

Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for Competitiveness (Research)

(19 July 2016, Reduta)

MEASURES TO SUPPORT YOUNG RESEARCHERS, RAISE THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF SCIENTIFIC CAREERS AND FOSTER INVESTMENT IN HUMAN POTENTIAL IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Science, technological development and innovation are the engine of welfare and development in Europe. In a complex and fast-changing world, researchers can contribute to a better understanding of the society and to addressing its big challenges. In this context, the new generations of researchers and scientists are key to Europe's future research. There is a need to raise the attractiveness of scientific careers for young people, to support young researchers in their careers, to foster their talent and to offer them attractive career development opportunities. The aim should be to create better conditions overall for young researchers both at European and national level.

Building capacities and developing innovative ways of connecting science to society is a priority under Horizon 2020. This contributes to making science more attractive to young people, increasing society's demand for innovation, and opening up further research and innovation activities.

Researchers' careers have been the subject of several policy initiatives. Examples of these are the Council Resolution of 10 November 2003 on the profession and the career of the researchers within the European Research Area (ERA) and the Council conclusions of 3 June 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 Strategy.

The challenges that young researchers face are recognized and have gained increased importance in recent years. The European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) adopted in 2007 (and revised in 2009) has a strategy with the objective to support early stage researchers. The latest COST progress reports (March and April 2015) show that young researchers in all countries point out a lack of opportunities after the post-doc period. The report states that this may repel even the most enthusiastic and successful young researchers, and complicates the return of the talented next generation researchers back to their countries of origin after their stay abroad. The resulting "brain drain" is thus caused not only by the economic challenges currently facing European countries, but also structural inefficiencies that are often associated with a lack of transparency of what is conceived as the "science managing elites".

Several Commission initiatives have also been launched. In July 2012, the Commission presented a Communication on "A reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth", as a basis for achieving a European research area in which researchers, scientific knowledge and technology circulate freely. With the aim to increase the performance and efficiency of the European

research systems, several priorities and actions have been identified that are relevant for young researchers.

The Commission has in particular worked on ensuring open recruitment through the European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers which ensures that researchers' rights and obligations are upheld across Europe. Moreover, the EURAXESS portal, which is the gateway for any mobile researcher in Europe, has been set up. It is also worth to mention RESAVER, a state of the art retirement savings product that will enable mobile employees to remain affiliated to the same supplementary pension fund when moving between different countries and changing jobs. Another good example is the Innovative Training Networks (ITN) of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions based on the principles for innovative doctoral training which aim to train a new generation of creative, entrepreneurial and innovative early-stage researchers, who are able to convert knowledge and ideas into products and services.

The 'New Skills agenda for Europe' adopted in June 2016 is also of particular importance for research and for young researchers. The quality of their skills is of vital importance in a research environment that is evolving considerably and that is the fuel of our knowledge based economy.

The Slovak Presidency is putting forward at the Informal meeting of Research Ministers "The Bratislava Declaration of Young Researchers", as the outcome of the conference organized on 13 June in Brussels, and invites the Ministers to focus their contributions around the following questions (intervention max. 3 minutes):

- 1. Based on the issues identified here above, what do you consider to be the main challenges and obstacles for young researchers in the EU (including early stage researchers and PhD students)? How could these be addressed to make the research career more attractive?**

- 2. Which follow-up actions and measures can be undertaken at the European and national level to improve the conditions for young researchers? How can the national ERA action plans help addressing these issues?**