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EUROPEAN COMMISSION GREEN PAPER,
***“INVENTING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER. THE EUROPEAN
RESEARCH AREA: NEW PERSPECTIVES”***

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INTRODUCTION

The European Commission has published in April 2007 its Green Paper, *The European Research Area: New Perspectives* [1], with the intention of starting a public and institutional debate on the structuring and enhancement of the ERA, in order to prepare its initiatives for the year 2008.

MCFA gathers more than 4000 European researchers granted a Marie Curie Fellowship and has become the voice of “mobile researchers” in Europe. The Association has often taken part in the past to the policy debate in Europe regarding mobility and science careers. Suggestions and recommendations come directly from the personal working and living experience of the researchers and from different internal debates and continuous exchange of ideas through different means (newletters, discussion forums, papers, workshops and participation to conferences).

MCFA therefore welcomes the possibility to give its feedback to the Commission Paper, wishing to offer its perspective on the main topics contained in the document and contribute to the debate on the future of the ERA.

The ERA vision reported in the Green Paper focuses on the six main topics which correspond to the key principles of the Lisbon agenda set in 2000. Due to work and life experience of the Marie Curie Fellows, the MCFA wishes to comment on the first one, namely the importance and establishment of an *adequate flow of competent researchers*.



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1. THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA VISION

We agree essentially with the progress made in structuring and fostering the ERA through:

- the Research Framework Programme, the establishment of the ERC and of the EIT (European Institute of Technology);
- the European Technology Platform and the ERA-Net;

and the different policy coordination procedures and actions such as the “open method for coordination”, the “broad-based innovation strategy” and the use of Structural Funds to support the less developed regions in Europe. We believe that the primary means for Europe to retain its prosperity is through fully embracing a development based on research.

As an obstacle towards reaching the goal of a research-based European economy, we want to point directly the fragmentation of the European public research base which still exists preventing the fulfilling of the research potential in Europe. Researchers still suffer from barriers existing in the national labour markets: nepotism, unclear recruitment procedures, difficulties regarding inter-institutional mobility, sectors and countries. Research activities across countries are essentially uncoordinated and resources risk therefore to be wasted in unnecessary duplication efforts, although we believe that competition leads to a strive for excellence in Science and coordination should not discourage (apparently) less successful groups from their research efforts. Duplication may in fact have a positive impact such as creating an atmosphere of healthy competition between excellent groups.

We also believe that, still retaining the “open method for coordination” leaving substantially important decision on the public research base to the national governments, the Commission must further encourage the achievement of targets of the R&D expenditure be set at a higher percentage of the GDP – which is now stuck at 1.9%. In order to fulfil this objective, the ERA should also be able to attract more investments from the private business sector and we believe that this aim may be reached, for example through:

- promoting industry-academia pathways by more intense collaboration, exchange of researchers and knowledge: presently the flow is mainly in one direction, being rather difficult if not impossible to access or go back to Academia after an employment period in Industry;
- facilitating the joint protection of new, useful and original ideas and products;
- promoting the patenting and commercialisation of new technologies especially in the academic environment;
- lowering the taxation/allowing incentives for BES investments in R&D.

Additionally, the building of the ERA is menaced by the lack of career structures for young researchers. It is absolutely necessary to address the bottleneck problem existing between post-docs and more stable academic positions. In general, there is a strong need for allowing long-term career perspectives to young researchers to make scientific careers more attractive and give visibility to research in Europe by rewarding the work and engagement of researchers, especially at the early stages.



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Following our internal discussion among MCFA members we identified an element of major concern which has been partially neglected in the guidelines to the enhancement and development of a successful ERA, i.e. the European great tradition for social conscience, culture and social inclusion. That is, the “adequate flow of competent researchers” seems a definition unable to take into account that researchers are individuals with their own needs, aspirations, wishes and dreams. Too often mobile researchers have to make hard choices regarding their families and personal life to pursue a career. This is especially true for women researchers who still find it very difficult to reconcile work and family needs. More and more couples of researchers have to face the dual – career problem and the question of favouring one of the two careers may have negative effects on the family life.

It is therefore important to provide the European Research Area with adequate structures and legal/administrative/financial instruments which require employers to care for the *complete researcher*, including his/her spouse and children. As a consequence of this approach, it would be possible to make scientific careers more attractive, thus retaining more researchers in Europe and preventing them from leaving research.

In our view, another element which in our opinion needs to be addressed is the definition of scientific merit, a key element to support the realisation of a successful scientific career. Too often the meaning of scientific performance is related to specific contexts, such as industry and academia, sectors and countries and the researcher’s age. The need for a more comprehensive and uniform definition and criteria of evaluation is relevant to foster a unique and flexible labour market, to facilitate industry-academia pathways and enhance in general mobility, to emphasise the professional role of researchers and therefore make scientific careers more attractive. Equally important is of course the recognition of scientific merit through transparent and fair recruitment policies and strategies.



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2. MAKING ERA A REALITY: REALISING A SINGLE LABOUR MARKET FOR RESEARCHERS

The GP reads:

“Researchers should be stimulated by a single labour market with attractive working conditions for both men and women, involving notably the absence of financial or administrative obstacles to trans-national mobility.

There should be full opening of academic research positions and national research programmes across Europe, with a strong drive to recruit researchers internationally, and easy movement between disciplines and between the public and private sectors – such mobility becoming a standard feature of a successful research career.”

This vision raises a wealth of related and inter-related issues which in our opinions need to be dealt with simultaneously to be able to create an effective single open labour market in the research field.

General principles

We appreciate the effort of the GP of going beyond national cultures promoting in its vision common and uniform approaches and the need of European frameworks, referring especially to those situations where patronage and forms of recruitment which in general lack transparency may reduce employment opportunities and force researchers to find work positions abroad.

This is reflected in the *brain drain* phenomenon and is in general felt as a negative aspect of a scientific career, making it less attractive. *Brain drain* is also an undesirable effect of a substantial lack of job opportunities for researchers, especially in and after the post-doctoral phase. A problem arises because of the ill-defined notion of “postdoctoral researcher”, considered not even a proper “job”, with post-doctoral positions considered of a different nature than other professional positions. The situation has become critical, with post-docs, in many countries, not even reported in national statistics for employment. Conversely, researchers have clear professional responsibilities: doctoral and post-doctoral students often account for a relevant part of scientific production and also carry out teaching and tutoring activities. It has often been underlined how urgent is to address the problem of the career development and advancement of these researchers especially to more stable positions. Often early stage or mid-stage researchers are employed under fixed term contracts, especially in the public sector, and the lack of perspectives push them to find another position where an opportunity (not always a *better* opportunity) arises, or to leave. Sometimes the available position does not even fit their scientific profile actually bringing to an end their scientific career. The latter may be defined as a *brain loss* mechanism and deserves attention.

When mobility is emphasised as a key element of the ERA it should be addressed as an *increased opportunity* for a researcher career not as a forced choice.

A single labour market should eventually be established with this in mind. We highly discourage the brandishing of mobility as *the only way* to pursue a scientific career with its frequently related



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relocation problems. Transparent recruitment processes should be strongly encouraged by the EC to ensure in a meritocratic and progression system the employment of skilled and competent researchers regardless their gender, age and country. In a merit-based system, with an increased possibility of long-term perspectives for their careers, researchers would consider mobility as an *increased opportunity* and an *effective way* to access scientific resources of different types and the supervision of/collaboration with outstanding scientists.

This general principle should apply to all forms of mobility: national, trans-national, inter-sectoral and inter-institutional and be fundamental in the definition of the *flexicurity* as it is referred to in the Green Paper and in attracting foreign researchers to European research institutions.

If *flexicurity* is actually promoted (as to some extent it actually is in anglo-saxon countries), even short-term employments would not be felt as negative and as symptoms of absence of career perspectives, provided that the appointment period ensures professional growth and actually represents a fruitful career step. In a truly flexible job market there would be increased chances to be employed shortly after the previous contract has expired.

Also, measures like reintegration-grants would ideally benefit from *flexicurity* as the returning researcher would not be afraid of running out of funds and then be unemployed at the end of the contract. Such concerns are detrimental and many researchers give up the idea of considering reintegration in their home countries mainly for this reason.

However, in the long run, researchers as any other employee need to perceive that the security of their job increases in order to set-up and raise a family ensuring an appropriate quality of life and stability to it. This means that being mobile should not be seen in all cases as a *permanet status* of a researcher career unless in the situations when it is a personal choice which can be actually implemented for various reasons.

Although the MCFA recognises the practical hurdles and great difficulty in the harmonisation of salaries at the European level, a parallel increase and standardisation of salary levels for researchers would be important to help establish a unique labour market in Europe and make scientific careers more attractive. Comparable documented levels of expertise and skills should be allowed a quite similar net salary. Posts which require comparable skills and levels of education and expertise should not be unequally rewarded in a unique and fair research labour market. This, again, would make mobility a forced choice sometimes or the preferred choice but not the optimal opportunity to meet the standards of a good scientific career.

MCFA agrees on the fact that mobility is related to the *transfer of knowledge*. Mobility is in general the fastest way to exchange ideas and know-how on methods, findings, processes through researchers themselves who carry with them their scientific background and receive training strengthening and enriching their competence in their scientific field. This is especially true for some disciplines (such as like natural sciences and the technology field in general) which require available and sometimes highly specialised (and costly) equipment and the physical presence in the lab.



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In this respect mobility also helps the process of the Europeanisation of science due to a free and improved circulation of researchers and know-how.

Mobility is essential for the Europeanisation of research and therefore is vital for enhancing Europe's competitiveness and to create a European cultural identity.

Europeanisation of research is here meant in the Green Paper's way: the transfer of knowledge through mobility should aim at a better coordination of the individual research efforts avoiding at best useless duplications and promoting a fruitful collaboration between different countries and different institutions.

Furthermore, it is believed that mobility may help the *cultural growth* of the European Research Area by addressing the obstacles to insufficient language training and/or knowledge, the lack of mental flexibility, poor preparation to working and living in a different cultural environment, and by addressing the European diversity issue in general, which has to be viewed as an advantage and not as a threat. There is unfortunately a lack of a common European cultural identity: the Europeanisation of research can foster the sense of European identity among the ERA members, promote the dialogue between Science&Society and a high interdisciplinary network of scientists (not only young but also experienced researchers) and finally set a social network for mobile scientists in Europe.

However, the development and enhancement of modern ICT tools for the dissemination and sharing of knowledge and also the reduced importance of geographical mobility for some disciplines (social sciences, for example) suggest that mobility is not always a necessary step to the development of a successful scientific career and/or the most effective way to the transfer of knowledge. As a result, endorsing mobility to be the "standard feature of a successful career" may not always be the most appropriate and effective choice.

In addition, forcing mobility to become a "standard feature of a successful career" may be misleading until mobility is not rewarded in a uniform way and based upon a standardised definition of scientific merit and it may have detrimental effects for women researchers for example, introducing as a matter of fact even if not voluntarily discrimination in the access to mobility programs.

Impact on the individual scientific career: the issue of the European Charter of Researchers

It is also important to question the importance of mobility to the individual career, not only from a European point of view. In fact while mobility is emphasised in the GP as a powerful means to promote the Europeanisation of research and to better balance the supply and demand of researchers, it has indeed an impact on the professional life and the career development of the individual researcher.

The impact of mobility on the development of a scientific career is not straightforward and needs a series of conditions to apply.



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Provided that mobility is considered as an opportunity to the enhancement of personal skills, elements that may have an influence on a successful mobility experience are for example:

- duration of the mobility period;
- quality of the infrastructures;
- importance of the scientific topic addressed;
- quality of the supervision.

It is therefore pernicious to let mobility become a necessary step of a scientific career if criteria of evaluation of a mobility period are not clearly defined and conditions for them to apply are not actually achieved. This means that in this respect mobility *is not an outcome in itself* and that all forms of fellowships and funding schemes need to be subject to quality evaluation.

In addition, in order to objectively make a mobility experience fruitful for a scientific career, criteria should be agreed in the definition of the optimal researcher's profile and then actually met by the researcher's experience. So, firstly, a definition of critical requirements for scientific merit and performance has to be given and accepted possibly at the European level, to be able to assess whether mobility may contribute to the effective growth of the mobile researcher.

Marie Curie fellowships schemes already define a set of evaluation criteria which seek to be as objective as possible and go towards a comprehensive evaluation and promotion of the candidate. This is important also to identify the potential of a researcher to perform good research.

In order to facilitate mobility across countries, disciplines and institutions, it is important to train the researchers scientific and managerial skills in the widest way possible and not only at the early career stages but during the whole career development.

This means going beyond rigid schemes as number of publications – geographical mobility with all the related relocation problems may sometimes be even detrimental for the scientific production, also, the private sector does not privilege bibliometrics when it comes to employ a researcher - and consider different skills which all need to be developed and enhanced. Mobility would in this case become the means to improve diverse and multiple personal skills and this would in turn encourage mobility.

Facts which constitute highlights in a researcher's CV include, besides bibliometrics and number of citations, the education level, presentations to conferences and workshops, invited talks, teaching and supervising activity, mobility experience, international collaborations, prizes and awards, patents, participation in and/or coordination of national and/or european research projects.

Not less important skills would be the ability in communicating research results also to the general public, managing research projects and teams, writing research proposals, learning and using other languages, being part of a research team.

Mobility may help improving many of these positive requirements, even though teaching and supervising activities would need to be better promoted in mobility funding schemes.



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The *European Charter of Researchers* and *The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers* goes in that direction, developing and promoting an optimal and flexible researcher's profile, but we are afraid that if its adoption is left only to the open method of coordination, a very long time will be needed to make changes effective at the national level. Recruitment processes and funding criteria are subject to national laws, often to local and cooptation procedures especially on established national and institutional cultures which present very strong element of inertia to external pressures, especially if these are perceived as weak.

Further efforts are also needed to better disseminate and promote the knowledge of this important document. Awards and prizes may be established to recognise the engagement and commitment of institutions that actually implemented the Charter and the Code.

In this context it is particularly important to address the issue of training and mentoring programs for researchers at all stages of their careers: too often researchers are self-made men and women, receiving poor supervision and leaving the acquirement of new skills to individual initiative and good will.

Standardised quality standards would be needed and mentors/supervisors should be aware of them and of their implementation.

To this aim, exploiting the experience and expertise of end-of-career researchers would be fruitful.

Rewarding mobility: the need for a standardised framework

Provided that mobility meets excellence criteria, the value of it needs to be concertedly recognised. This refers especially to the issue of *career advancement*. Often, for different reasons, but not based on merit, a period abroad may even be seen as detrimental for pursuing a scientific career. For example, often the reintegration in a research group after a period abroad is very difficult: priority is given to researchers who have not been mobile and this becomes unfair when objective criteria of merit are applied.

Especially when local committees have the power to assign public research posts and set criteria for them, mobility may be manipulated arbitrarily and become important if planned before and agreed with a supervisor but be neglected if the mobile researcher is not supported by local personal connections. A way to open the access of national career systems to international applicants could consist in (voluntarily) employing in the academic staff a quota of foreign researchers. This measure could temporarily lead to a cultural change based on which enrolling foreign academics becomes the rule rather than the exception.

However there is a lot of variability depending on the country and institution and the risk is reduced if international committees are in charge of evaluating a researcher in a competition for a public post. In the private sector mobility may play a different role and in some companies it is already a necessary step for accessing high-level positions.

So far, rewarding a mobility period from a career advancement point of view is not uniform and therefore either a regulatory framework is established or mobility may fail to be a key experience or may again be a forced choice.



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Mobility across disciplines: the issue of multidisciplinary

Multidisciplinarity plays a central role when it comes to promote an adequate flow of researchers across sectors and institutions, but especially across disciplines.

Multidisciplinarity has seen a noticeable improvement in the last ten years thanks to a technology push and an industry pull. Technology developments particularly in the field of computers has allowed many research sectors to reach a level in which they are ready to confront results with other research areas.

To clarify this point, an example is hereby given in the field of mechanical engineering. Research in fluid dynamics gives a designer the ability to shape an aerodynamically efficient part of a plane, of a turbomachine and so on. The analysis of the mechanical stresses could give on the other hand results conflicting with the one coming from the aerodynamic engineer. For years the two areas of research have been walking mainly parallel ways. Nowadays advanced codes allow performing aero-stress-and even noise analysis at the same time, giving optimal results for all different areas. This will have (and is having) a consistent impact on industry where professional people are still working separately on the different aspects of design. This is the aforementioned industry pull to multidisciplinary, which seems to be a process already underway [2].

It may be the case that multidisciplinary is well accepted in research teams involving different researchers to solve complicated scientific problems which require different approaches, but not as the ability of the individual researcher.

In “systems of specific employment” as opposed to “career systems” [3] for example, the researcher works in a focused area of expertise. This is often the case of employment in the private sector where the needs for a knowledge base economy are predominant. The researcher fails to see in this case the “complete picture” and wastes in part its full potential.

But it is not only the case of private companies. In several European countries, among which, Italy and France, for example, the public academic system is based on scientific-disciplinary sectors defined at the national level: researchers and professors are evaluated and promoted in public competitions based on the pertinence between their scientific production and the specialised characteristics of their scientific sector. As a result, multidisciplinary is seen as a loss of coherence and as a more or less important deviation from the fundamental guidelines of the specific sector. In such systems, most of the time, when a researcher decides to work in a multidisciplinary field, this perceived “incoherence” is penalised.

Inter-sectoral mobility: career pathways between public and private sector

Exchange of personnel and know-how between Academia and Industry is welcome in the GP and it is rightly believed to be a useful means to encourage the private sector to develop opportunities for researchers, to promote collaboration between two often different ways of dealing with research and to finally attract investments from the private sector.

Working conditions in the two sectors are quite different as remunerations in private companies are generally higher and related to the contribution to the overall performance of the company, there is better equipment when the R&D department is well developed (as in high-tech companies, less in



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SMEs) and the researcher is usually employed based on the specific needs of the company thus developing a high specialised profile. Publications become less important than in Academia while the reverse is true for patents. In general, applied research is preferred over fundamental research and more stringent deadlines must be made in the private sector to be and stay competitive in the market.

Mobility may in this case encourage collaboration and therefore exchange of know-how and resources, but due to the differences mentioned above and the generally diverse career paths, a series of obstacles to the actual moves do exist [3].

When considering mobility from the public to the private sector, usually academic researchers find it difficult to cope their public employment with participation to the activity of a private company. If the researcher is employed full-time, often and especially in the case of SMEs, his previous experience as a doctoral or post-doctoral student may be considered of poor relevance and in many cases too theoretical. Moreover in SMEs with a very low high-tech content there are very few opportunities for researchers.

Moving from the private to the public sector may even be more problematic. Usually researchers do not have a high record of publications if they have worked in a private research environment and are less favoured in competitions.

Short stays, temporary exchanges of personnel may in this case be the preferred choice due to actual obstacles. Early stage academic researchers could benefit from stages in Industry working on common projects while senior researchers and professors could collaborate on a part-time basis. In general more flexible recruitment strategies taking into account also experiences made in a different sector would help establish a more effective collaboration. Those strategies would be better set-up if more fundamental research was promoted in Industry and the Academia would in turn be more able to bridge the gap to the economic development by carrying out more applied research.

Mobility and personal life: the social dimension of the problem

When a researcher decides to be geographically mobile he/she has for a long period to re-invent its life. His decision often influence his family in the broadest terms: scholarisation for children can become a problem; the partner's career can become to a halt. Unclear taxation and double-taxation agreements can become a burden as many institutions do not provide any help on these matters, leaving the researcher dealing alone with the new changes in his/her life.

In a recent article published by Nature [4] it was pointed out how hard is for scientists to reconcile personal and professional life, as it looks like careers and personal aspirations seem to diverge, a situation nurtured by a system that disregards the human side of science as an essential component in a researcher's life.

In the same article, from an informal survey of 52 scientists, 14 were married to other scientists based in the same lab or others, nearly as many were single, about half as many were in relationships with other scientists, and a few were divorced. Other stories showed how intrusive lab life can be, with bosses asking for unhealthy and unfriendly lifestyles ranging from extended time in



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the lab to actively discouraging any time of personal relationship to their employees, just to cite a few examples.

Salary levels should also take into account the family situation and allow a decent life regardless the country and institution and duration of the appointment. This situation is partially addressed in Marie Curie Fellowships by different allowances that take into account the personal situation of the researcher and the country where the fellowship period is spent.

The problem of portability of pension rights is being dealt with in talks between member states of the European Union and the need for a standardised frame has become a priority.

However, regardless the outcome of these talks, it is of course of utmost importance to mobile researchers that they will have the ability to properly and fairly prepare for their retirement. Many national pension schemes require workers to be active for at least 35 years, before the complete pension will be paid out. The difference between, say, being active for 33 years and for the full 35 years, can have a disproportionately large impact on pension payouts. It is therefore clear that separate pension schemes, combined from working periods in different countries, will not amount to the same value in retirement. In effect this penalizes a researcher in his/her old age. Instruments that address this issue must be prepared, otherwise the researchers who have been most actively mobile will also be the poorest when they are old.

A scarce knowledge of national social security systems has also been reported among the Fellows in previous surveys [3] and some of them have not even been integrated in any pension scheme with all the related consequences.

Some forms of recruitment and also fellowship schemes for post-doctoral researchers do not even consider maternal leave and foresee only the termination of the contract in case.

Making mobility accessible by every researcher: gender issues related to mobility

In the Green Paper the issue of the under representation of women researchers is weakly addressed and the relation to how mobility may effectively address this problem is not clear.

From a woman researcher's point of view, mobility can further complicate the access to a scientific career. There is evidence that women may be even more mobile than their male counterparts at the early stages of their career, when they are single [5]. But the situation gets worse in subsequent stages, when women have to reconcile work and life and the burden of their responsibilities discourage them from uptaking mobility programs – even participating to conferences.

Encouraging mobility in the scientific community should not increase further the gap already existing in different scientific fields – the so-called horizontal segregation – by discriminating women researchers.

Short-term mobility: an opportunity which deserves consideration

In [6] it was pointed out that the use of long-term mobility in the pharmaceutical sector has declined and is now very limited. Secondments abroad were more often employed in the past when each centre was organised as a completely self-sufficient R&D unit specialised in certain therapeutic



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areas where most of the phases of the drug discovery and development process were carried out. Because all the R&D staff from research to development were in one place, there was less short-term researcher mobility and cross-border team projects were almost never implemented. Long-term international assignments of researchers instead were employed more often than in the current organisation model as a mechanism for transferring complex and location-specific knowledge. It was found that long-term international assignments are not widely used even though companies rely heavily on the initiative of individual researchers to interact with other colleagues and to enhance R&D synergies across projects. They have been replaced by other, short-term forms of mobility which are less costly and do not require the relocation of the family. Researchers from different R&D centres meet each other quite regularly either because they are involved in cross-border team projects or because they participate in a technology interest group. Short-term assignments are also used for transferring specific expertise to other R&D facilities or for solving problems of critical-skill shortages.

The example of the pharmaceutical sector deserves to be considered more widely. In general, short mobility periods may offer the possibility of reconciling various work and life needs. If for example a secure employment situation exists in the home country, most researchers find it difficult to suspend their teaching and supervising activities or their role in a scientific project. As they are more and more engaged in their profession the use of the sabbatical year becomes necessary to be able to spend a period abroad as a visiting scientist or professor for example.

On the other hand, researchers may be in a dual career situation and have to decide whether to separate for a period or to find a job opportunity for the partner. Other family responsibilities like finding childcare, pre-school and school opportunities for children may further discourage long mobility periods which require relocation of the whole family.

Advantages of short stays are also of administrative nature and involve not having to cope with different taxation and pension schemes for example.



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3. CONCLUSIONS

As far as *mobility* is concerned, the MCFA recognises its key role in enhancing Europe's competitiveness through the Europeanisation of Science in the Green Paper's sense, i.e. through the improvement of coordination and collaboration avoiding fragmentation.

In general it is agreed that mobility should be an *opportunity* and not a *forced choice*, should meet standardised criteria of scientific merit and be rewarded at the European level.

However it should not become an obliged rite of passage neither a permanent status of a researcher's career. Some disciplines do not benefit from a mobility experience and modern ICT tools make it possible to enhance different collaborations for example in those research stages when physical presence is not required. Short mobility periods would often be welcome in the scientific community as they would allow work-life reconciliation, closer contacts with the home country and would avoid integration in different social security schemes.

In addition, scientific mobility should not operate discrimination between genders and an effort must be made to ensure equal opportunities to apply for mobility programs from both male and female researchers.

More attention should be paid to the social aspect of mobility to build a Europe of culture and not only a Europe of competitiveness, as it has been pointed out several times throughout this paper.

It is important in our view, to build an ERA where the researchers community can share strong ethical and cultural elements, democracy and participation to the European social and cultural context of research, besides the scientific context. Europe's lack of a good scientific dissemination system of research results and their implications to the general society (after 50 years of Europe we still lack a common radio-TV system among the Member States, besides the small experience of Euronews). We need to contribute as ERA to create a common sense among Member States, which can overlap the lot of "rethoric" in the current Europeism. It is important to finance partnerships among Members States (see the Interreg experience) and scientific mobility to contribute to the development of a European civic society.

Scientific mobility plays a central role in this process as it enhances international careers, dual careers, and, last but not least, fosters different nationalities marriages and vehiculates the ideals of a European culture. However, the international exchanges are becoming more important than the intra-European exchanges, especially towards the US.

In our opinion, another cultural change is most important regarding in general the promotion of scientific careers in Europe. That is, the role of researchers in society. The US is perceived as attractive for young researchers due also to the importance and visibility accorded to research. Researchers are considered vital for the societal growth and all types of funds are raised for the sake of giving them all the necessary tools to perform at best. In the US a researcher benefits from the best possible environment with all the equipment necessary to achieve excellent results, thus giving a strong motivation to excel in his/her area.



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Recent initiatives at the European level seem encouraging in that sense. What the ERC has been doing for example with the IDEAS panel is giving credit to young researchers, believing in their ability and skills to perform at best. Almost 10.000 project proposals have been submitted in the first call [7]. This suggests that, besides the need for more transparent recruitment processes and less bureaucracy, a growing consideration for the work and individual initiative of researchers needs to be allowed and recognised at all levels.



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