Open, merit-based and transparent recruitment

Final paper for the 2014 ERAC mutual learning workshop on Human Resources and Mobility

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Main issues reflected by the participants of the ERAC Mutual Learning Workshop

Facts that are known:

- Open, merit-based, transparent recruitment practices foster mobility (geographical and sectorial) and enhance the recruitment pool for the best candidates.
- Recruitment practices characterized by nepotism, parochialism and particularism tend to have detrimental effects to knowledge production and diffusion, and act as a disincentive for people to take on scientific careers.
- There is perception gap between policymakers and researchers concerning open, merit-based, and transparent recruitment in Europe.
- Countries have been striving to develop and implement policies to encourage the establishment of transparent recruitment practices
- There is a diversity of "realities" in terms of scientific development that impacts the adoption of open, merit-based, transparent recruitment practices.

Some key questions that were debated:

- *How important is open, merit-based, recruitment in the policy talks in your country?*
- *To what extent can national level policies influence the effective implementation of open, merit-based, transparent recruitment practices in universities and research institutes?*
- *Language and administrative issues were identified in the questionnaire as barriers to open, merit-based, transparent recruitment. To what extent solving these issues represent a major step towards an effective open recruitment system for researchers in your country?*
- *Are some close/internal recruitment practices necessarily at odds with open/external recruitment practices? When would internal recruitment practices make sense in terms of recruitment, and can these explain patterns of greater dissatisfaction concerning recruitment procedures among R2 researchers?*
- *To what extent greater or smaller degrees of institutional autonomy can contribute to the implementation of effective open, merit-based, transparent recruitment practices?*
- *Is it possible that the understanding of "merit" in Merit-based recruitment by the universities is hampering intersectorial mobility because it refers mainly to research indicators associated with academia and its research practices?*

Introduction

This final paper presents a review of what is known on open, merit-based, transparent recruitment in the European Research Area (ERA) and the results of the 2014 ERAC Mutual Learning workshop on Human Resources and Mobility. The 2014 workshop is framed within a series of dedicated workshops aimed to give Member State participants a valuable insight into each other's policy challenges and undertaken actions regarding Innovative Union Commitment 1, which relates to training enough researchers to meet their respective research and development (R&D) targets and to promote attractive employment conditions.

This final paper starts by reporting findings of the specialized and grey literature concerning researcher recruitment in the European Research Area, in academic and public sectors of R&D activity. This is followed by the overall results of the mutual learning workshop. The paper results are informed by the workshop discussion and by a pre-workshop questionnaire directed to and answered by the participating member states in the workshop. The aim of the questionnaire is dual: 1) to verify/confirm previous findings in the literature, and 2) to help further the dialogue concerning open, merit-based and transparent recruitment in Europe. The overall objective of this paper thus is to promote informed discussion among the participants of the workshop, a general reflection on the practices that the countries have implemented, and sharing of the best practices and experiences. This is expected to provide new paths for furthering the analysis of open, merit-based, transparent recruitment in Europe.

Important note:

The main questions discussed in the workshop are placed in the first page of this document, but throughout the text boxes with relevant, ancillary and key questions are included. These are of interest and were thoroughly discussed by the participants during the workshop helping to identify the key challenges, fostered the discussion and the mutual learning process, and helped to consolidate the path ahead.

Perceptions of open, merit-based, transparent recruitment in Europe

Recruitment procedures at European universities characterized as open, transparent, and merit-based are understood as a prerequisite for the realization of the European Research Area (ERA)[1]. The effective hiring of the best researchers and academics to fill available positions is believed to ensure better academic and research performances at individual and institutional level. These performances are of critical importance in the context of a globalized, knowledge driven world, where regional competition (and collaboration) dynamics between Europe, North America and Asia are increasing. Additionally, transparent, merit-based recruitment permits open competition at all research career stages for posts based nationally and internationally. As such, it fosters the geographical career mobility of researchers. Transparent recruitment policies and procedures in all European countries have the potential to facilitate researchers' mobility by matching supply and demand for the best-suited research positions across Europe[2]. Furthermore, the possibility to compete openly stimulates competition and individual strive for merit and thus the attractiveness of the research career.

A key issue is the gap of perceptions between policymakers and researchers on open, merit-based, transparent recruitment. While the vast majority of national policymakers understand the recruitment systems in place to be fair and transparent, a substantial share of researchers do not perceive it as such. Several reports found that researchers perceive recruitment rules and procedures as not open, fair, and transparent. Moreover, researchers and academics tend to mention lack of open access to vacancies and job opportunities as a major disincentive to start or remain in the research career track in Europe. This is a significant discrepancy, but some caution is required when dealing with this discrepancy since it is one of "perceived understandings" of the same phenomena. Still, it is important to consider it.

According to results from the MORE2 survey (Table 1), around 34% to 40% of European Union researchers based in higher education institutions indicated to be

[1] *EC DG Research and Innovation (2012). Areas of untapped potential for the development of the European Research Area (ERA). Analysis of the response to the ERA Framework public consultation.*
[2] Deloitte 2012 Researchers report

"dissatisfied" with the levels of openness, transparency and the existence of merit-based recruitment at their institution. The level of satisfaction, however, was found to be country specific. The UK researchers showed the highest level of satisfaction for all three aspects (~80%) while those based in Italy showed the lowest level of satisfaction for open recruitment (30%) and transparent recruitment (45%). Low satisfaction was also found in other countries such as Croatia, Bulgaria and Slovenia.

Another important result of the MORE2 survey is that are those in the early career researcher stages that are most dissatisfied with their recruitment experiences. R1 researchers are the least satisfied with the levels of openness in recruitment while R2 researchers show the lowest levels of satisfaction concerning transparency and merit-based recruitment. Moreover, females show lower levels of satisfaction with recruitment processes when compared to males. Yet, it is important to realize that as respondents were asked their opinion about the recruitment practices at their higher education institution that a relative majority (at least 60% plus) indicated that they were satisfied with the levels of openness, transparency and merit-based recruitment practices in place.

Yet, one has to consider even these results carefully. On the one hand, results based on perceptions can be misleading because a perception of a real phenomenon as a problem (or not) does not necessarily mean that the real phenomenon is effectively a problem (or not). However, in the case of these results, one should take them with an additional critical stance. The MORE2 survey was directed to researchers that are employed at the universities and research institutions. These were researchers that applied for a position and were successful in being hired. If the survey was directed at those not recruitment, one could predicted that the percentage of dissatisfied researchers would increase overall, and most notably at the R1 and R2 levels.

Table 1: Satisfaction with recruitment process at home research institution (EU27)

	R1	R2	R3	R4	% satisfied
Open recruitment	56.1%	58.6%	60.1%	63.3%	60.0%
Transparent recruitment	62.3%	60.6%	65.0%	68.8%	64.6%
Merit-based recruitment	67.3%	60.1%	66.9%	67.9%	65.7%

Note: % of researchers that were satisfied (vs. not satisfied) with the researcher recruitment process (n=9,016); Source: MORE2 Higher Education Survey (2012)

Benefits and barriers to open recruitment

The perception discrepancy observed in the several countries concerning open, merit-based, transparent recruitment processes may also be related to the evolution of scientific and higher education systems themselves and national traditions. However, the perception discrepancies may be sometimes more associated with the dynamics of scientific and academic institutions than to the norms in place established at national level. It is not unreasonable to find the close recruitment practices in research universities of countries with more developed scientific and higher education systems (Bleiklie and Hostaker, 2004)[3]. It is also not unheard of to find more research oriented universities in countries developing their knowledge base by fashioning open recruitment dynamics (Lisbon MBA[4]).

The balance between close and open recruitment dynamics often leads to institutional or faculty differentiation within one system, depending on the position of the institution in the national and international market as well as in terms of its history and culture (Musselin, 2005)[5]. It may also be related to these institutions' ability – and tradition - of international attraction of human resources. This is due to the "competitive horizons" of intuitions as a Finnish study of academic department and research units compellingly suggests (Hoffman et al., 2008)[6]. There is also a reckoning that some disciplinary fields tend to be more linked to open recruitment processes (science and engineering) while others to closed recruitment processes. Once again, this is related to the *ethos* and disciplinary traditions, as well as the variability of their international scope. Variability in the adoption of open and close recruitment processes can happen within countries by institutions, and within the institutions by disciplinary field.

The benefits associated with open recruitment are known. It assures access to a larger pool of qualified candidates, grants opportunities for those interested applicants to

[3] Bleiklie, I., & Hostaker, R. (2004). Modernizing research training-education and science policy between profession, discipline and academic Institution. Higher Education Policy, 17, 221–236.
[4] See: http://www.thelisbonmba.com/
[5] Musselin, C. (2005) European academic labor markets in transition, Higher Education, 49, 135-154.
[6] Hoffman, D., Valimaa, J., and Huusko, M. (2008) The Bologna Process in Academic Basic Units: Finnish Universities and Competitive Horizons in J. Välimaa and O.-H. Ylijoki (eds.), Cultural Perspectives on Higher Education, Springer. 227-243.

compete for open vacancies, allows for the possibility to include new skills and perspective to the hiring institution, works as an opportunity enabler to address underutilization within the job group, and allows for the recruitment of the most qualified candidates, thus fostering the productivity and the ability of the hiring institution to excel in its core activities. The downside of open recruitment is that requires substantial resources dedicated to advertisement and is a process that can take long periods of time until complete.

Highly internationalized scientific and higher education systems are those that tend to have more open recruitment processes. This is not surprising since these countries are also the ones that act as global magnets of researchers. Thus open, merit-based, transparent recruitment is critical for these countries to engage in the global war for talented researchers and increase/maintain scientific performance levels (e.g., UK universities).

Countries which are catching-up their scientific and higher education systems tend to be more conservative in adopting open, merit-based, transparent recruitment practices either due to institutional traditions and cultures, or due to "unofficial" policies to keep those that are their most qualified and that they do not want to lose. A further reason may be associated with the challenges of internationalizing their science base and what it really means. For these countries, the adoption of open, merit-based, transparent recruitment (especially at international level) may take longer and require stronger stimulus and incentives. But the combination of tackling obstacles to open, merit-based, transparent recruitment and the need for time raises the question:

How can the design and implementation of open, merit-based, transparent recruitment be understood in the long term? Often solutions are expected to appear quickly but time is a critical dimension – should policies promoting open, merit-based, transparent recruitment have larger time spans to be assessed?

Close recruitment is characterized by limited advertisement and outreach and for being highly favorable to the institution's community. It gives priority to current employees/students, and it can even be used to fill positions pre-approved for internal

only recruitment. Close recruitment[7] allows employees to access promotional opportunities, in theory allows for the hiring of the most qualified internal applicant, and reduces substantially risks associated with the hiring process (the skills and abilities of the person to be hired are known). An issue with close recruitment practices is that it limits the pool of applicants to the hiring institution employees and students, thus not allowing for other qualified applicants to apply. Internal recruitment processes also represent a known barrier to researcher and academic mobility both nationally and internationally[8].

Are close recruitment practices necessarily at odds with open/external recruitment practices? When do they make sense, particularly concerning hiring of researchers at different research career stages?

Close recruitment can be associated with academic inbreeding (Pezzoni et al., 2009 [9]). This practice is often associated with nepotism and parochialism. Academic inbreeding practices have been reported at many European academic institutions (e.g., Bleiklie and Hostaker, 2004; Cruz-Castro and Sanz-Menéndez, 2010[10]). Academic inbreeding, as the most extreme recruitment practice of job immobility and close recruitment, is known to be detrimental to the research and academic endeavors of institutions, and in a more encompassing way, to the development of scientific systems (see Inanc and Tuncer, 2011)[11]; Horta 2013[12]). Recent studies, suggest this practice is diminishing due to research competitive frameworks and public policies fostering the internationalization of researchers and universities. However, the rationale for academic inbreeding continues valid as a means to retain the "best" and to maintain teaching activities fluid (Horta and Yudkevich, 2014)[13]. This raises the questions:

[7] http://shr.ucsc.edu/procedures/fill_vacancy/staffing-options.pdf
[8] *IDEA Consult (2008), Evidence on the main factors inhibiting mobility and career development of researchers, Brussels.*
[9] Pezzoni, M., Sterzi, V. and Lissoni, F. "Career progress in centralized academic systems: an analysis of French and Italian physicists", Working paper n. 26/2009
[10] Cruz-Castro, L., and Sanz-Menéndez, L. (2010). Mobility versus job stability: Assessing tenure and productivity outcomes. Research Policy, 39(1), 27–38.
[11] Inanc, O., and Tuncer, O. (2011). The effect of academic inbreeding on scientific effectiveness. Scientometrics, 88(3), 885–898.
[12] Horta, H. (2013) Deepening our understanding of academic inbreeding effects on research information exchange and scientific output: new insights for academic based research, *Higher Education*, Vol. 65, No. 4, 487-510.
[13] Horta, H. and Yudkevich, M. (2014) Role, challenges and possible solutions for academic inbreeding in higher education systems, ongoing research

To what extent can national level policies influence the effective implementation of open, merit-based, transparent recruitment practices in universities and research institutes? Can public policies contribute to diminish recruitment practices such as academic inbreeding, and others associated to nepotism and parochialism?

Are competitive research funding and internationalization policies a possible solution? Is it feasible/desirable to compel/strongly encourage every HEI to establish an open recruitment policy and make it publicly available? Would a toolkit or good practice guide for open recruitment be beneficial?

Policies in place, good practices and recent changes to foster open recruitment: Results of a questionnaire

Based on the existing indicators and information available, the organizers of the workshop launched a questionnaire on practices of open, merit-based and transparent recruitment focusing on two critical issues: 1) assessment of open, merit-based, transparent recruitment in the various countries as perceived by the respondents, and 2) the identification of good practices and recent changes in terms of policy and incentives to facilitate or encourage open recruitment.

<u>Assessment of open, merit-based, transparent recruitment in the various countries as perceived by the respondents</u>

Overall, the findings of the questionnaire are aligned with the general perception of policymakers found in previous exercises. There was an overall agreement that:

-it is assumed that the universities have a publicly available and open recruitment policy in place

- the job specificities are included in the job ads, and that these include clearly defined working arrangements, standards, and transparent procedures for appointment.

- there is a belief that appointment decisions are primarily based on excellence and merit.

Yet, some major barriers to the establishment of an open, merit-based, transparent recruitment were also identified, namely regarding language, burden of application, and the ability to reach the best possible candidates.

-Language seems to be problematic in terms of the selection and appointment of the best applicants.

Only a few countries asserted that this was not an issue, while several countries reckoned that language restrictions sometimes prevented the selection of the best applicants. Some countries identified language restrictions as a major barrier to select and hire the best applicants (e.g., Greece). The main issue of language is associated to the practices of teaching. When academics are hired to universities they are usually hired with the purpose of engaging mostly in research and teaching, and in particular the teaching practice requires the domain of the national language (e.g., Slovenia). Language also seems to be problematic in terms of international advertisement of vacancies. In some countries the law does not require institutions to publish job vacancies in English and the default language tends to be the national (e.g., Estonia), even if sometimes complemented by English language (e.g., Belgium). In this context, the EUROXESS website is specifically referred as used in cases when attracting researchers from abroad is desirable. It is relevant to note that this entails that EURAXESS is not always used to reach the best possible candidates, but only when attracting from outside is desirable (a typical mechanism used in internal labor markets in transition). Some countries recognized that not all universities publish vacancies in English (e.g., Finland, Greece), and others that the documents provided by applicants to specific positions – such as lecturers and professors - need to be translated into the national language (France; this usually requires the documents to be translated by official translators which place a high burden on the applicants) or filled in the national language (e.g, Moldova). Some countries asserted that language was the major barrier to openness and transparency of the recruitment system (e.g., Greece).

-Although most countries stated that the application procedures should not be considered as burdensome for the applicants, a few countries suggested that this occurs sometimes, while in others this was deemed to be a challenge.

There has been some effort made by countries legislation and institutional practices to make recruitment procedures easier to be understood and followed. An example is that in many countries, no special forms to present the CVs for instance are required. Still, several documents to ensure the identity, qualifications, and level of the candidates are requested (e.g., France), and in some cases it was reported that some required application mandatory items pose problems to the applicants applying from abroad (Switzerland: the applicants must indicate a bank account in Switzerland which is not possible without a permanent address in Switzerland). However, *when analytically relating the answers to the two above questions, one can perceive that probably the understanding of burdensome seems to have been somewhat undervalued by the respondents, in particular when application procedures are compared internationally (see example in Annex II).*

-Most respondent countries believe the advertisements are reaching the best possible applicants to the job, although a few countries consider that this happens only in some cases.

This understanding seems to be informed by the adoption of agreements of good practice in recruitment by the universities as well as by efforts to advertise almost all possible vacancies internationally (in the EURAXESS website for instance), or in websites deemed to have an international scope (Galaxie and Légifrance website in France). From the answers provided, there seems to be a strong belief that wider advertisement of vacancies is a strong predictor in attracting the best possible applicants for the job. Only few countries refer that reaching the best possible candidates only happens in some cases. In Belgium for example, there is the perception that some institutions feel that broad international advertising is not always the most efficient way to have the best possible candidates. Other countries, pointed out that a major problem is the time that takes from the application opening to the actual recruitment to take place (Finland).

When analyzing the language problems in connection with the fact that advertisements are reaching the best possible candidates one wonders if this is the case. This seems to be particularly true when vacancies are posted in EURAXESS in national languages only or when the advertisements are placed in English but in national recruitment websites with a probably lesser international visibility (except for those interested in working in the specific country hosting the website).

Lesser issues related to the establishment of an open, merit-based, transparent recruitment were the following:

-Most respondent countries state that the recruitment procedures are transparent from application to selection, although few countries suggest that this only happens in some cases or regarding some positions.

Some countries, however, report that there are changes of procedure (in terms of transparency) from research career group where in the highest career ranks tends to be more transparent while in lower researcher ranks it is not so (e.g., Austria, Switzerland). This may be linked to the results of the MORE2 survey, which reported different levels of dissatisfaction of those researchers in earlier stages of their careers in relation to open, merit-based, transparent recruitment when comparing with those in more advanced research career stages.

- The composition of the jury/evaluating committee/hiring committee is made available to the applicant, either systematically or upon request in the majority of the countries, but some other countries report that this is only done in some cases.

In most countries the composition of the evaluating committee members is public information (e.g., Finland, France, Moldova, Slovenia). Yet, in other countries the composition of the evaluating committee is only made public regarding specific applications usually referring to the recruitment of those researchers in the R4 research career stage, and not necessarily concerning other positions although this information can be provided upon request (e.g., Switzerland). Also, in other countries the availability of the composition of jury/evaluating committee/hiring committee for the candidate differs according to the universities (Estonia).

In some cases the evaluation committee consists of anonymous experts, in others the juri composition is listed on the university webpage. In the cases where the composition of the committee is not publically available the information is available upon request.

The main findings are summarized in Table 2:

Table 2 - Questionnaire results

	Never/not at all	***Sometimes / in some cases***	***Very often/very much***
1 Do your universities have a publically available and open recruitment policy?		Czech Republic,	Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Moldova, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Netherlands, UK, Denmark
2 Have your universities recently made changes towards more open recruitment practices?	Austria	Finland, Slovenia, Netherlands,	Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Moldova, Switzerland, UK, Denmark
3 Are the advertisements for academic positions reaching the best possible applicants for the job?		Belgium, Greece,	Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Moldova, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Netherlands, Denmark
4 Does the job specification clearly define working arrangements, standards, and transparent procedures for appointment?			Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Moldova, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Netherlands, UK, Denmark
5 Is the entire procedure from application to selection transparent and efficient?		Austria, Finland, Switzerland,	Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Moldova, Slovenia, Spain, Netherlands, UK, Denmark
6 Do language restrictions prevent the selection and appointment of the best applicant?	Greece, Slovenia, Denmark	Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, "France", Moldova, Slovenia, Netherlands,	Austria, Belgium, Spain, Switzerland,
7 Does the information required in the application place pose an unnecessarily bureaucratic burden on the applicant?	Greece, Denmark	Austria, Czech Republic, Switzerland,	Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Moldova, Slovenia, Spain, Netherlands,
8 Is the composition of the jury/evaluating committee/hiring committee made available to the applicant, either systematically or upon request?		Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia,	Austria, Finland, France, Greece, Moldova, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Netherlands, Denmark
9 Are appointment decisions primarily based on excellence and future potential as researchers?		Denmark	Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Moldova, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Netherlands, UK,

A widespread promising development reported is that *a substantial number of countries reported their universities changing recruitment practices towards more open recruitment practices*. Although this suggests a greater effort to improve existing recruitment practices, it does not mean that these countries did not already have to a very large extent many features of open recruitment practices in place. Emphasis on public open competition have been particularly strengthened, and some countries underlined the placement in the EURAXESS website of the positions made available (e.g., Estonia, Slovenia). Others also do so through other recruitment websites (such as the Netherlands and the UK universities). Universities in some other countries expressed the desire to endorse and follow the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (e.g., Moldova).

The best practices in place at the countries and recent policies and/or incentives to facilitate or encourage open recruitment are reported next.

Identification of good practices and recent changes in terms of policy and incentives to facilitate or encourage open recruitment

Most countries reported having good practices implemented concerning an easier accessibility to information and procedures of recruitment for international researchers, transparency of selection process/evaluation criteria, and setting or introducing national and/or international guidelines concerning open, merit-based, transparent recruitment.

However, only two countries identified these associated with funding schemes to attract and recruit researchers (Belgium and Czech Republic), although a more substantial number of countries associated best practices associated to open, merit-based, transparent recruitment to attracting international researchers (which, do not have to necessarily involve funding schemes).

Although several countries reported good practices related to the transparency of the selection process and evaluating criteria, very few pointed out good practices regarding the transparency of job information (opening of vacancies). Moreover, few countries seem to have good practices implemented regarding features associated

with the efficiency of job information posting or the selection process. This may be explained by the fact that these are matters more of the realm of universities and other hiring institutions. Few good practices seem to have been recognized or implemented concerning the use of recruitment mechanisms/tools (such as job portals) to foster intersectoral mobility.

Good practices addressing issues associated with open, merit-based, transparent recruitment

Country	Setting or introducing national or international guidline	Funding to attract and recruit researchers	Transparency of		Efficiency of		Easy accessibility to information and procedures of recruitment for international researchers	Attracting international (foreign) researchers	Using recruitment tool to bridge academic and business
			Selection process / evaluation criteria	Job information (opening)	Selection process / evaluation criteria	speeding job information			
Austria	√						√		
Belgium	√	√	√	√		√?	√	√	
Czech Republic	√	√					√	√	
Estonia							√	√	
Finland			√		√				
France									
Greece			√				√		√
Ireland	√		√				√	√	
Moldova	√		√				√		√
Slovenia	√		√						
Spain	√		√	√					
Switzerland			√		√		√	√	
Netherlands					√	√	√		
United Kingdom	√			√					
Denmark								√	

Note: Switzerland reported that they have no national regulation or law regarding open, merit-based, transparent recruitment.

The recent changes in policy/incentives towards more open, merit-based, transparent recruitment practices has been mainly done at the government or funding agency level, either through changes to the law or by efforts to reform the system at national level (in a top down approach). Fewer countries reported these policies/incentives been promoted at the university level, but when they are, they tend to be part of reform efforts driven by the universities, or part of their strategic planning. Only a few countries reported increases in university autonomy as a means to facilitate or encourage open recruitment. In view of the debate concerning the need for greater levels of institutional autonomy for European universities, this raises the question:

To what extent greater or smaller degrees of institutional autonomy can contribute to the implementation of effective open, merit-based, transparent recruitment practices?

Few countries also identified recent changes in advertising job vacancies, mostly internationally. However, fewer countries seemed to have introduced policies or incentives to increase the transparency of selection processes or contracts but this may be related to the fact that there is a perception that these are not particularly important barriers regarding the establishment of open, merit-based, transparent recruitment systems. Only one country identified recent changes in policy (or incentives) towards encouraging open recruitment that entailed closer cooperation between societal and economic needs.

Recent changes in policy or incentives to facilitate or encourage open recruitment

Country	Government or agency level		University level		Advertising job vacancies		Increasing transparency of		Making easy to access and guiding for international researchers	Attracting and giving intensives to doctoral & postdoctoral level researchers	Cooperating societal and economic needs (public & private sectors)
	Legal policy or program	Reform of system	Increasing autonomy	Reforming or planning	Nationally	Internationally	selection process / evaluation criteria	contract			
Austria	√		√			√					
Belgium		√			√	√	√			√	
Czech Republic						√					
Estonia	√	√						√		√	√
Finland			√	√							
France									√		
Greece	√	√	√	√			√?		√		
Ireland	√			√							
Moldova	√										
Slovenia	√	√?				√				√	
Spain	√										
Switzerland				√					√		
Netherlands						√					
United Kingdom	√										
Denmark		√	√				√				

General findings of the ERAC Mutual Learning Workshop focused on open recruitment

The ERAC mutual learning workshop took place on the 26th of March in Brussels, with the participation of several member states and associated countries, as well as stakeholders associations. During the morning an outlook on open, merit-based, transparent recruitment was given, and the questions mentioned in this document were raised to the audience for reflection and to foster the discussion. The discussion took place during the afternoon. From this discussion, there was a general agreement on the following challenges/issues:

- ***Lack of appropriate data on open, merit-based, transparent recruitment is an issue***. The current information available is considered to be incomplete and inadequate to inform policymakers about the reality of open, merit-based, transparent recruitment. The current data is based on perceptions that were deemed as problematic (with the potential to be misleading) and not particularly helpful in better understanding the problem. The evolution in the number of job openings in portals such as EURAXESS was also found to provide only very limited information on open recruitment. Therefore, one of the key findings is that there is the need to study in-depth open, merit-based, transparent recruitment in ERA in a more systematic way. This entail the need for studies that follow recruitment processes – from the moment the advert is placed to the conclusion of the recruitment - to assess to what extent open, merit-based, transparent recruitment practices are in place. Although quantitative indicators might be useful, there was a shared understanding that the study on the thematic probably needs to combine quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and led by research teams, an expert group or a working group.

- ***The monitoring of recruitment processes was deemed as essential for the better understanding – and development - of open, merit-based, transparent recruitment dynamics***. This monitoring could also help to design (or fine-tune)

policies and lead policymakers to act upon policies to foster and consolidate open, merit-based recruitment processes. The monitoring of recruitment processes was identified as lacking in some member states and its implementation could be useful not only to foster it but also to raise awareness for its importance. In association to the implementation of a monitoring process, the questions of who could perform the monitoring (there was an agreement that it ought to be performed by an independent and impartial agency, but the type of agency needed further analysis and adjustment to the different countries) and how the monitoring could be performed was deemed to need further discussion and analysis. Some countries emphasized the monitoring of the recruitment processes themselves, while others emphasized the assessment of results of the institutions as a proxy to assess the effectiveness of recruitment practices in hiring the best.

- ***It was understood that national policies matter, even if the recruitment processes are to a large extent in the realm of institutions***. National policies, particularly science policies, should be defined legally in order to be ahead of time and thus create the legal framework for opportunity. National policies should be in place to create opportunities for institutions to develop and change current recruitment practices. In this context, it was suggested that a toolkit that reflected the complex matrix of careers stages (and in the case of project related recruitment, funding periods) and needs could be developed to assist national and institutional policies in developing their own policies. This toolkit ought to encompass the types of contracts and positions that researchers in different career stages are usually recruited to. It was further argued that its development could be performed in two stages. Firstly, at the European Commission level, with the active collaboration of member states and stakeholder associations a general toolkit could be framed. Then, in a second stage, this toolkit could be further developed by the member states according to the specificities of national science, technology and higher education systems, but always considering the fundamentals of the Charter and Code and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

- ***A policy focus on competition and internationalization has the potential to foster open, merit-based, transparent recruitment***. It was found from the examples of several member states that national and institutional funding that underlined competitiveness and internationalization components had results in fostering open, merit-based, transparent recruitment. This was understood to possibly lead to changes in the recruitment processes since competition in particular could be a driver for the changing of mentalities and dispelling institutional practices that favored nepotism, parochialism and particularism in recruitment in universities and public research institutions. The changing of mentalities concerning open, merit-based, transparent recruitment associated to funding that highlighted competitiveness and internationalization was related to peer-pressure, which was agreed to be a strong motivator for change nationally and institutionally.

- ***Greater levels of institutional autonomy could work for or against the implementation of open, merit*-based, transparent recruitment.** During the discussion it became clear that institutional autonomy was found to promote the implementation of open recruitment in some countries, but in other countries it had the opposite effect. There were cases where national funding was provided to the universities in a completely decentralized and laissez-faire way. This lead universities to develop their own open, merit-based, transparent recruitment schemes that they apparently did with success. In other countries, it was shown that the centralization of a large extent of the recruitment process not only ensured a greater efficiency of the process, but also its internationalization, and even at national level, the widening-up of the pool of potential candidates. In other countries, it was argued that greater levels of autonomy could lead to fostering academic inbreeding practices that relied on the choice of in-house candidates that were not necessarily the best candidates. These findings entail that the relation between institutional autonomy and open, merit-based, transparent recruitment practices is not

linear and most likely strongly mediated by systemic and institutional characteristics.

- ***Language is a problematic issue for many countries and can be a barrier to establish internationally focused open, merit*-based, transparent recruitment.** It was agreed that language should not pose a barrier to the establishment of open, merit-based, transparent recruitment processes at national level since the spoken language is shared. However, it was found to act as a barrier to access the pool of potential applicants internationally. Language – i.e, the ability to have the job vacancies and the recruitment process in English, the current *lingua franca* of science - in some countries seemed to be associated to the lack of a professional body of professionals at the universities that can speak, write and understand English language. The lack of these services could prevent some of the job vacancies to be disseminated internationally. It was argued that for the language problem to be tackled, a greater investment in establishing professional services in universities that can cope with English language is required.

- **Time is of the essence**. The policies and implementation of open recruitment practices at institutional level require ongoing efforts and supporting funding mechanisms and other incentives to promote it, including funding to sustain the monitoring of these practices, and fomenting public accountability regarding the implementation of open, merit-based, transparent recruitment. This efforts need to be considered in the medium and long-term in order to allow institutions to adapt and further opening their current recruitment practices.

Annex I

What is open, merit-based, transparent recruitment?

According to the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers "funders or employers of researchers in their role as recruiters should be responsible for providing researchers with open, transparent and internationally comparable selection and recruitment procedures." (pg 5). In particular, the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers stipulates a set of general principles and requirements that employers and funders should consider when recruiting researchers. These include an equal treatment of all applicants and transparent recruitment processes that can contribute to foster the development of an open, competitive and sustainable European labor market for researchers. A few selected principles of utmost relevance for this workshop are stated below as follows:

- *Recruitment*, whereas employers should have in place open, efficient, transparent, supportive and internationally comparable procedures, tailored to the type of positions advertised. Importantly, the advertisement of openings should include a broad description of knowledge and competencies, and should avoid being over-specialized as to discourage potential applicants from applying. A description of the working conditions and entitlements, including career prospects should also be included. The time frame between the announcement of the advertisement and the possibility to apply should be realistic.
- *Selection*. The selection committees should bring diversity of expertize and competences, and whenever possible include members from different sectors of research activity and disciplinary frameworks. They should also have adequate gender balance. A wide range of selection practices should be used (e.g., interviews, external expert assessment). The members of the selection panels should be adequately trained.
- *Transparency*, underlining that the candidates should be informed prior to the selection, about the recruitment process and the selection criteria, the number of available positions and the career development prospects. They should also

be informed after the selection process about the strengths and weaknesses of their applications.

- *Judging merit*[14], by which the selection process should take into consideration the (whole range of) experience of the candidates. In terms of the overall potential of the candidates, their creativity and level of independence should be considered. Therefore, the merit of the candidates should be judged both quantitatively (e.g., number of publications) and qualitatively (experience of career path including activities such as teaching, theses supervision, soft skills, research management, knowledge transfer activities, and activities associated with public understanding and awareness of science). For candidates from an industrial background, particular attention should be paid to any contributions/authoring of patents, development of prototypes and/or inventions.

The Commission Researchers Report, based largely on information provided by Member States through a SGHRM Questionnaire implemented in 2011, contributed to the debate by suggesting a broader, more operational definition. Open, merit-based, and transparent recruitment was in place if: 1) Job vacancies are published on the relevant national websites; 2) Job vacancies are published on relevant Europe-wide online platforms, e.g. EURAXESS; 3) Job vacancies are published in English; 4) Institutions systematically establish selection panels; 5) Institutions establish clear rules for the composition of selection panels; 6) Institutions publish the composition of a selection panel; 7) Institutions publish the selection criteria together with the job advert; 8) Institutions stipulate minimum time periods between vacancy publication and the deadline for applying; 9) Institutions place the burden on the employer to prove that the recruitment procedure was open and transparent; 10) Institutions offer applicants the right to receive adequate feedback; 11) Institutions have a complaint mechanism in place.

[14] It ought to take into account periods of lower academic productivity due to family circumstances (maternity leave, family care)

The application of most – if not all – of the criteria identified above could contribute to render a recruitment system as open, merit-based and transparent. Although the criteria mentioned above is relevant, its relativity (adoption of some criteria or all) seems to assert that not always all the criteria can be assumed or generally implemented. This raises the question:

Can it be that a system may have an open recruitment if only some fundamental criteria concerning open, merit-based, transparent recruitment system is in place? To what extent would this be acceptable or desirable? Can it be arguable that context and other reasons may overcome open recruitment processes?

This is something important to be discussed, but for the sake of setting up the discussion paper a more simple – neutral - definition of open, merit-based and transparent is desirable. One that states that open, merit-based, transparent recruitment "incorporates the principles of equal opportunity to ensure that the most capable person is selected for a position on the basis of merit, and refers to the right of every individual to be given scrupulously fair consideration for any job for which they are skilled and qualified[15]. Open recruitment can be understood as "competitive process that seeks a broad pool of qualified, diverse applicants and normally utilizes a search committee to screen, interview and identify a candidate for hire"[16].

In this definition, key issue to consider is what is meant by merit. One can argue that publication lists in university hiring is used as a main proxy for merit and ability of a researcher to engage and deliver scientifically accepted research findings. However, if merit is consider mainly as such will it not pose a problem for intersectoral mobility, namely when highly qualified human resources with a career path in industry would like to start a career in academia? This raises a further question:

How is merit in recruitment of researchers characterized and used? Is it possible that the understanding of "merit" in merit-based recruitment by the universities is

[15] University of Technology of Sydney: http://www.equity.uts.edu.au/equal-opportunity/employment/recruitment/what.html
[16] University of California Santa Cruz: http://shr.ucsc.edu/procedures/fill_vacancy/open.html

hampering intersectorial mobility because it refers mainly to research indicators associated with academia and its research practices?

Annex II Example of a vacancy post at a Chinese University:

Department/Unit	Department of Surgery
Position	Associate Professor (Non-clinical)
Reference Number	1314/121(737)/2
Closing Date (mm dd,yyyy)	March 17, 2014
Post Specification	Applicants should have (i) a PhD or MD degree or equivalent in a medical field or a related discipline; (ii) a good track record of research, grants and publications in high impact international journals, commensurate with their seniority; and (iii) commitment to contributing to the development of basic science and clinical research. The appointee will be appointed jointly with a related department. Appointment will normally be made on contract basis for up to three years initially commencing as soon as possible, which, subject to mutual agreement, may lead to longer-term appointment or substantiation later.
Monthly Salary and Fringe Benefits	Salary will be highly competitive, commensurate with qualifications and experience. The University offers a comprehensive fringe benefit package, including medical care, plus a contract-end gratuity for an appointment of two years and housing benefits for eligible appointees. The terms mentioned herein are for reference only and are subject to revision by the University.
Application Procedure	Application forms are obtainable (a) at http://www.per.cuhk.edu.hk; or (b) in person/by mail with a stamped, self-addressed envelope from the Personnel Office, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, Hong Kong; or (c) by fax polling at (852)3943 1461. Please send the completed application form and/or full curriculum vitae, together with copies of qualification documents, a publication list and/or abstracts of selected published papers, and names, addresses and fax numbers/e-mail addresses of three referees to whom the applicants' consent has been given for their providing references (unless otherwise specified), to the Personnel Office by post or by fax to (852) 3943 1462 by the closing date. Please quote the reference number and mark 'Application - Confidential' on cover. ThePersonal Information Collection Statement will be provided upon request.

Posting Date : Feb 21, 2014

Click here to download application form