

# General Rapporteur

Conference Summary

# Issues and Context

## Researchers as 'special case'

If so – better use of derogations to tailor policy to their needs – are they a special case?  
(doubtful that this argument can stand however specific features of academic careers esp at ECS)

Examples of distinguishing characteristics:

- long pre-qualification period
- short terms contracts
- multiple mobility
- likelihood of self initiated moves (job to job mobility rather than within a company)
- public and political expectation that mobility is a specific ingredient in the career
- Nature of the work is international in some cases
- *public sector employees/civil service*
- low relative remuneration
- Grant funding – difficult to pin down who is responsible for pension provision
- Status of doctoral researchers – stipends etc.

# Issues and Context

Examples of when researchers are NOT a special case

- Researchers also work in companies (definitional issue)
- High levels of national and transnational mobility in other sectors (communications industry) and in private industry
- In terms of multinational employees – longer term moves within a company do entail engagement with the host state social security scheme – so impact for pillar 1 pension (less impact on pillar2)
- Self initiated moves between private sector employers – the same issues as researchers
- Moving between employment statuses is common eg self employment/employment (although less likely to be employed on a stipend)
- Specific issue of status of foreign researchers – existing legislation exists to promote the non-discrimination principle – this should be actively promoted to prevent 'special' status approaches to foreign post-docs. (the only problem is they might 'want' this kind of special status.....)

# Issues and Context

## **Institutional Context and Diversity**

- National/regional diversity
- Differences between subject areas/disciplines (researchers in social sciences less mobile)
- Externally funded fellowships – how to promote common practice – who funds rights- Different treatment of researchers in the same institutions (Marie Curie eg)
- Definition of researchers is increasingly problematic.

# Issues and Context

## Other Specific Issues

- Civil servants in Germany – and ECJ ruling deters mobility – encourages ‚saying-put‘
- Regional /federal diversity in Germany
- Performance related supplements not part of pensions assessment
- Purchasing power – both within countries and between
- Vesting period of 5 years
- Declining confidence /trust in pensions schemes esp for ECR

# Effective Policy Making

- Repeated reference to the need for 'pragmatism'
- Use existing legal routes? – if private pensions are a way forward – EU measures exist to support this – need to encourage MS to go beyond narrow implementation of the Directive
- Additional policy initiatives in the context of current complexity may generate 'collateral damage' – policy externalities
- Reference to need for on-going impact assessments to assess policy impact/effect (eg impact on actual volume of positions – fall by 40%)
- More 'joined-up' thinking at EC level – joint meeting of Ministers of social affairs and ministers of research
- Does development of special private pensions for researchers confront the solidarity principle (threat to bases of public pensions schemes)
- Need consistency /transparency and compatibility
- Keep things simple and visible

# Effective Policy Making

## Engaging Stakeholders

- Full engagement with all stakeholders is important to make recommendations 'politically sound'
- Of particular importance to determine the views of researchers themselves in this process and find out what they want /feel will work for them.
- Engage with Trades Unions.
- Also engage with current and potential pensions providers.
- Key targets (partners in shared responsibility – but be really clear who policy proposals are targeted at)
- Member states
- Federal governments
- Institutions
- Individual researchers

# Effective Policy Making

## Engage with Potential Providers/Actors

- Need to encourage /put pressure on financial service industry to increase their awareness of this group of employees – respond to labour markets changes – flexibility agenda – address cross border issues and develop new cross border products
- Where should policy be aimed?
- Devolution in German system – implies that policy will have to be aimed at institutions themselves/ Lander – at least in the short term
- Institutions key players at interface of ERA/EAHE

# Effective Policy Making

## Capturing Current Policy Momentum

- Strategy? Important to capture current policy momentum
- Link initiatives to Charter and Code – or to Bologna process – Green paper consultation exercise
- Should issue of working conditions of researchers be addressed as part of Bologna Process?

# Effective Policy Making

## Evidence Based Policy Making

- Proposal for a feasibility study on pan-European fund for researchers – to determine how such funds could be set up and operate and prevent policy externalities – how would such a fund respond to national diversity?
- Proposal – to build on the model used by global companies – policy borrowing from other sectors? ( will it work – are these people paid a lot more???)
- Sponsors at EU and MS level need to devote some funding to support research in the field – identifying new solutions to pensions and also increasing awareness of the need for intervention – clarify key issues re statutory, supplementary and private pensions
- Link this to EURODOC proposal to run a survey of young researchers (link this to issue about engaging with researchers – finding out what they want – what they would actually find useful)
- Identification of 'good practice' as policy tool? – suggestions to look at good practice in, eg Scandinavia re status of researchers

# Tools for Change

## Information/ Advice

- Better Information / advice – esp for ECR – improved information on pensions etc on mobility portals – websites - talk of on-line information system – pensions tool at European Commission level?? ( will this work /cope with complexity - be enough?? – look at Swedish model?)
- Need reliable /competent advice
- Information issue is also needed to support cultural change
- Better information encourages individual responsibility /autonomy
- Not just information – financial education /awareness is needed – public authorities /universities – have done very little to education employees on pensions issues – should this be part of HR systems?
- Can pension issues become part of doctoral training/institutional induction?
- Better information on pensions not only promotes mobility but also, critically aid return moves (Czech republic).

# Tools for Change

## **Delivering Better Information and Advice**

- Researchers need careful tailored advice.
- Mobility Centres – what role should these have – in relation to universities – what is the best place for this kind of advice to be provided – should mobility centres advise universities.
- Cascade System – train the trainers
- One suggestion that this is linked to the international office to support a more grounded approach. (selection of best location may depend on the specific institutional organisation)
- Good practice – Foundation in France to support foreign researchers (Vincent de Graauw)
- Do the kinds of networks developed to support mutual recognition offer an example of how we can deal with pensions advice?
- Role of existing pension providers? Or – maybe also part of the responsibility of existing pensions providers (USS for example)

# Tools for Change

## **Mechanisms to Improve Pensions Contributions**

- ,top up' payments to EC researchers on stipends/low pay – specifically ear-marked for pensions /social security
- Link to pension ,back pack' idea
- Pan-European Pension Scheme? Pension providers to open up pan-European pension scheme? ( suggestion to focus on 2nd and 3rd pillars)
- How would this work in practice? How would it interface with existing ( compulsory and/or employer subsidised schemes) – is it simply to ,fill in holes'?
- Taxation issues here? (public subsidy) – no European competency to act on this? ( might be changing...)
- Where researchers are on a low income /stipends – maybe a tax credit system could operate?
- Cut vesting periods in German context to 2 years?

# Future Actions

- Berlin Declaration could be starting point for series of workshops on other related issues: Health Insurance / family allowances / wider approach to ,risk'