

European employment market for researchers: challenges and opportunities:

Some achievements and new instruments

S. Gruber European Commission, DG RTD, Policy and Strategy for Mobility and Human Resources

Europe needs researchers. One of the major policy developments since the beginning of the millennium is the growing perception that the provision of abundant and well trained human resources in research is paramount to the EU's ability to meet its ambitious challenges. This perception was determined by three major political developments :

- * the launch of the **European Research Area**, in January 2000, which provides for the first time a general framework for the designing of a global ambition for European research
- * the commitment by the Heads of State and Government, in **Lisbon**, in March 2000, to **make "Europe the most dynamic and competitive knowledge economy in the world by 2010"**.
- * the commitment taken at the European Council in **Barcelona** (March 2001) to **raise the investment in research in the EU to an average of 3 % of the members states' GDP**, two-thirds of which to originate from the private sector.

While the number of researchers in the European Union rose slightly from 5.4 per 1,000 workforce in 1999 to 5.7 in 2001, the current level of approximately 6 per 1,000 is well below that of countries that are approaching or have achieved the EU's 3% target : the US, with 8.1 researchers per every thousand of the workforce, and Japan, with 9.1 per 1,000¹ have undoubtedly created a competitive gap. As emphasized in the report from the Commission to the Spring European Council of March 2004², the persistence of the current trend would mean that Europe would be faced with major shortages in highly qualified research staff towards the end of the decade.

Fighting these trends and fulfilling the ambitious policy objectives cannot therefore be achieved without a **broad and integrated strategy** involving all stakeholders concerned, and taking stock of the changing environment in which research is pursued. The EU's strategy regarding the development of human resources in R&D has, consequently, developed around three interconnected policy objectives, namely:

- * to substantially **increase the EU funding** for the training, mobility and career development of researchers (the so-called '**Marie Curie Actions**')
- * to **improve the overall environment** for researchers in Europe by enhancing mobility and removing obstacles (The **Mobility Strategy for the ERA**)

¹ Sources: Third European Report on Science and Technology Indicators and Key Figures 2003.

² COM(2004)29 of 21.01.2004 "Delivering Lisbon; reforms for the enlarged Union"

- * to **foster the career development of researchers**, thereby **enhancing the EU's attractiveness** for research talent from around the world (**The Communication: researcher's in the ERA: one profession, multiple careers**).

The European Commission has taken initiatives in all these areas, designing the basis for the emergence of a **global and integrated EU policy** for Human resources in research thus contributing to the development of a European labour market for researchers.

First concrete results have been achieved through the implementation of the Mobility Strategy at both Commission and Member States level:

- Both ERACAREERS – *the pan-European Researcher's Mobility Portal* and ERA-MORE, *the European Network for Mobility Centres* are now fully operational,
- On the more administrative side; adopting and implementing the instruments on the **entry conditions** for non-European researchers (the 'scientific visa') is foreseen for 2004.
- The third strategic axis stems from the perception that **mobility in itself is only an instrument**, and consequently cannot be fully exploited if it not embedded in the development of a career. Offering better **career patterns** to researchers is certainly an area where urgent progress is required, and where the EU suffers from comparative disadvantages with its main competitors on the world scene (the US in particular). The persistence of striking differences in the elements which determine a career in research is clearly detrimental in the long run to the EU's overall attractiveness. It has also a negative influence on the social perception of the researcher's profession in Europe. The different elements which condition the development of careers in research were analysed for the first time at European level in the *Communication: Researchers in the ERA: one profession multiple careers* adopted in July 2003. A series of concrete initiatives are proposed in this Communication and the following are now in the process of being developed.

The European Researchers Charter and Code of conduct for the recruitment of researchers

Based on the structural weaknesses which currently characterize a career in R&D, the objectives and different items to be included in the Charter and the Code have been outlined and discussed since the beginning of 2004 through a process involving major relevant stakeholders of the research community. The consultation process initiated in March 2004 will be further highlighted during a dedicated workshop within the Dutch Presidency Conference "Brain gain : the Instruments", of 29 and 30 September 2004. Based on the outcomes of this preparatory work, a "**Recommendation from the Commission to the Member States**" on the Charter and the Code is foreseen for adoption before the end of 2004.

Both instruments should clearly be regarded, not in the context of a 'regulatory' framework, but as an opportunity for researcher organisations to refer to a document which lays down **common principles and guidelines** for the career management of researchers at the different stages of their career, thus contributing to instil parity of esteem between contract researchers and staff employed on stable contracts.

The presentation will overview the different results of the consultation process related to the items to be included in both the Charter and the Code.