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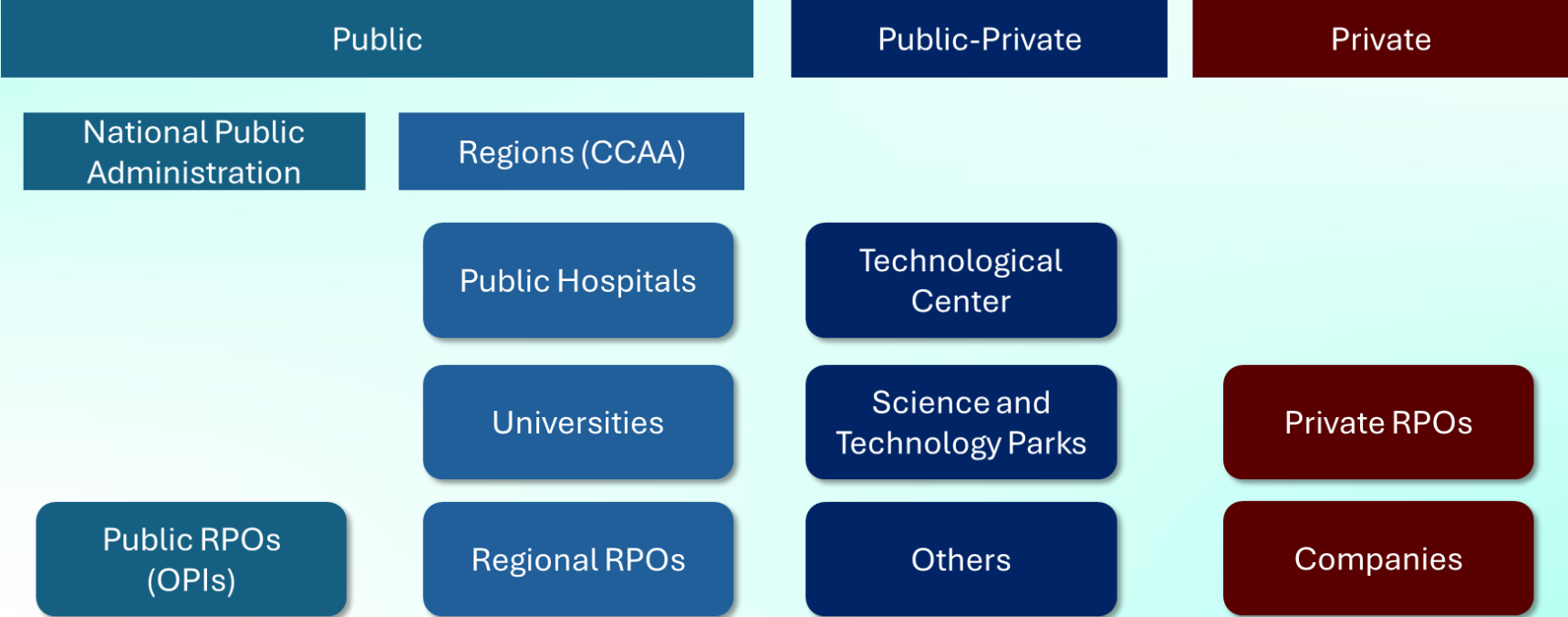
MINISTERIO
DE CIENCIA, INNOVACIÓN
Y UNIVERSIDADES



Spanish experience of implementing the Council Recommendation on Research Careers

Xavier Eekhout & Elisa García
FECYT

Understanding the Science and Technology Systems (SECTI): Implementers



Understanding the Science and Technology Systems (SECTI): National Public RPOs and Universities

Public RPOs (OPIs)

- The Spanish National Research Council (CSIC),
- The Research Centre for Energy, Environment and Technology (CIEMAT),
- The Carlos III Health Institute (ISCI),
- The Institute of Astrophysics of the Canary Islands (IAC)

Universities



50 public universities

- Focus of this presentation & measures
- Subject to limitations of Public Administration

<https://www.euraxess.es/spain/science-spain/public-research-bodies>

Understanding the Science and Technology Systems (SECTI): Regional RPOs

<https://ciencia.asturias.es/instituciones-y-centros-de-investigación-e-innovación>



<https://www.science.eus/es/centros-de-investigacion>

<https://www.usc.gal/es/investigar-en-la-usc/institutos-centros-investigacion>



<https://cerca.cat/>



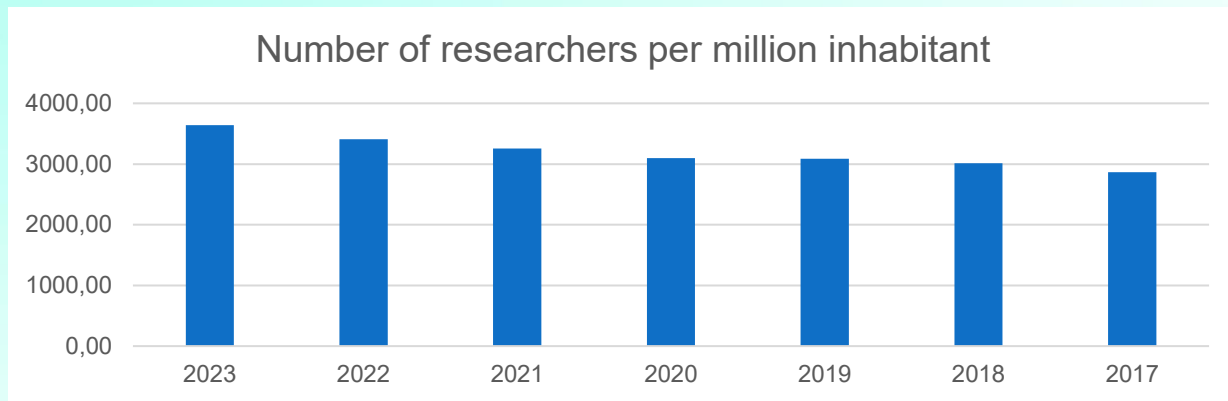
<https://www.imdea.org/>

https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/html/especiales/CelulasMadres/AJ-CM_CentrosInvestigacion/index.html



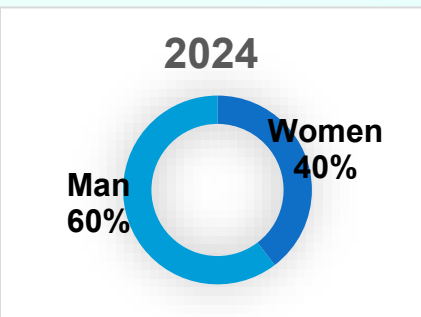
Red Española de Centros de I+D+I RECIDI

Research Personnel of the SECTI

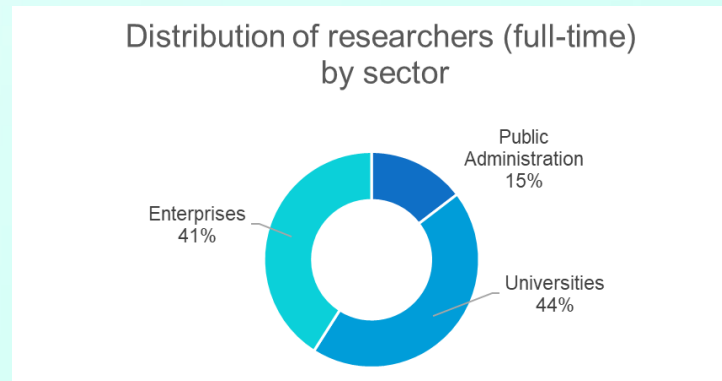


- Total personnel employed in R&D (FTE): 295,290 people (2024)
- Researchers only (FTE): 184,382 researcher
- Historical maximum for ES, but below EU average

39% increase of R&D personnel in 10 years



| 2024 | |
|---|-------|
| Percentage of R&D personnel relative to the employed population | 1,4% |
| Percentage of researchers as part of R&D personnel | 62,0% |



Data source: EUROSTAT & INE

Understanding the Science and Technology Systems (SECTI): Positions in the Public Research System

Regulated by the Science and Technology Act and the Organization of the University System Act:

Fixed term contracts:

- ***Contrato Predoctoral (PhD researcher)***, whose minimum duration is 1 year and cannot be held for longer than 4 years independently of the hosting institution, or 6 years in case of disability.
- ***Contrato de Acceso del Personal Investigador (Postdoctoral Researcher and Assistant Professor)***, whose minimum duration is 3 years and cannot be held for longer than 6 years independently of the hosting institution or 8 years in case of justified disabilities. All of this time will be extended in case of paternal or maternal leaves and caring duties of dependants.
- ***Ayudante doctor (Assistant Professor)***, a position only offered by universities, lasts for 6 years independently of the hosting university.
- ***Profesor Visitante (Visiting Teacher)***, a 2-year contract to teach at a university.

Understanding the Science and Technology Systems (SECTI): Positions in the Public Research System

Regulated by the Science and Technology Act and the Organization of the University System Act:

Open-ended contracts:

- ***Contrato de Actividades científico-técnicas (Research/Scientist Fellow)*** is a contract to hire staff dedicated to research activities, whether researchers or supporting staff, as well as research managers.
- ***Contrato de Investigador Distinguido (Associate Researcher)*** is a contract to hire a highly internationally recognized researcher, which duration is mutually agreed among employer and employee.
- ***Profesor Distinguido, (Associate Professor)*** is a contract to hire a highly internationally recognized lecturer or professor at a university, which duration is mutually agreed among employer and employee.

Understanding the Science and Technology Systems (SECTI): Positions in the Public Research System

Regulated by the Science and Technology Act and the Organization of the University System Act:

Permanent contracts (labour or civil servant nature):

- ***Profesor Permanente Laboral (Lecturer and Professor)*** is a permanent contract to hire a researcher with teaching responsibilities in universities. The recruitment processes is based on the competition of merits.
- **Civil servant permanent positions** whose sources of funding come from intramural structural funds, recruitment processes are also based on competition of merits:

Científico Titular, Investigador Científico, and Catedrático Investigador at national public RPOs,

Profesor Titular (Lecturer), and *Catedrático* (Full Professor) at universities.

Understanding the Science and Technology Systems (SECTI): Policy framework

Law 17/2022 amending Law 14/2011 on Science, Technology and Innovation (Ley de la Ciencia):

- Greater stability in research careers
- Improved working conditions and labour rights
- Attraction and retention of talent
- Equality, diversity and gender mainstreaming
- Strengthened governance of the science system
- Stronger focus on knowledge transfer and innovation
- Administrative simplification and better research management

Organic Law 2/2023 on the Spanish University System (LOSU):

- A renewed model of university governance
- More stable and predictable university funding
- Reform of academic careers and reduction of precariousness
- Recognition and strengthening of technical and support staff
- Students at the centre of the university system
- Commitment to equality, diversity and sustainability
- Integration of teaching, research and knowledge transfer
- Strong alignment with European higher education and research policies

Policy framework vs Council Recommendation

| | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p>Pillar 1</p> <p>Researchers, Research Managers, and Research Technicians in the European Research Area</p> <p>#1-6</p> | <p>Pillar 2</p> <p>Recognition, Interoperability, and Comparability of Researchers' Careers</p> <p>#7-10</p> | <p>Pillar 3</p> <p>Recruitment and Working Conditions</p> <p>#11-15</p> | <p>Pillar 4</p> <p>Researchers Skilled for Intersectoral and Interdisciplinary Careers and for Entrepreneurship and Innovation</p> <p>#16-25</p> |
| <p>Pillar 5</p> <p>Career Assessment, Development, and Progression</p> <p>#26-30</p> | <p>Pillar 6</p> <p>Balanced Circulation of Talents and Making the Union an Attractive Destination</p> <p>#31-32</p> | <p>Pillar 7</p> <p>Support Actions for Research Careers</p> <p>#33-39</p> | <p>Pillar 8</p> <p>Monitoring of Research Careers</p> <p>#40-44</p> |

Policy framework vs Council Recommendation

Pillar 1 – Researchers, Research Managers and Research Technicians in the ERA

| Ley de la Ciencia (2022) | LOSU (2023) |
|--|--|
| Explicit recognition of researchers, technical staff and research support staff as part of the R&I system, including technical and management profiles | Explicit recognition of research support staff (technical, management & administration) as a strategic pillar of the university system, with career development and training |

Pillar 2 – Recognition, Interoperability and Comparability of Careers

| Ley de la Ciencia (2022) | LOSU (2023) |
|---|--|
| Structured research career pathways aligned with national evaluation mechanisms (predoctoral, postdoctoral, R3 certification) | Alignment of academic careers with national research career frameworks |

Policy framework vs Council Recommendation

Pillar 3 – Recruitment and Working Conditions

| Ley de la Ciencia (2022) | LOSU (2023) |
|---|--|
| Introduction of open-ended scientific-technical contracts; full labour and social rights regardless of funding source | Limitation of structurally precarious figures (e.g. associate professors); principles of decent work and work-life balance |

Pillar 4 – Skills, Intersectoral Careers, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

| Ley de la Ciencia (2022) | LOSU (2023) |
|--|--|
| Legal recognition of knowledge transfer (technological and societal); support for spin-offs and public-private compatibility | Transfer recognised as a core university mission; stronger links with industry and society |

Policy framework vs Council Recommendation

Pillar 5 – Career Assessment, Development and Progression

| Ley de la Ciencia (2022) | LOSU (2023) |
|---|---|
| Evaluation mechanisms linked to career progression and stabilisation (e.g. access contract, R3) | Periodic evaluation of academic staff integrating teaching, research and transfer |

Pillar 6 – Balanced Circulation of Talent and International Attractiveness

| Ley de la Ciencia (2022) | LOSU (2023) |
|---|---|
| Facilitated recruitment of international researchers; promotion of mobility | Internationalisation as a strategic objective of universities |

Policy framework vs Council Recommendation

Pillar 7 – Supportive Frameworks, Governance and Funding

| Ley de la Ciencia (2022) | LOSU (2023) |
|---|--|
| Stronger strategic planning of the national science system; flexibility in managing competitive funds | Renewed university governance; multiannual programme-based funding; accountability |

Pillar 8 – Monitoring of Research Careers

| Ley de la Ciencia (2022) | LOSU (2023) |
|---|---|
| National tools for monitoring research trajectories and career stages | Institutional responsibility for evaluation, reporting and performance tracking |



Full labour recognition of PhD researchers

Mixed system (Royal Decree 63/2006 Estatuto del PIF):

- Initial years under scholarship status.
- Final years under a labour relationship.

Employment-based status: Doctoral candidates are formally recognised as **employees**, not scholarship holders, through the predoctoral contract model (Science Law 14/2011)

Social protection: PhD researchers now enjoy full social security coverage, including unemployment benefits, sick leave, maternity/paternity leave and pension contributions.

Severance rights: The 2022 reform extended the right to **end-of-contract compensation** to predoctoral researchers, reinforcing their status as workers under general labour law.

Challenges:

- Long process until full recognition has been achieved



The Contract for Scientific and Technical Activities

Included in Ley de la Ciencia 2022 (23bis)

Open ended contract for carrying out tasks related to **research lines** or scientific-technical services,

Allows adding **funding sources around a line** and thus guarantees continuity

Does not require prior authorization if there is prior funding or it comes from competitive actions (not-linked to wage bill or reposition rate)

For research personnel: scientific, technical, or management (non-structural)

Overcomes the limitations of work and service contracts

Increase in projects overheads to cover end of contract payouts

Challenges:

- Definition of research lines by institutions (Danger: definition of research line= project)
- Legal uncertainty over the type of severance rights (fair vs unfair dismissal)
- Career progression and inclusion in collective agreements
- Creating parallel career paths (vs Contrato de Acceso del Personal Investigador->R3->Civil Servant)
- Compatibility with funding programmes



R3 certification



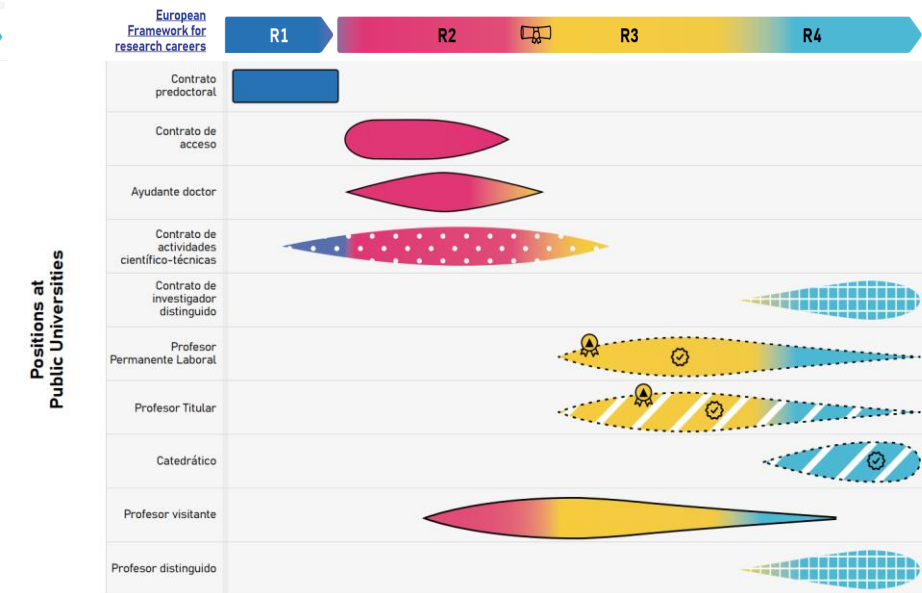
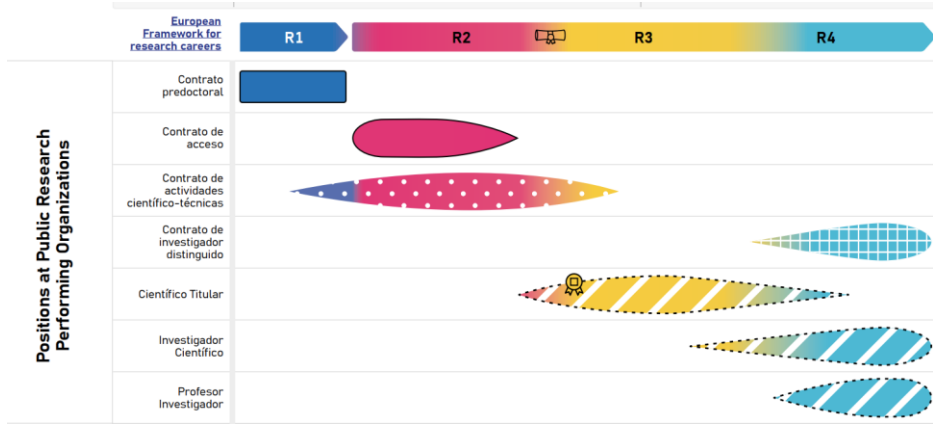
- Non-mandatory certification
- Certificate as an established researcher (R3) that facilitates stabilization
- Possibility of accessing the accreditation process:
 - 2 years for other postdoctoral researchers with an access contract (R2),
 - with more than 3 years of postdoctoral experience within Spain or abroad

Advantages:

- Clear criteria for a R3 researcher
- Exemption from part of the tests for access to stable positions for permanent position entry level
- Reservation of replacement rate for these contracts (at least 15% in universities and 25% in OPIs)
- Implementation of advantages in universities (habilitation processes)



Alignment to European Framework for Research Careers (R1–R4)

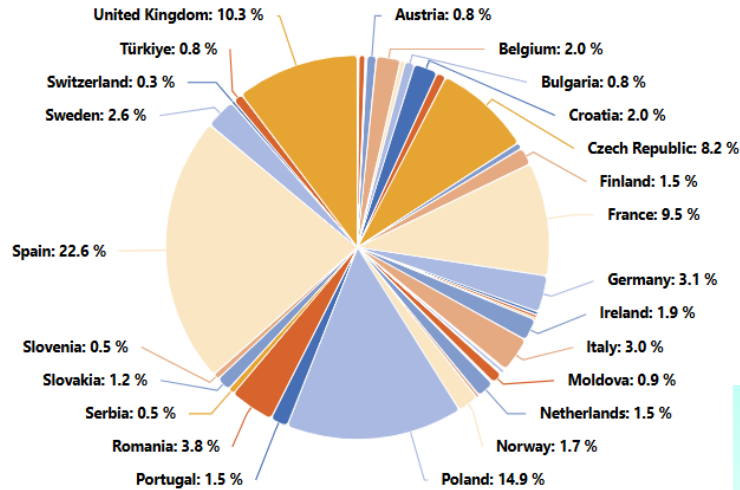


[Researcher Career Path in Spain at a Glance! \(9th Edition\) | Fecyt](#)

Challenges:

- Only Public RPOs and Universities (e.g., Regional RPOs, Health Research System)
- Link with career development content for researchers

Implementation of HRS4R in Spain



168 institutions awarded

EU4 - Annual Multi-Country Agreement (2010/2010/2010) 11.11 - December 2014

SECTION 4 - OTHER RULES AND OBLIGATIONS

ARTICLE 12 - RECRUITMENT AND WORKING CONDITIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

12.1 Obligations to take measures to implement the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

The beneficiary must take all measures to implement the principles set out in the Commission Recommendation on the Code of Conduct (2012) for the Recruitment and Work Conditions for the Recruitment of Researchers in particular regarding:

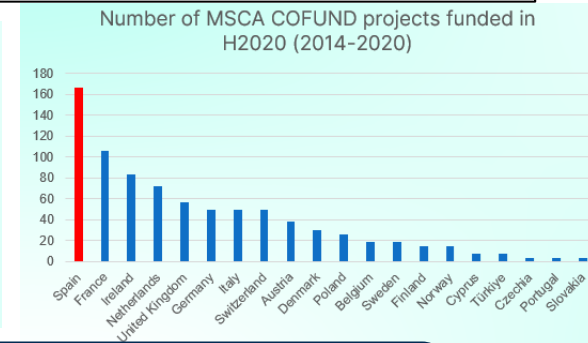
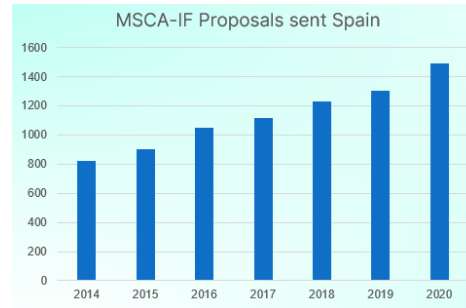
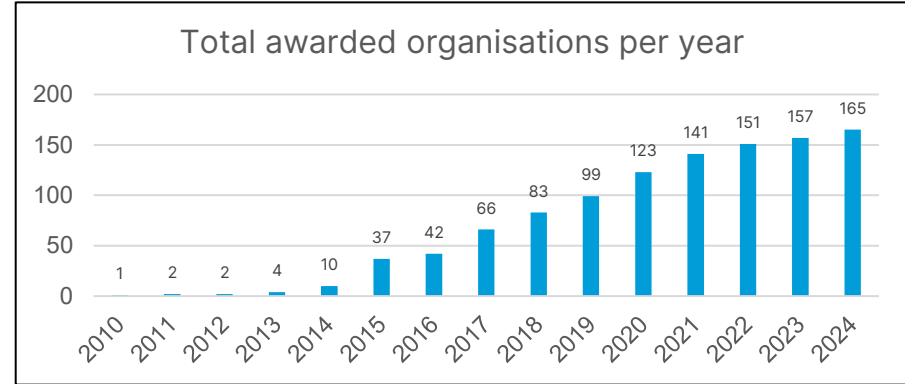
- recruitment procedures
- recruitment procedures based on merit and open to all
- work conditions

The beneficiary must ensure that researchers and third parties involved in the review are aware of these.

12.2 Compliance of non-compliance

If the beneficiary breaches an obligation under this Article the Commission/Agency may apply any of the measures described in Clause 8.

* Commission Recommendation (2012) 12 of 11 June 2012 on the European Charter for Researchers and on the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment and Work Conditions for the Recruitment of Researchers (2012/12/11)



Challenges:

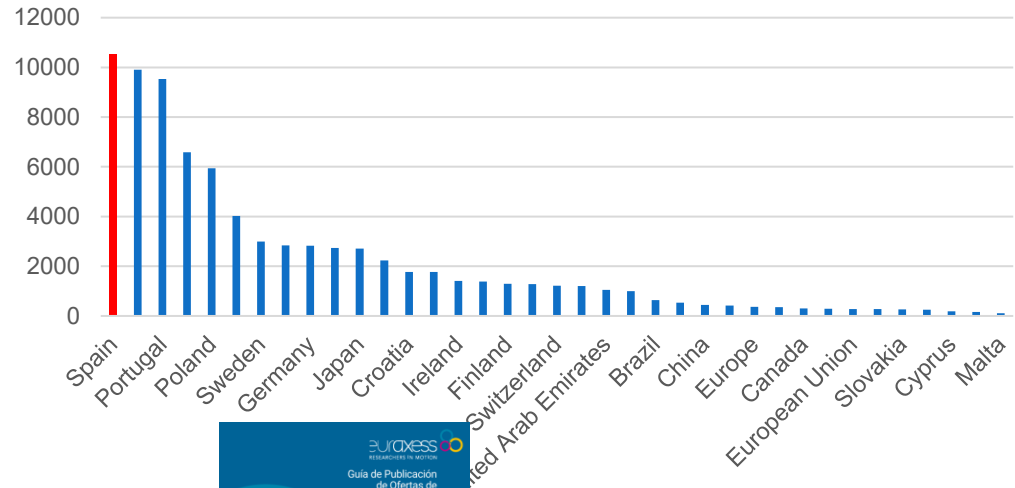
- Added value of HR Excellence in Research Award for the institutions
- Leveraging this community

Mandatory publication in EURAXESS for Universities

Most publications for **project-related positions** (including research support staff)

Royal Decree 678/2023 of 18 July, regulating the state accreditation for access to university teaching bodies, provides in Article 29.3 that: “Notices of competition calls shall be communicated, at least one month prior to the holding of the competition, to the registry of the EURAXESS Jobs platform managed by the Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology (FECYT).”

EURAXESS Job publications 2025



Challenges:

- Resources & timing issues
- Language barrier
- Definition of positions
- Linking EURAXESS ad with official source

[GuiaEuraxess_Jobs.pdf](#)



Funding programmes to recruit researchers in other sectors

Industrial PhD Programme

Annual calls since 2014
Budget ca. 8M€/year (4M€ until 2022)
90–120 doctoral contracts
4-year contracts

Torres Quevedo Programme

Annual calls since 2001
Budget ca. 20M€/year 90–120
350–400 PhD contracts/year
3-year contracts
Co-financed: Up to 70% of labour costs
~90% of beneficiary entities developed
new products, processes or services
Positive long-term retention of PhDs in
the private sector

Challenges:

- Lower-than-expected completion rates 2014–2022 cohorts in Industrial PhD
- Competitive salary vs industry



Facilitating intersectoral mobility of researchers

Article 17 of Science Law (2022). Mobility of Researchers:

- Public agents of SECTI will promote & recognise mobility
 - Geographical mobility
 - Interdisciplinary mobility
 - Intersectoral mobility
 - Between public and private sector
- Teaching and non-permanent activities (Art 17.5)
- Secondments (Art 17.2)
 - Max. 5 years
 - In the interest of institution of origin
 - For private destination, legal connection remains (incl. IPR)

| BEFORE REFORM | AFTER REFORM |
|---|--|
| Were only allowed between public entities and public and participatory private non-profit organizations | Are allowed between public entities, and public and private sector |
| Between national entities | National and international entities |
| Full time | Full and part-time (double affiliation) |

Challenges:

- Only civil servant research positions

Sexenio de Transferencia



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2018 Pilot of the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA): six-year individual evaluation scheme designed to recognise and reward knowledge transfer and societal engagement activities:

- Commercialisation (patents, licences, spin-offs)
- Contract research and co-creation with public or private entities
- Policy advice and expert participation
- Professional and lifelong learning activities
- Cultural production and dissemination
- Social innovation, citizen science and community engagement

Challenges:

- Persistent ambiguity about what counts as “transfer”, particularly regarding social, cultural and policy-related contributions
- Transfer outputs are highly heterogeneous, context-dependent and often non-standardised
- Economic forms of transfer were more easily recognised and scored than social or cultural ones
- Gender biases, as women were disproportionately involved in social transfer activities that were undervalued by evaluation panels
- Only for civil servant permanent positions

ANECA and the Ministry are currently redesigning to address these challenges



Funding programmes to support institutional capacities

Severo Ochoa and María de Maeztu Programme

Recognise internationally leading research centres and units of excellence

Since 2013

Total budget 78 M€ (2025)

4.5 M€ for centres & 2.2M€ for units (8-10 funded / year)

Evaluated by independent international scientific committee

Eligible uses include:

- Implementation of four-year strategic research plans
- Recruitment and attraction of international talent (senior researchers, postdocs, predoctoral researchers)
- Strengthening of research infrastructure and scientific management
- Promotion of international collaboration and mobility
- Training activities, outreach, and knowledge transfer
- Improvement of governance, evaluation, and long-term sustainability of centres and unit

Challenges:

- Synergies with other funding programmes (e.g., MSCA COFUND)



Funding programmes to support institutional capacities

Redes y Gestores I+D+i Programme

Supports thematic research networks
and professional R&I management
structures

Annual

Total budget 5-10 M€

Max. 100.000€ for networks (40-80
funded / year) and 70.000€ for R&I
management structures (30-50 funded
per year)

Research Networks eligible uses:

- Coordination meetings and workshops
- Networking and collaboration activities
- Preparation of joint international project proposals
- Development of shared scientific or technological agendas
- Dissemination and visibility activities

R&I Management and Support eligible uses:

- Professionalisation and training of R&I management staff
- Creation or consolidation of project management offices
- Development of tools for proposal preparation, monitoring and evaluation
- Support for internationalisation and participation in European programmes
- Good-practice exchange and benchmarking among institutions

Challenges:

- Sustainability of R&I management structures



Support to career transitions

RESEARCHERS BEYOND ACADEMIA MENTORING PROGRAMME 2025-2026



Have you ever received an inspiring not-so-expected piece of advice that at some point could change your life?



euraxess RESEARCHERS IN MOTION

RESEARCHERS BEYOND ACADEMIA EXPLORER by euraxess

IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR AND BEYOND, GO TOGETHER



Challenges:

- Higher institutional uptake of analogue/comparable practices
- Use as leverage for further academia – industry collaborations



Simplification of legal and administrative requirements



Participation in Interministerial Agreement on Visa Procedures

Working group with Secretary of State of Science and Innovation and Secretary of State for Migration to (i) identify bottlenecks of Spain's fast-track entry procedure for researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs (Ley 14/2013) and (ii) to generate specific guides for researchers

Draft Royal Decree on academic and professional recognition and verification of official university degrees obtained in foreign higher education systems

Challenges:

- Interministerial Agreement also covers students
- Ensuring dialogue and engagement of relevant stakeholders
- Ensuring dissemination of outputs

General challenges faced by Spain to further advance in the implementation of the Council Recommendations

- Competitive salaries of researchers
- Limited structural funding for institutions (in the case of universities also dependant on regional governments)
- Limitations for many organisations to apply long-term institutional strategies
- Limited funding of national calls for research projects (e.g., the salary of a postdoctoral researcher can take ca. 90% of the funding granted for a Project)

THANK YOU

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