

## Key messages Report Workshop on Strengthening Research Careers

On 15 May 2024 IrishRSA and [ICoRSA](#) held a joint virtual workshop titled [Strengthening Research Careers](#). This event was co-hosted by Dr. Mikey Creane (International Officer at [IrishRSA](#)), Dr. Bruno Pereira (President of the Portuguese Researchers Association, [ANICT](#)) and Mrs Carolina Varela (ICoRSA). The event started with a warm welcome from Dr. Mikey Creane who set out the objectives of the workshop which were (1) to create awareness of Action 4 of the ERA Policy Agenda and the support measures that are part of the European Framework for Research Careers (2) to create awareness of how researchers can engage locally and nationally to address the challenges related to research careers and professional growth. Mikey then introduced Luísa Henriques (Senior Policy Analyst and Advisor to the Board of Directors of FCT- Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia), who was the guest speaker of the workshop. Dr. Henriques not only has a vast amount of experience in these particular topics but most importantly is co-sponsor of Action 4 on Attractive and Sustainable Research Careers from the ERA Policy Agenda (2022-2024), in the ERA FORUM.

### Summary report of key messages

- The European Member States approved the Council Recommendation on the European Framework for Research Careers<sup>1</sup> on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The Framework is a result of the political initiative, the European Research Area (ERA) created in 2000. The Council Recommendation sets the **standards and objectives** to be achieved by all stakeholders, including **norms and actions** from each sector and organisation. Its implementation must be a result of **collective effort**.
- The components of the European Research Career Framework include:
  - A **new definition of the researcher profession and research support personnel**, research managers included as well as within the research careers.
  - The recognition, interoperability and comparability of careers.
  - Recommendations on career assessment, development and progression.
  - Recognition, interoperability and comparability of careers.
  - Instruments and initiatives to support its implementation:
    - Observatory on research careers to monitor research careers.
    - Set-up of the [ERA Talent Platform](#) as a one-stop-shop online gateway to EURAXESS services.
    - The [European Competence Framework \(ResearchComp\)](#) is a tool to help researchers identify their skills and needs for training and employers to identify the type of skills researchers might have.
- The Council Recommendation is a non-binding legal instrument that requires the will of EU Member States for its effective implementation.
- Although it took 23 years since the creation of ERA to have a consolidated framework on research careers, this long process included **consultation processes with representatives of Member States, university and Industry sector, researchers, and other stakeholders**. For its effective implementation at the national and local levels, the collective effort must be

---

<sup>1</sup> More information about the Framework and the Decision process:  
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/12/08/council-reaches-political-agreement-on-how-to-keep-attract-and-retain-research-innovation-and-entrepreneurial-talents-in-europe/>

supported through appropriate consultations and sharing of best practices between organizations that employ researchers, researchers' representatives as associations and unions and all the departments that work directly with research.

- Furthermore, data should be collected at both national and institutional levels on the planning and monitorization of the different areas that compose research careers.
- Researchers should engage with their host institutions via their local/national research staff networks or associations to promote transparent research career initiatives and services.
- The interoperability of researchers between sectors needs to be followed by incentives and tracking systems by host institutions:
  - with research assessment models adjusted to the career track of the researcher including time spent outside the academia.
  - Career incentives that allow researchers to return to academia without losing any career progression benefits.
  - Career tracking services and systems to monitor the career track, profiles and training needs of researchers.
- One of the main challenges affecting research careers is the precarious nature of short-term project-based contracts and lack of employment benefits at different career levels. These challenges need to be addressed with long-term investment. Approaches to tackle the problem include<sup>2</sup>:
  - Funding investment:
    - tenure-track models that promote permanent positions and research careers paths.
    - States should promote individual funding schemes that promote a framework of good quality research to balance the existing focus on excellence-based research only. This broadens the access to funding for researchers that do not have the access to the type of research conditions and career training (Member State specific) needed to achieve elite funding schemes and promotes higher success rates.
    - Rethink funding models of State budget for higher education institutions. The current models of state budget are often not adjusted to the trends and needs in Education and Research.
  - Avoid the use of precarious mechanisms as fellowships as much as possible **as institutional practices**.
  - Constant consultations with sector representatives (Researcher representatives, Rectors/Presidents Conferences, staff unions) regarding any changes on law, funding or career related practices, at both institutional and state levels.
  - Career tracking mechanisms and services for all career levels.

Video and presentation available [here](#).

#### Authors

**Dr Mikey Creane**, International Officer at IrishRSA and Research Fellow at the Regenerative Medicine Institute of University of Galway

**Dr Bruno Pereira**, President of ANICT and Associate Researcher/Project leader at i3S - Instituto de Investigação e Inovação em Saúde, Universidade do Porto

**Mrs Carolina Varela**, administrative officer at ICORSA

<sup>2</sup> Following the recommendations by the Council's European Research Career framework

*The employability and career development of early-career researchers would benefit from dedicated incentives for their recruitment, such as financial and social protection incentives, including opportunities for permanent or open-ended contracts in line with Council Directive 1999/70/EC of 28 June 1999. In this respect, a wider use of baseline funding or life-cycle research funding could be promoted alongside project-based funding. Baseline funding provides higher education institutions or research organisations with a projection of guaranteed financial support in return for meeting certain deliverables and quality standards; life-cycle funding is characterised by an initial competition for funding that is renewed if assessed positively following a monitoring process.*