

# Shaping the Future of Research Careers: From Policy to Implementation

**Structural Policy on Research Careers Meeting  
and National Event  
Ljubljana, Slovenia 5-6 May 2026**

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# National Approaches and Perspectives on Implementation

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**Council Recommendation C/2023/1640**  
on a European Framework to Attract and  
Retain Research, Innovation, and  
Entrepreneurial Talents in Europe (RECO)  
was adopted in 2023 to address the

- attractiveness and precarity of research careers
- unbalanced circulation of researchers
- and support Member States in the European Union to improve research careers

# Mutual Learning Exercise on Research Careers

- 16 Member States, 5 Experts, European Commission
- Support **national implementation** of the RECO
- Exchange of information, experiences, good practices
- Four topics
  1. Recruitment, Working Conditions, Career Development and Progression
  2. Skills and Intersectoral, Interdisciplinary, and Interoperable Careers
  3. Enabling Conditions for Attractive Research and Innovation Systems and Balanced Circulation of Talents
  4. A Conducive Policy and Legal Context for Attractive Research Careers including Incentives for the Implementation of the European Charter for Researchers

# Structure and Approach

## *Focus on Researchers*

Investing in Researchers for a Thriving R&I Ecosystem

Developing the Environment for attractive Research Careers

Supporting Skills Development and Mobility

# Conclusions

It is important to stress that MS have been developing researcher career policy since the foundation of the ERA in 2000. However, **the RECO is the first time that MS and EC have collaborated to develop a comprehensive research career framework.**

There is **no single solution or approach** that will work for all MS.

There is a clear need for **collective responsibility** among policymakers, employers, and funders of researchers to support researcher careers.

The combination of policy options and good practice examples provide a **toolbox for MS** to adopt and adapt to their national R&I system.



# Recommendations

# Implement the RECO

1. National policymakers should **put research talent at the heart of R&I investment**. The policies should include initiatives to develop more attractive research careers for researchers and implement the 44 recommendations of the RECO. Research organisations should be supported to offer attractive research careers by having access to the necessary financial means and operating in regulatory and policy frameworks aligned with RECO.
2. National policymakers **should integrate the European Charter for Researchers into R&I policy** and provide funding to support implementation by research funders, universities, and research organisations in the public and private sectors.

# Develop the Environment for Research Careers

3. MS should **encourage and support research funders, universities, and research organisations to adopt open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment** and ensure that the legal and policy framework is conducive to reforms for researcher recruitment.

4. MS should **develop long-term national strategies to balance the level of core/baseline and project-based/competitive funding and stimulate more tenure track-like models and open-ended/permanent contracts** to reduce precarity by ensuring adequate national funding and that the legal and policy framework is conducive to such reforms.

# Develop the Environment for Research Careers

5. MS should **benchmark researcher salaries against other high-skilled professions across sectors and improve the salaries of researchers** as well as **strengthen the social protection benefits of researchers** and ensure that researchers at all career stages and with all types of contracts have **equal access to relevant social protection benefits**.

6. MS should **support the reform of researcher assessment** by ensuring that the legal and policy framework is conducive to reforms for researcher assessment and supporting the adoption and implementation of principles and commitments in the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment by their research-performing and research-funding organisations.

# Support Skills Development and Mobility

7. MS should **adopt a national skills/competence framework for researchers which is aligned with ResearchComp** to guide national regulations, policies, and funding for the skills development of researchers and integrate a professional development component and funding for researchers to cover relevant costs into research project grants.

8. **MS should promote and develop funding programmes to stimulate and support the interdisciplinary, intersectoral, and international mobility of researchers** as well as ensure that the legal and policy framework for mobility is conducive to reforms.

# Policy Toolbox

# Policy Toolbox for Attractive Research Careers

## Box 1: Boosting the Attractiveness of Research Careers for Researchers

**Comprehensive R&I Policy:** Develop an interlinked R&I policy and governance framework to boost R&I activities consisting of:

- An analysis of strengths and weaknesses
- A comprehensive R&I strategy setting spending and performance goals and specifying policies to reach these goals
- Legally enshrined multi-annual budgetary frameworks for a steady growth of public financing of both public and private-sector R&I activities, ensuring predictability of funding and a healthy balance between competitive and baseline funding
- Advice on policies, monitoring of progress, and evaluation of effects by independent experts or research councils
- Policy decisions based on data and evidence on research careers collected by Member States and relevant stakeholders including ReICO

**Stakeholder Collaboration:** Build public and political support for investment in R&I by bringing all stakeholders on board, e.g. via studies on the impact of research, good communication on policies with all levels of the research system, transparent indicators on the effect of activities, and efforts at increasing trust in science

**Research Resources:** Develop research infrastructures aligned with EU-level capacities.

# Policy Toolbox for Attractive Research Careers

## Box 3: Encouraging the Implementation of the European Charter for Researchers

**National Charter Adoption Campaigns:** Launch voluntary endorsement drives (e.g. ministerial letters, public pledges, or charters) urging all research institutions to implement the European Charter for Researchers. The goal is to raise awareness and signal high-level support for Charter principles, prompting widespread uptake without legally mandating compliance. This approach preserves institutional freedom while creating moral and reputational incentives for universities to align with national research career goals

**Guidelines and Good Practice Sharing:** Develop national guidelines, toolkits and forums to help institutions implement Charter principles in their own context. For example, governments can publish good practice manuals and convene workshops where universities and other public/private research organisations which have adopted the Charter share lessons learned. Fostering the establishment of national or regional communities of practice could provide further support, enabling institutions to improve policies (like recruitment transparency or mentorship programmes) at their own pace, ensuring alignment with national strategy objectives while respecting each institution's autonomy and unique needs

**Institutional Action Plans with Autonomy:** Invite or encourage each university and research organisation to craft its own Charter implementation action plan aligned with broad national priorities. Rather than top-down regulation, institutions could set tailored targets (such as improving postdoctoral career pathways or establishing new faculty evaluation criteria in line with the Charter) and timelines for achieving them. This voluntary planning approach fosters institutional ownership of reforms and innovation in how Charter principles are put into practice, all while fitting into the country's overall strategy for more attractive and sustainable research careers.

# Policy Toolbox for Attractive Research Careers

## Box 7: Supporting the Skills Development and Mobility of Researchers

**Skills/competence Frameworks:** Implement a comprehensive skills/competence framework for researchers at the national level which aligns with ResearchComp. The framework should include all relevant research and transversal skills/competences and identify obligatory skills/competences for researchers across all career stages. The framework should guide national regulations, policies, and funding for the skills development of researchers. Researchers need to be made aware of and supported in the use of such a national framework

**Professional Development:** Ensure that research-performing and research-funding organisations provide adequate support for the professional development of their researchers (including skills development and career support services) through national regulations and policies. Such support should be offered to researchers at all career stages but is especially important for early-career researchers and could be structurally integrated into doctoral and postdoctoral programmes. Research project grants aimed at researchers could include a professional development component and funding for researchers to cover costs for skills development and career support. The national Euraxess bridgehead organisations and service centres could lastly be further strengthened and expanded to support researchers at the national level

**Interdisciplinary, Intersectoral, and International Mobility:** Ensure that national regulations and policies facilitate and do not hinder the mobility of researchers. Funding programmes focused on stimulating the different types of mobility should be created or strengthened and expanded. Research-performing and research-funding organisations should be encouraged to provide adequate support for mobility (including skills development and mobility support services) and recognise (the time spent on and value of) mobility activities by researchers in researcher assessment. Researchers need to be made aware of the benefits of the different types of mobility and the opportunities available to them to be mobile. Non-academic organisations lastly need to be made aware of the value of a PhD and the skills/competences of researchers.



The image features a stylized lighthouse with a white body, red accents, and a glowing yellow lantern room. It stands on a blue globe. The background consists of concentric green circles and blue wavy lines. The word 'Progress' is written in a bold, dark blue font.

# Progress



- **Study - Support for Career Development in Research Organisations: Selected Themes (National Training Fund)**
  - examines key factors influencing scientific careers in the Czech Republic, with a primary focus on early-career researchers.
- **Professional Workshop on “Supporting Career Growth in Research Organizations”**
  - Recommendations including fixed and transparent salaries for senior positions, transparent recruitment for senior positions; fundamental reform of doctoral studies; national postdoc fellowship

# Poland



- **Polskie Powroty (Polish Returns) Program**, recognises MSCA periods as part of career track (<https://nawa.gov.pl/en/scientists/polish-returns>).
- The **Ulam Programme** - NAWA is now open to MSCA Seal of Excellence holders from any of the HE MSCA PF
- **A new pilot : Researchers at risk - NAWA** – requires serious rethinking due to the following eligibility requirement: excludes Ukrainian researchers.
- A new program: **TOP200 NAWA** (<https://nawa.gov.pl/en/scientists/top200-nawa>).



## Strengthening internal HR policies aligned with HREiR

We are in the process of implementing the HREiR process.

INESC TEC is a co-founding member of the HR4EXCELLENCE Portugal Community of Practice, created together with [@Luísa Henriques](#) who has been a key driver of this initiative.

INESC TEC also participated in a CSA proposal on research careers, which builds on the MLE findings and on the Council Recommendation.

## New performance appraisal and career framework aligned with ResearchComp and the Council Recommendation

We are introducing a new performance appraisal system based on competence frameworks and goal-setting, broadening evaluation criteria in line with the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA).

Narrative CVs and more holistic evaluation practices are being integrated into internal calls and career mechanisms, with explicit recognition of diverse contributions beyond publications.

We are developing a new careers framework aligned with the R1 and R4 profiles in a way that there is no formal requirement of a PhD for progression in the scientific career, and the possibility to recognise professional competence and experience as equivalent to a PhD. Dedicated career paths for research managers and research technicians are also being created.

## Support for lifelong learning

We are reinforcing a culture of lifelong learning and continuous skills development, with a stronger focus on transferable skills to support intersectoral mobility and promote employability.

Internal training, knowledge dissemination, and recognition of expertise are being systematised as part of our HR strategy.

## Health and well-being initiatives

We are continuing to develop our health and well-being programme, which was cited in the first thematic MLE report as an “inspiring example”.

## Internal structures to support research careers

We are consolidating internal support structures, including:

a Students' Support Office (PhD support and career guidance),

an Entrepreneurship Office (innovation and start-ups), and

a Project Management Office (capacity building and support for project teams).

# Slovenia



## Mapping against the Council Recommendation on Research Careers

Slovenia has a relatively strong formal and institutional basis for implementation, especially regarding researcher profiles, early-career support, collective agreements, EURAXESS, the Charter for Researchers and European university alliances. Main gaps concern recognition of diverse and non-linear careers, inter-sectoral mobility, systematic career development support, and reform of research assessment.

Council Recommendation point	What the Recommendation asks for	Slovenian situation	
Points 5–6	Use the R1–R4 profiles for researchers and distinguish early-career and senior researchers.	Slovenian normative framework — ZRID (Science and Innovation Act) and ARIS (Slovenian Research Funding Organization) act on titles — largely follows the conceptual framework. Some institutions and EURAXESS vacancies use these profiles.	Partly implemented. Slovenia has a broadly compatible formal framework, but uptake appears uneven across institutions.
Point 7	Full recognition of researchers' careers and equal esteem/reward of different career paths across sectors, institutions and Member States.	Slovenia does not enable full recognition, interoperability or comparability because institutions autonomously regulate and recognize research titles; SICRIS also supports quantitative bibliometric indicators for appointments.	Weak/not fully implemented. Institutional autonomy and quantitative evaluation mechanisms limit comparability and equal recognition of diverse research careers.
Points 8–9	Encourage non-linear, multi-career and hybrid paths; implement ESCO updates concerning researchers' occupations and skills.	Slovenia lacks measures supporting non-linear, diverse and hybrid career paths. A study on alignment of the national research career system with EU/OECD recommendations is ongoing (ending 12/2026).	No clear national measures yet, but an analytical basis is being prepared.

# Thank you!

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All reports and factsheet are publicly available here: <https://projects.research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/en/statistics/policy-support-facility/psf-challenge/mutual-learning-exercise-research-careers>



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