

A EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR RESEARCHERS by Georges Bingen

Si espongono brevemente le ragioni e i punti della Carta Europea dei Ricercatori (destinata agli Stati membri come ai singoli), elencando gli obiettivi e gli strumenti per la valorizzazione della carriera della ricerca in Europa, a partire dal ruolo, le responsabilità, il guadagno, la formazione, la mobilità, i concorsi.

In April this year, the European Commission adopted a Recommendation on the European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers which aims to re-valorise the researchers' careers in Europe, and to facilitate the full exploitation of the EU scientific potential by creating a genuine researcher job market in Europe.

700.000 additional researchers are deemed necessary to attain the 3%-Barcelona objective, on top of the expected replacement of the ageing workforce in research. In this context it is relevant to state that, while the number of researchers in the European Union rose slightly from 5.4 per 1000 workforce in 1999 to 5.7 in 2001, this is well below the level in countries that are near or on the EU 3% R&D investment target (USA 8.1/1000; Japan 9.1/1000).

The identified potential shortage of researchers, particularly in certain key disciplines, will pose a serious threat to EU's innovative strength, knowledge capacity and productivity growth in the near future and may hamper the attainment of the Lisbon and Barcelona objectives. Consequently, Europe must significantly improve its attractiveness to researchers, including with regards to the participation of women researchers.

This presupposes targeted efforts for providing researchers with attractive long term career prospects by improving their employment and working conditions, by making the "professions" in research and development more attractive and by creating more favourable conditions for every form of mobility within a given research career path.

The Recommendation by the Commission addresses Member States, employers, funding organisations and all researchers in the European Union at all stages of their career. It covers all fields of research in the public and private sectors, irrespective of the nature of the appointment or employment, the legal status of the employer or the type of organisation or establishment in which the work is carried out.

The Recommendation encourages them to undertake, on a voluntary basis, further initiatives for the improvement and consolidation of researcher's career prospects in Europe and for the creation of an open labour market for researchers. The initiative of the Commission, undertaken jointly with the Member States in the framework of the so-called "open method of coordination" introduced to achieve the objective of the Lisbon strategy by collaboration on volunteer basis rather than exclusively on the basis of rules and regulations, has been taken as a result from the fact that research careers in Europe are fragmented at local, regional, national or sectoral level, which does not allow the full exploitation of the EU scientific potential.

What are these instruments?

The Commission Recommendation identifies a comprehensive series of principles and a set of statements of minimum requirements referred to as The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

The European Charter for Researchers addresses the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers and their employers or funding organisations. It aims at ensuring that the nature of the relationship between these parties is conducive to successful performance in the generation, transfer, sharing and dissemination of knowledge and technological development and to the career development of researchers.

The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers aims to improve the recruitment and selection procedures and proposes different means of judging merit.

Both instruments constitute an authoritative reference point for all those who are responsible for developing, enhancing and maintaining a supportive research working environment and culture for researchers, and for the researchers themselves. They are invited to act

responsibly and as professionals within their working environment, and to recognise each other as such.

The Recommendation also invites Member States to consider The Charter and the Code as an integral part of institutional quality assurance mechanisms by regarding them as a means for establishing funding criteria for national/regional funding schemes, and by adopting them for the auditing, monitoring and evaluation processes of public bodies.

And last but not least Member States are invited to put in place the necessary

monitoring structures to review this Recommendation regularly, as well as to measure the extent to which employers, funders and researchers apply these two new instruments.

The general principles and requirements outlined in this Recommendation are the fruits of a public consultation process which took place between March and December 2004 and are based on good practice of Member States and other stakeholders within the research community in Europe.



GEORGES BINGEN

Lavora alla Commissione Europea, Direzione Generale Ricerca, ed è capo dell'unità Fattore umano, mobilità ed azioni Marie Curie, politica e strategie.

Contatti:

UE - DG Research

Square de Meeus 8

B 1049 Bruxelles