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## Career Paths and Mobility of Researchers in Europe

### *Career Paths and Mobility of Researchers in Europe*



*Proceedings of the Conference ESRM2004 and the  
MCFA Events at ESOF2004*

edited by

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## Introduction

Mobility has become an indispensable element in the career trajectory of researchers in almost any discipline, especially of those who are still at an early stage in their career. Working temporarily at another institution and in a different research environment can have a very positive effect on a researchers' professional development, and this applies both to a move in the geographical sense and with regard to employment sector. Geographical mobility of researchers within Europe is vital for the creation of a common European research identity. It is essential for the development and transfer of research competencies and the promotion of scientific excellence. Researcher mobility is therefore decisive for the establishment of a European Research Area and should be promoted already at an early stage. However, despite important improvements that have been made over the last few years, researchers still have to struggle with a whole number of obstacles when they decide to move to another country, or between public and private sectors. Younger researchers who do not yet have the experience and the contacts that their more senior colleagues can rely on are particularly affected by these hindrances.

Policy makers across Europe agree that careers in science and research need to become more attractive in order to be able to achieve the ambitious goals of the Lisbon strategy, namely "to make Europe the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion". Over the last couple of years a whole number of initiatives have been launched at European level in order to improve the framework conditions for researchers in Europe and to provide them with better career prospects. The European Commission has launched an ambitious mobility and career strategy aimed at making Europe more attractive for research talent from all over the world. However, implementation of the associated measures at the level of Member States is advancing only rather slowly, with some countries clearly lagging behind.

Alerted and encouraged by its younger members who have personally experienced serious obstacles to mobility during their PhD training, the association Euroscience, a transdisciplinary grassroots organisation of individual researchers from both the public and the private sector, initiated the project "Doctoral Student Mobility in Europe" back in 2001. Soon after its conception this project was joined by the Marie Curie Fellowship Association (MCFA), the representative body for all former and current holders of a Marie Curie fellowship or other European Community-funded research training grant involving mobility. The initial idea of the project was to create a special "Best Practice Award" to be bestowed upon institutions or networks, honouring outstanding and original contributions towards significant progress in the mobility of European researchers at doctoral level. The Award was intended to be purely symbolic without any monetary prize associated to it. Nevertheless, the organisation of such an award requires financial means, and a proposal for funding was submitted to the European Commission as an "Accompanying Measure" within the Human Potential and Mobility Programme "Improving Human Potential and the Socio-Economic Knowledge Base" in 2001. Unfortunately it was not accepted for funding, and the Award project had to be put on ice for some time.

However, some of the people who had been involved in the project since the beginning were not that easily discouraged and in late 2002 decided to give it a second try, with a slightly different approach. In particular, the organisers abandoned the idea of creating a special "Best Practice Award" as a means of directing the public's attention to the issue of researcher mobility and the obstacles that especially young researchers have to overcome in this context. Instead, it was decided that a big European conference should be organised, where examples of good practice would be presented to a broad audience including researchers, policy makers, representatives of funding bodies, research administrators, as well as media representatives. In order to make sure that the views of young researchers at PhD level would be adequately represented, two more organisations were invited to join the project: the European Council for Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (Eurodoc) as well as the Postgraduates International network (PI-net), both of them federations of national organisations of junior researchers.

This is how the first of the two events covered by these proceedings came about: the conference "*Early Stage Researcher Mobility in Europe: Meeting the Challenges and Promoting Best Practice (ESRM2004)*" took place on 25-27 February 2004 on the beautiful premises of the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon. The conference attracted close to 180 participants from 41 countries, including such far-away places as Japan, Taiwan or the United States. Thanks to the generous support by a whole number of organisations

and foundations a very encouraging number of young researchers from all over Europe, especially also the Eastern European countries, had the opportunity to actively contribute to the event. During the two and a half days of the conference participants had the chance to discuss topics such as the social dimension of researcher mobility, mobility related gender and family issues, or the influence of the cultural framework on early stage mobility. Four keynote speakers from the worlds of research and science policy provided the frame of the conference, and the 15 invited plenary speakers covered a very large variety of topics. Many of them presented examples of good practice from across Europe, both from the side of official authorities such as national ministries or the European Commission and from the side of individual institutions or funding organisations. In the discussions following these talks participants enjoyed the opportunity to exchange their views on mobility and research careers in general, and to lay the foundations for future collaborations with colleagues from other countries. Six parallel workshops on specific subjects gave further opportunity for in-depth discussions.

The second event on which the present proceedings are based was the Career Programme within the Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF2004) in Stockholm in August 2004, or more precisely the part of the ESOF Career Programme that was organised by the Marie Curie Fellowship Association: a session on “Governance of Young Scientist Associations” (organised jointly with the World Academy of Young Scientists – WAYS), a one-day symposium on “Mobility of Researchers in Europe and Beyond”, and a one-day workshop on “Scientific Careers in Europe”. Many of the topics that had been at the centre of the debate in Lisbon were taken up again in Stockholm and were analysed in more detail, taking into account the developments that had taken place in the six months that had passed since the first conference. This close relation between the ESOF Career Programme in Stockholm and the ESRM conference in Lisbon was also reflected in the fact that ESRM2004 had been declared an official satellite event to ESOF2004. However, while the Lisbon conference had been focused very strongly on issues directly related to the mobility of early career researchers, the MCFA events at ESOF2004 had a broader scope and looked at more general issues related to the career paths of researchers in Europe.

Both the mobility conference in Lisbon and the MCFA events in Stockholm included special sessions focussing on the situation of young researchers in Eastern Europe and mobility between the western and the eastern parts of Europe. There were two reasons for organising these sessions: First of all, the organisers wanted to give a special acknowledgement to the fact that Europe is a very heterogeneous place and that the challenges encountered by young researchers in countries like Ireland or Sweden on the one hand and Romania or Turkey on the other are not at all the same. All too often the debate on researcher careers in Europe is dominated by a very western point of view, although with the EU enlargement this is now slowly changing. Secondly, the idea of these sessions was also to foster the dialogue between researchers (and especially between young researchers) from East and West, and to encourage younger participants from Eastern European countries to relate their own experiences to their peers from western countries, in order to learn from each other and perhaps also create a certain curiosity for each other. This dialogue was made possible through the generous sponsorship by the UNESCO Regional Office for Science in Europe (ROSTE), which allowed for the invitation of about 25 young researchers from Eastern and South Eastern Europe to each of the events. The organisers would like to extend their sincere gratitude to UNESCO-ROSTE for this special support without which a lot of very stimulating discussions at the two conferences would not have taken place.

Special thanks are also due to the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian which not only provided the venue and the conference facilities for ESRM2004 but also offered much appreciated technical support during the event. Indispensable help with the logistics of the planning as well as other sponsorship in kind were offered by the Centre for Innovation, Technology and Policy Research, Instituto Superior Técnico, in Lisbon. Local support for the organisation was also received by the Associação dos Bolseiros de Investigação Científica, the Portuguese member organisation of Eurodoc.

The organisers would like to thank all sponsors and supporters who have contributed to the success of the project. Apart from UNESCO-ROSTE the main sponsors of the Lisbon conference were the Stifterverband für die deutsche Wissenschaft (Donors' Association for the Promotion of Sciences and the Humanities in Germany) and the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation). Sponsorship was also received from the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (Portuguese Science and Technology Foundation), GlaxoSmithKline and Unilever Netherlands, as well as the British Council in Lisbon. The MCFA contribution to the ESOF Career Programme was made possible through a grant that the Marie Curie Fellowship Association had received from the European Commission in the framework of a Specific Support

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April 2005

*Dagmar M. Meyer  
on behalf of the editorial team*



## **Organisation and sponsors**

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## Organising team for ESRM 2004

### Early stage Researcher Mobility in Europe: Meeting the Challenges and Promoting Best Practice

<http://www.mariecurie.org/esrm2004/>

#### Jointly organized by:



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## Organising team for the MCFA events at ESOF 2004

### MCFA Events During ESOF 2004 EuroScience Open Forum Careers Programme

[www.esof2004.org](http://www.esof2004.org)

The EuroScience Open Forum 2004 (ESOF2004) was initiated by EuroScience, the main organiser of the event. The Marie Curie Fellowship Association contributed to the ESOF Careers Programme with three events.



<http://www.mariecurie.org/>

The workshop “Governance of Young Scientists Organisations” was jointly organized with the World Academy of Young Scientists.



<http://www.waysnet.org/>

The session on “Mobility of Early Stage Researchers in Europe” within the MCFA Mobility Symposium was jointly organised with the European University Association (EUA).



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