchers from universities, research institutions, academies of sciences and industry to work with early stage researchers before, during and after their university studies on a short or long-term basis,
 - e) encourage universities and research institutions to create more opportunities for early stage researchers with the aim of finding a better balance between research and teaching work, and taking into account the need for a family-friendly work environment,
 - f) promote best practices and policies to support the career advancement of early stage women researchers,
 - g) encourage the national funding agencies to consider analysing if and how funding schemes can be improved, strengthening their performance in order to empower early stage researchers and enable them to pursue their ideas,
 - h) facilitate and promote participation of early stage researchers in bilateral and multilateral S&T cooperation schemes and projects, as increased mobility of early stage researchers contributes to the European added value in research excellence,
 - i) encourage adequate support for PhD candidates, establishing it on the basis of quality assessment while respecting the autonomy of the universities and research institutions.
14. INVITES Member States, in accordance with their national legislation, to ensure appropriate social security coverage to all researchers, including doctoral candidates, who are engaged in remunerated research activity.
15. CALLS UPON the Commission to:
- a) explore, in cooperation with the Member States, integrated ways of networking young European researchers and to further facilitate institutional networking at the European level, helping early stage researchers to advance their careers, as well as to introduce them to the tools and grants that exist at regional, national and European level,

- b) continue developing, based on existing monitoring processes and Eurostat's work, in cooperation when appropriate with the OECD, evidence-base for the mobility of researchers and early stage researchers in the ERA, throughout the measurement of flows within the EU and with third countries, without creating unnecessary reporting burden on Member States.
 - c) support the voluntary return of early stage researchers to pursue scientific careers in their countries of origin, thus facilitating inter-institutional networking throughout Europe and international scientific cooperation, while encouraging mobility throughout their careers,
 - d) consider establishing measures such as a recognition prize²⁰ for excellent early stage researchers aimed at supporting their independent research, mobility, networking, and entrepreneurial skills.
16. INVITES early stage researchers to share responsibility in managing their own career paths and to be the ambassadors of the transformations that scientific development brings to society and to actively contribute to the buy in of European citizens to those changes.
17. AGREES to take stock of progress by the end of 2018, together with the Commission and on a regular basis thereafter, within the existing monitoring processes.
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²⁰ Such as the possible creation of a Matej Bel Prize.