

# IMPROVING THE SOCIAL SECURITY OF INTERNATIONALLY MOBILE RESEARCHERS

DANNY PIETERS & PAUL SCHOUKENS

## LEAGUE OF EUROPEAN RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

Universiteit van Amsterdam - Universitat de Barcelona - University of Cambridge - University of Edinburgh - Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg - Université de Genève - Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg - Helsingin yliopisto (University of Helsinki) - Universiteit Leiden - Katholieke Universiteit Leuven - Imperial College London - University College London - Lunds universitet - Università degli Studi di Milano - Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München - University of Oxford - Université Pierre et Marie Curie, Paris - Université Paris-Sud 11 - Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm - Université de Strasbourg - Universiteit Utrecht - Universität Zürich

## Authors

The main authors of the paper are Danny Pieters and Paul Schoukens, both Professors of Social Security Law at the K.U.Leuven. LERU thanks the experts in its universities who have commented on the initial draft, in particular David Bogle (University College London), Gerard Cielen and Peter Marynen (K.U.Leuven), Vincenzo Ferrari (Università degli Studi di Milano), Christian Jäger (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg), Ann Numhauser-Henning (Lunds universitet) and Frans Pennings (Universiteit Utrecht). The work has been supported by Katrien Maes (LERU chief policy officer) and Joost van Asten (LERU policy officer).

## Summary

- The mobility of researchers constitutes a crucial element in the realisation of a dynamic and successful European Research Area (ERA), but in practice their international mobility is often hindered by obstacles linked to their social protection.
  - The most important factors that contribute to mobility obstacles for researchers include the complicated character of the EU coordination regulations, employment statuses specific to researchers, variations in the provision of non-statutory pension arrangements, the complexity in the nature, length and frequency of researchers' mobility, and the lack of easily available, transparent information in the vicinity of the researcher.
  - These challenges equally apply to, and are even exacerbated for, third country researchers, when they want to move to and inside the EU and when they return to their home country. Family benefits (especially when relatives stay behind in the country of origin) and pension arrangements are often lost because they cannot be exported outside the EU.
  - In addressing the social security component of obstacles to mobility, it is important to realise that there is limited room for solutions. These limits result mainly from three factors, 1) the national sovereignty in matters of social security and labour conditions of researchers, which are competencies that the EU cannot change, 2) EU law and in particular the general coordination regulations for all migrant workers, with which any specific measures for researchers need to be in line, and 3) the variety of researcher profiles (for example depending on the type of employer), the specificities of which call for a differentiated approach.
  - It is with this framework in mind that we formulate a set of recommendations, the aim of which is to identify a number of appropriate options for solutions inspiring the European decision makers to act in this area. It must be realised that their implementation will require significant political stamina, an efficient action strategy and a choice of the most appropriate instruments.
- LERU considers it a matter of high importance and urgency to call for improvements in the social security arrangements enjoyed by mobile researchers. Our main recommendations are:
    - Improve the coordination of social security needs of internationally mobile researchers.
    - Take the example of researchers working at accredited universities or research institutes as a pilot case for other categories of mobile researchers and highly mobile workers in general.
    - Provide early stage researchers who are in professional statuses other than that of an employee, self-employed person or civil servant with social security protection including health care coverage, family allowances and minimal protection in case of work incapacity.
    - Clarify and develop interpretations that are appropriate for the world of research of the new EU coordination regulations coming into force in May 2010.
    - Ensure that third country national researchers active in a member state enjoy fully equal treatment compared to researchers who are EU citizens.
    - Allow second and third pillar pensions to better absorb the negative social security consequences of a typical research career.
    - Develop a network of independent advisers to provide information and counselling on social security matters tailored to the specific needs of mobile researchers and their employers.

## I. The regulatory background

1. The social security status of researchers is regulated by the national law of the country where they perform the research, by bilateral and other international social security instruments concluded by that country, and, as far as relations between EU countries are concerned, by EU law, not least its Coordination regulations<sup>1</sup>.
2. The dispositions of the Regulations are self-executing. As the coordination rules serve the free movement of (professionally active) persons, they are to be interpreted in the light of these principles. Although the aim of the coordination regulations is restricted (i.e. they only coordinate the various social security schemes when people cross borders, without harmonising them), they became quite a complicated piece of European legislation. It should be kept in mind that they coordinate the social security systems of the 27 EU member states.
3. Ultimately, the Regulations have to coordinate the national provisions dealing with the territorial scope of the social security schemes in such a way that for the insured person neither a lack nor an accumulation of protection can occur according to these national schemes. To achieve this, the following coordination techniques are applied<sup>2</sup>:
  - the prohibition of discrimination which is based upon nationality;
  - the designation of one competent state for social security matters;
  - the guarantee of acquired social security rights (or export of social security benefits);
  - the guarantee of social security rights in the course of their acquisition; and
  - the guarantee of a smooth collaboration between social security administrations.

## II. Obstacles to the international mobility of researchers

4. Two distinct but very much related questions are at stake:

- To what extent does social security influence the mobility of researchers?
- To what extent does the mobility of the researcher influence his social security?

The first question is difficult to answer. Attempts have been made in the past to find evidence that a researcher decides on migration on social security related grounds. Most likely the decision for a researcher to do research abroad will rather be motivated by other elements, such as the quality of research there, perhaps also the attractiveness of the salary offered and the possibility to accommodate the researcher's family. Probably the impact of the social security issues is low, if only because researchers seem to have only limited knowledge and interest in the social security consequences when moving to another state. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to conclude that no major initiatives are needed to stimulate the free movement of researchers or at least to eliminate existing social security related barriers to such free movement.

5. The second question is as essential as the first with regard to the promotion of a truly European Research Area: to what extent does researchers' mobility influence their social security in an adverse way? In other words, we should be attentive to all elements causing a researcher to suffer disadvantages merely because of the fact that s/he does research in another country than the one in which s/he previously worked. These mobility-related disadvantages should be eliminated for all workers. This is particularly important for the research world as it allows more mobility, more cooperation and more competition throughout Europe. As such, it could lay the very foundations of a truly dynamic European Research Area.

1. Regulation 1408/71 and Application Regulation 574/72. Regulation (EEC) Council N° 1408/71, 14 June 1971, relates to the application of social security schemes to salaried workers, to non-salaried workers and to members of their family who move within the European Union, OJ L 5 July 1971, issue 149, 2, as often revised afterwards. In principle as of May 1st, 2010 enter into force Basic Regulation 883/2004 and its Implementation Regulation 987/2009 (Regulation (EC) N° 883/2004 European Parliament and Council, 29 April 2004 concerning the coordination of social security schemes, OJ L 30 April 2004, issue 166, 1). In order to make Coordination Regulation 1408/71 also applicable to non-EU-citizens, Regulation 859/2003 has intervened; this has not been realised yet for Regulation 883/2004, meaning that the Regulations 1408/71 and 574/72 remain applicable (even outside the context of transitional measures) to third country nationals.

2. The substantive provisions on coordination are to be found in the Basic Regulations 1408/71 and 883/2004, whilst the Application Regulations 574/72 and 987/2009 contain the provisions on the administration of these EU rules.

6. Over time, the obstacles encountered in realising the European Research Area have been studied; some of these obstacles relate to social security.
7. As far as the mobility of researchers is concerned, it should be recognised that the current situation still presents some important obstacles to the free movement of workers in general and to the specific category of researchers in particular. The free movement of researchers, however, is an essential component of the European Research Area. Such obstacles include the following:
- The complicated character of the EU coordination regulations (both present and future) often make it impossible for researchers to figure out their exact social security status, i.e. what they will be entitled to if a social risk occurs. In other words, when deciding whether or not to pursue a research career not confined to the own national borders, social security questions are not always easy to deal with. The existing Researcher's Mobility Portal<sup>3</sup> is a first positive step, but is far too general and requires pre-knowledge of the social security system of the countries involved, which cannot be assumed for most researchers.
  - The complexity also arises from the fact that sometimes researchers in one country are not subject to the general national rules concerning salaried workers, but may 'enjoy' special social security statuses (e.g. as consequence of a status of 'scholarship holder'; a status specific to university personnel; some special status as civil servant; etc.).
  - Similarly, the situation of researchers, as far as non-statutory supplementary (pension) arrangements are concerned, varies considerably from country to country; for some researchers the supplementary pension scheme will be the main part of their old-age income, whereas for other researchers (in similar institutions, sometimes even within one country) there will be no supplementary pension, but a substantial (civil servant's) statutory pension. For example, leaving a country with substantial statutory pension for a country where the social protection highly depends on the supplementary pension may raise questions as to the opportunity of the mobility when these supplementary pensions are not portable in case the researcher would like to move on later.
  - Specific to the migration of researchers is also its undefined time element. The EU coordination regulations were developed mainly considering the social reality of the (long-term) migration of blue collar workers (from poorer regions of the EU to the more industrialised). Yet the migration reality of the researcher is more complex: there are of course researchers who make a final decision to continue their career in another EU country; most researchers, however, will go to another country for a limited number of months or years, followed by a period back home or by moving to yet another country (transmigration).
- Research itself is an activity which may be linked to a specific place (lab, site, etc.), but which is more and more done in multinational teams that carry out their research in multiple countries. Networks of researchers operating in various parts of Europe, or even globally, have an active interchange of ideas and indeed 'work together' although they may never meet in person. Moreover, some research may be linked to a certain place, but specifically not within the country of the employer. An archaeologist, for instance, may do excavations in Greece, while being employed by a Swedish research institute. Again, the current coordination regulations do provide solutions for such situations, but these are often very complex as concrete realities were not fully considered at the time they were developed.
  - Moreover we have to acknowledge that the primary interest of the researcher lies within carrying out research rather than organising his social security in the best possible way. It often makes the negotiation position of the prospective researcher very weak. Information may be provided, but it has to reach the (prospective or actual) researcher. The quality and quantity of information provided in the vicinity of the researcher (e.g. by his employer) may be rather meagre, even within larger organisations (such as universities etc.).
8. If we go a step further and consider not only the mobility of researchers within the European Union, but also that of researchers into Europe who are currently employed (or otherwise resident) outside the EU, we could add the following challenges:
- The EU coordination mechanisms only deal with intra-European mobility; the social security status of someone coming to the European Research Area from outside Europe will be defined by the bilateral arrangements, if they exist, between the country of origin and the EU country s/he is moving to. If, however, such researchers, once in Europe, want to go and work elsewhere in what is presented to them as

3. See: [www.ec.europa.eu/euraxess](http://www.ec.europa.eu/euraxess)

the European Research Area, they are faced with major complications. Their situation will then be governed by two bilateral treaties (country of origin and EU states involved) and the EU regulations. It goes without saying that things could be simplified.

- The researchers may also want to return to their country of origin when they are no longer able to be active as researchers (due to incapacity to work, old age etc.). Again, the export of their benefits built up in the European Union to the country of origin may raise serious problems.
  - The situation of the researchers from outside the EU becomes especially complex when they leave dependent relatives (especially children) behind or when they have a spouse in the country of origin. Yet previous research has shown the importance of taking into consideration family members for a researcher's mobility. It should be noted that many EU countries exclude or reduce family benefits when they would have to be paid out of the country and that even pensions are not always exported outside the EU.
- These are some obstacles to the realisation of an open and integrated European Research Area; others could be added.

9. Some EU countries show a relatively good record of researchers' mobility, others have hardly any foreign researchers on their territory. This, of course, is related to the state of development of an important research sector in the country concerned. Care should be taken that countries with a small number of highly skilled researchers and a less developed research sector will not suffer from a 'brain drain'. To avoid that, researchers from other countries should be offered good conditions to work in the country, to set up new research domains, etc. This involves of course the ability to pay adequate salaries to the incoming researchers, but also to provide these researchers with social and fiscal security. Often, whereas money can be found, it is much more difficult to give researchers guarantees as to their social coverage (at the moment and possibly later, when they go back to their country or move on, after having started up a new research activity in the country). The issue seems especially relevant for some smaller and some new EU member states.

### III. A framework for finding solutions

10. When addressing the social security component of the difficulties to fully realise an open, attractive and integrated European Research Area, it is important to realise that there is limited room for solutions. These limits result mainly from three factors, graphically represented in Figure 1.
11. Firstly, we have to take into account that member states of the European Union remain to a very large extent sovereign as to how they organise their social security systems, as well as to how they regulate the labour relations of the researchers (e.g. as wage earners, self-employed persons, civil servants, students or as a sui generis category). There is neither a possibility nor the political will within the European Union to change these national competencies fundamentally.
12. Secondly, we should maintain a balance with the general coordination rules established by the European Union for all migrant workers. Finding solutions for mobile researchers may sometimes be possible, but we have to keep in mind that we cannot propose to create 'privileges' for mobile researchers. Any solutions to be found need to be (as much as possible) in line with general solutions and policies. If, however, the European Research Area is to become a reality, and if that should go beyond an integrated market in a specific area of (economic) activity, there can be no objection against removing the obstacles impeding its realisation. This is necessary for achieving the set goal: it is not creating privileges for one group or another. This is also in line with the recognition of the specificity of researchers by the EU legislator when dealing with the access to the EU<sup>4</sup>.

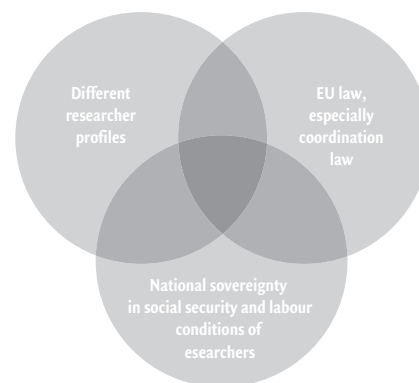


Figure 1 - Framework for finding solutions

4. See e.g. Council Directive 2005/71/EC of 12 October 2005 on a specific procedure for admitting third country national for purposes of scientific research. (OJ L 289 of 3.11.2005)

13. When looking for a solution we are clearly constrained by the present (and future) Treaties establishing the Union. Obviously, it does not make sense to come up with solutions which would require a change of the Treaties. The latter would, for example, be the case if new institutions were to be created, such as a European social insurance for researchers. What is more, the whole coordination apparatus of the European Union will be undergoing a rather important renewal when the Coordination Regulations 883/2004 and 987/2009 become operational as of May 1st, 2010. It will prove rather difficult in the period of introduction of the new regulations to come up with substantial amendments to what was established. It remains possible<sup>5</sup>, but is politically difficult to defend. Practically speaking it means that solutions will rather have to be sought in non-legislative measures to be taken (such as interpretations provided by the Administrative Commission for the Coordination of Social Security Systems, explanatory notes or other measures).
14. In this context it should be noted that the new coordination regulations appear to make life for the researcher more difficult rather than easier. In a nutshell, the new difficulties can be summed up as follows:
- new rules as to the designation of the competent country for students; new rules in relation with the possibilities to posting and a new vision on the Article 17 exception procedure (now Article 16 Basic Regulation)<sup>6</sup>;
  - new rules governing persons who are simultaneously or consecutively operating for one or for different employers in various countries, including the country of residence or not; additionally, difficulties to establish the country of residence;
  - the inability of the coordination regulations (new and old) to properly include funded, even statutory, pension schemes;
  - the very complex and long-lasting transitional period, in which both the old regulations and the new ones will have to be applied.
- Not so much an added problem, but probably an interesting opportunity is offered by the extended possibility to have foreign facts and periods assimilated as if they had occurred in the country concerned. Researchers' periods of military service and especially periods of study could prove to be very important to complement their insurance record.
15. Thirdly, we need to be aware that the very concept of 'researcher' is problematic. We may use the so-called 'Frascati definition' of researchers as "professionals engaged in the conception or creation of new knowledge, products, processes, methods and systems and also in the management of the projects concerned".
16. This implies that researchers may work as scientists and scholars engaged in long-term basic research at large research infrastructures, as more mission-oriented researchers at government labs, as highly qualified wage earners carrying out development work, as staff of high-tech SMEs pursuing technology transfer or product and process innovation, etc. These various groups of researchers call for a differentiated approach because their problems may be quite specific. Moreover, depending upon the group concerned, the definition of the specific group of researchers will be easier or more difficult. Perhaps the easier way to approach this diversity would start from the employer of the researcher; this allows us to make a distinction between:
- researchers working for public or private accredited universities and colleges of higher education<sup>7</sup>;
  - researchers working for public or private accredited research institutions;
  - researchers working for multinational enterprises' research and development divisions;
  - researchers working for SMEs or enterprises operating in a predominantly national environment.
17. We would suggest concentrating our attention in a first stage to the first, possibly the first two categories. Solutions found for them could then be tested for the other categories of researchers. We do not intend to propose solutions for the group of highly mobile workers as a whole, as exactly this group seems particularly affected by some novelties of the coordination regulations 883/2004 and 987/2009. Nevertheless, solutions we put forward in the context of defined groups of researchers may open the road to solutions for other groups of highly mobile workers, such as transportation workers, who seem

5. Regulation 883/2004 was already amended before 2009.

6. Basically this exception allows an agreement between the concerned member states, in the interest of the concerned worker, to designate another country as competent country than the one which would result from the mere application of the other designation rules.

7. All academic staff can in principle be considered for this purpose as researchers, even if their activities include an important part of teaching, as it is essential to academic education to build on research.

- to face considerable new problems with the new coordination regulations.
18. Moreover, the typical career paths followed by researchers in various countries may differ considerably<sup>8</sup>. Researcher profiles may also be differentiated on the basis of the actual or expected duration of the employment. It is clear that a new researcher on a one-year scholarship will face different problems than a tenured professor. As far as feasible we shall try to take into account the variety of problems encountered by the diversity of these groups of researchers. As such these problems are not specific to internationally mobile workers, but in the case of international mobility their problems may indeed be more apparent and severe.
    - Problems may also emerge when the source of the research funding changes, as a result of which it may be rather difficult for the researcher to identify who is to be considered as his/her employer (for social law).
    - Quite wide-spread is the problem that researchers join social security and second-pillar (pension) schemes at a more advanced age than other workers do, which may then jeopardise their insurance record. When they have the choice to join or not, they tend to join social security and above all second- and third-pillar schemes only when their research position appears to be stabilised. At that moment, however, taking a (supplementary) insurance policy may have to compete with other settling-in expenses such as buying a house, having children, etc.
  19. The most important challenges are:
    - Early stage researchers often have an unclear status ‘in between’ that of student and that of ‘employee’ or ‘civil servant’. Sometimes they are artificially labelled as ‘students’ even after obtaining their PhD.
    - Many researchers, in the early but sometimes also later stages of their careers, work under a succession of short-term scholarships, contracts or appointments, often in function of the succession of grants received to do the research. One of the many inconveniences of such a situation is the exclusion of workers from social security and especially from second-pillar pension arrangements<sup>9</sup>. For example, the vesting periods for such pension arrangements may not match the duration of the fixed-term contracts.
    - Specific problems relate to postponing parenthood until one has reached a more or less stable research position, which not only disadvantages female researchers in particular, but has broader family and societal consequences.
    - Those entering research at a more advanced age encounter specific problems, especially in countries where research careers are implicitly assumed to start immediately after the student period.
    - The traditional assumption that a tenured professor will continue to work in the same tenured post for the rest of his/her career creates particular problems. For example, transitions to other universities, research institutions or private employers are often not anticipated by the legislator.
  20. It is within the triangle of national, social and research sovereignty, of the existing European coordination law and of the multiplicity of researcher profiles (cf. Figure 1) that the most appropriate solutions will need to be identified. Certain solutions may put pressure on some sides of the triangle, others will only affect part of the problems or part of the total group of researchers. Some of the solutions brought forward may be parallel or even contradictory. This should not be a major concern at this point of time; the priority now is to identify appropriate options for solutions. Choices will have to be made subsequently at the political level, which can be further developed into one coherent proposal.

## IV. Recommendations

21. We have already stated that LERU’s reform proposal will have to be situated within the triangle represented in Figure 1. If any success is to be obtained in making proposals to solve some if not most of the problems with which internationally mobile researchers are confronted, it will be important to develop an adequate and efficient strategy of action.
22. The recommendations sketched hereafter may be implemented by a variety of instruments, ranging from an EU legislative intervention (creating new or

8. An extensive analysis of career paths and the challenges which researchers face in navigating the diversity of employment conditions is given in a recent paper by LERU entitled “Harvesting talent: Strengthening research careers in Europe”.

9. In describing types of pension provision the first pillar refers the compulsory, mostly pay-as-you-go, statutory pension, the second pillar refers to the supplementary (often funding-based) collective occupational pension and the third pillar comprises individual pension arrangements and life insurances.



amending existing legal instruments), to decisions by the Administrative Commission for the Coordination of Social Security Systems, the elaboration of explanatory notes or the effective dissemination of relevant information. In some cases the choice of instrument may be rather straightforward, though often there may be a certain freedom of choice.

23. We conclude this paper by making the following recommendations for tackling the problems described above:

- The notion of researcher is broad and hard to define. Attempts have been made to provide such a definition (cf. Frascati definition). Yet the formulation, selection and implementation of all parameters in an identical way for all groups of researchers may be difficult if not impossible. Good solutions need to be found for all researchers. Yet the most typical researchers may be found at universities. **We recommend that the problems with which researchers working at accredited universities or in recognised scientific research institutions are confronted, be addressed with priority.**
- We are convinced that the free movement of researchers is especially relevant to the development of the European Research Area and therefore calls for special attention. Differences between social security systems should not be an obstacle for a barrier-free space for European researchers; likewise they should not obstruct enhanced cooperation between research units in various countries. Social dumping to the detriment of the (mobile) researchers should be avoided; competition in research should be based on the quality of research. **We recommend that the EU and its member states affirm that they attach the highest priority to creating the fifth freedom, that of free circulation of knowledge, by removing barriers to the international mobility of researchers. This implies that the free movement of researchers may call for specific social security co-ordination measures, just as the EU recognised this specificity in relation with the access to the EU of third country researchers.**
- The co-ordination of social security systems in favour of persons moving with the European Union has recently been the object of new legislation. As much as possible, solutions should be found which also accommodate the needs of mobile researchers. **We recommend that the improvement of the social security of mobile researchers be conceived as a ‘pilot’ for the improvement of the social security of all highly mobile workers.**
- Researchers are presently working in a wide variety of

capacities (student, bursary, employee, civil servant, etc.). This diversity is an expression of the national competence in these matters. Be that as it may, persons active as researchers should not be deprived of social security coverage. **We recommend that:**

- **early stage researchers who are in professional statuses other than that of employee, self-employed person or civil servant should at least be granted a social security protection providing them with health care coverage, family allowances and some minimal protection in case of work incapacity. They should also get as soon as possible access to the pension insurance.**
  - **it be clearly established, as far as EU coordination is concerned, that, whatever domestic status is attributed to active researchers, mobile researchers have to be considered professionally active persons making use of the free movement of work or of the free movement of services; as such their social security needs to be coordinated.**
  - The EU Coordination Regulations 883/2004 and 987/2009, which will come into force by May 2010, still need to get interpretations which are crucial for their successful implementation, especially in a research surrounding. **We recommend that:**
    - **terminology such as residence, place of work, and employer be interpreted appropriately for the world of research;**
    - **the opportunities and limits of posting and of Article 16 Basic Regulation be clarified as they apply to researchers;**
    - **an appropriate coordination approach for periods of ‘sabbatical leave’ and similar arrangements typical in research be proposed.**
- The EU should prioritise the development of such interpretations in consultation with the sector under consideration. **We also recommend that:**
- **it be examined whether the European funding of individual researchers (such as by the Marie Curie scheme) could be adapted in such a way as to guarantee the mobile researcher a clear and stable link with a substantial social security system.**
  - It is not only the social security status of the individual researcher that matters. **We recommend that the situation of a researcher’s family members, whether they accompany him/her abroad or remain in the country of origin, be taken into consideration. Labour law and tax issues should not be disregarded either.**
  - The social security dimension of working in the EU should be an element to attract third country national researchers to the EU rather than an obstacle to their coming. **We recommend that third country national researchers active in a member state enjoy fully equal treatment compared to researchers who**

are EU citizens. Likewise, social security should facilitate and not obstruct the return of researchers having left the EU. **We recommend therefore that the EU make bilateral agreements with the principal countries that attract EU researchers.**

- Direct or indirect disadvantages related to high international mobility and to other typical features of a research career should be countered as far as possible when considering the constitution and portability of additional social protection arrangements. Ideally the same coordination should be achieved as with the statutory schemes (first pillar) on which they build. **We recommend that solutions be developed allowing second and possibly third pillar (private) pensions to better absorb the negative social security consequences of a typical research career (with a long pre-entry period before becoming an established researcher and the precarious and unpredictable employment status, especially in the first years).**
  - It follows from the above that it is crucial for the actors involved, universities and research institutions as well as the researchers themselves, to be well-informed. Especially the mobile researchers should have access to non-biased and comprehensive information and counselling about the (often complex) social security issues relevant to them. This could be realised by upgrading existing and developing new information channels on the social security status of (actually or potentially) mobile researchers. **We recommend that a network of independent advisers for information and counselling in social security matters be created. These advisers could provide the (actually or potentially) mobile researchers and their employers with a tailored response to their specific needs.** While respecting the linguistic constitutional order of all member states, solutions should also be found to help mobile researchers overcome linguistic barriers to social security information and counselling and to maintain normal relations with the competent social security administrations.
24. LERU submitted these recommendations to the EU Ministers responsible for Research and the EU Ministers responsible for Employment and Social Affairs on 1 March 2010. In the conclusions of the EU Competitiveness Council meeting of 2 March 2010<sup>10</sup>, the Ministers

invite the Commission and the Member States to take action in five areas relating to researchers' mobility and careers. Firstly, the existing information services (e.g. via the web portal EURAXESS) on social security for internationally mobile researchers should be enhanced. Secondly, specific shortcomings in the coordination of Member States' social security schemes should be identified and solutions should be sought to ensure appropriate social security coverage for all remunerated researchers. Thirdly, the need for adequate pension provisions for highly mobile workers will be examined in the context of a planned Commission Green Paper about a European framework for adequate and sustainable pensions. Fourthly, Member States are asked to apply the common principles of flexicurity to research careers and the Commission is invited to draw up specific case studies illustrating the application of such principles. Finally, the importance of skills development by workers in knowledge-intensive sectors should be recognised and linked to the 'new skills for new jobs' agenda and the EU 2020 Strategy.

25. At a meeting of the EU Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council on 8 March 2010, Ministers held an exchange of views on the mobility and careers of researchers based on the conclusions of the Competitiveness Council meeting and in the presence of a number of Ministers from the latter. The provisional conclusions<sup>11</sup> state the need to eliminate obstacles to researchers' mobility and to guarantee decent employment conditions by improving social security rights, including the portability of pension rights. They highlight the relatively small share of women in the European research community, pointing out that the lack of social security rights could mean, for example, that young women researchers were not entitled to paid maternity leave. The Commission is urged to table specific initiatives in order to improve the working conditions of European researchers and facilitate their mobility.

10. [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/intm/113121.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/intm/113121.pdf)

11. [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/113230.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/113230.pdf)

## About LERU

LERU was founded in 2002 as an association of research-intensive universities sharing the values of high-quality teaching in an environment of internationally competitive research. The League is committed to: education through an awareness of the frontiers of human understanding; the creation of new knowledge through basic research, which is the ultimate source of innovation in society; the promotion of research across a broad front, which creates a unique capacity to reconfigure activities in response to new opportunities and problems. The purpose of the League is to advocate these values, to influence policy in Europe and to develop best practice through mutual exchange of experience.

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Position papers make high-level policy statements on a wide range of research and higher education issues. Looking across the horizon, they provide sharp and thought-provoking analyses on matters that are of interest not only to universities, but also to policy makers, governments, businesses and to society at large.

Advice papers provide targeted, practical and detailed analyses of research and higher education matters. They anticipate developing or respond to ongoing issues of concern across a broad area of policy matters or research topics. Advice papers usually provide concrete recommendations for action to certain stakeholders at European, national or other levels.

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Université Pierre et Marie Curie, Paris  
Université Paris-Sud 11  
Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm  
Université de Strasbourg  
Universiteit Utrecht  
Universität Zürich



#### LERU Office

Huis Bethlehem      tel +32 16 32 99 71      www.leru.org  
Schapenstraat 34      fax +32 16 32 99 68      info@leru.org  
B-3000 Leuven  
Belgium