



The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

Securing decent work for ECRs: Why the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) is a good but not sufficient policy

Filomena Parada (ABIC) & Anna Tschaut (THESIS e.V.)

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for Early Career Researchers

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www.eurodoc.net

Background

The European Charter for Researchers & The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers = **C&C**

- European Council 2003: European Research Area as an **attractive place for researchers**
→ C&C: first published in 2005

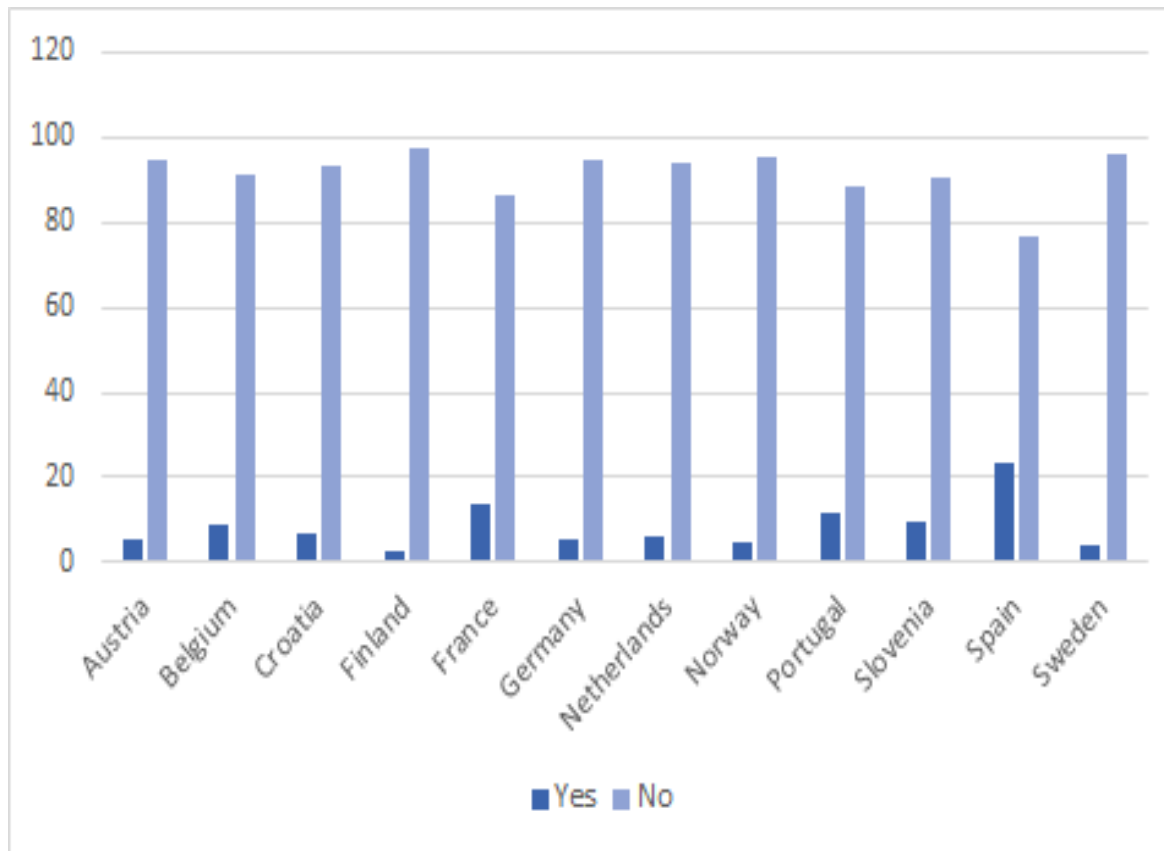
Background

Eurodoc:

- Declared its commitment to the C&C in 2011
- Calls on its member organisations to disseminate and endorse the C&C

Background

- Eurodoc Survey (2011): "Are you aware of the C&C?"



EC survey
(2017):
~7% of R1 & R2
researchers are
aware of the
C&C

Background

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C&C today:

- In 2017, endorsed by 882 European institutions
- But **too little change** has been achieved

Background

Human Resources Strategy for Researchers = **HRS4R**

- Ten years after the launch of the C&C, only few employers had started implementing it
- Since 2015, HRS4R supports research institutions and funding organisations in the **implementation of the C&C**
- 'HR Excellence in Research' award is attained after a thorough analysis of an institution's HR policies
- In 2017, 332 organisations have received the award

C&C recommendations

Employers and funders should ensure:

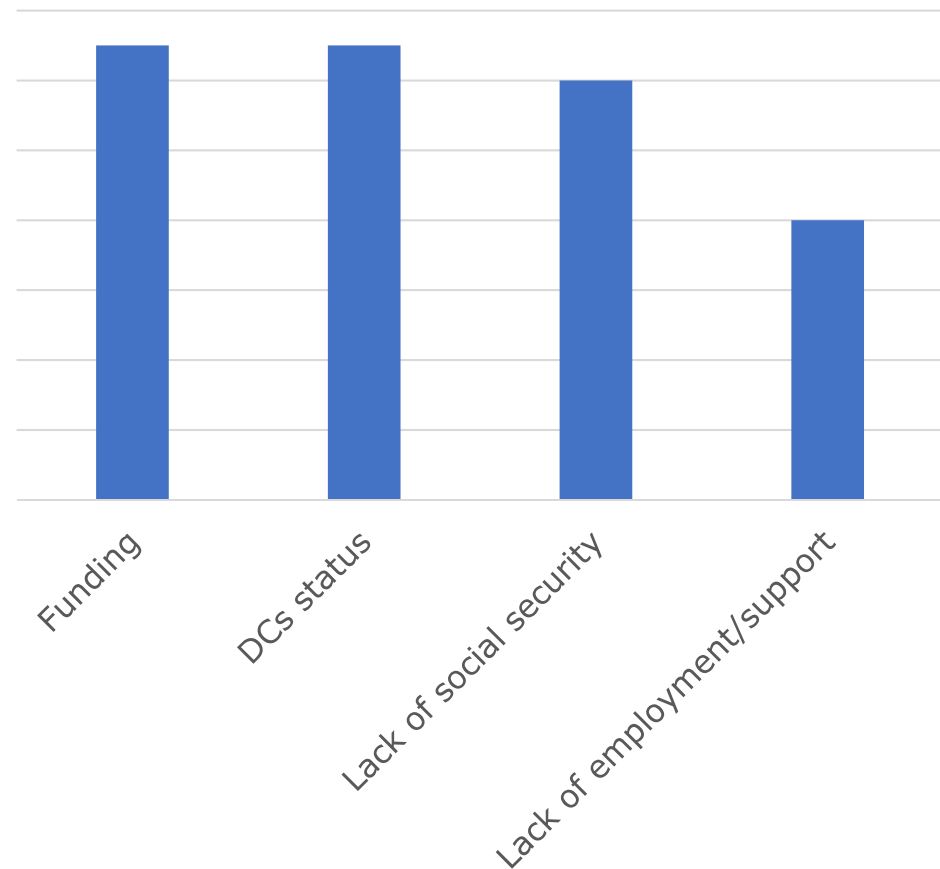
- The recognition and treatment of all researchers as professionals
- Stimulating research/research training environments → appropriate equipment, facilities and opportunities; adequate resources for work programme
- ECRs access to a structured, regular, positive and constructive relationship w/ supervisor/mentor and/or department/faculty reps.
- Stability of employment conditions → performance must not be undermined by instability of employment contracts
- Fair and attractive conditions of funding/salaries w/ adequate and equitable social security provisions (incl. sickness and parental benefits, pension rights, unemployment benefits)

Main issues

Opportunistic behaviours
from supervisors and hosts

- ECRs (DCs + R2/postdocs) source of cheap labour → work without contract
- precariousness → low salaries; no benefits; underemployment
- lengthening of the postdoc phase

Working conditions and
opportunities



Main issues

Opportunistic behaviours from supervisors and hosts (cont.)

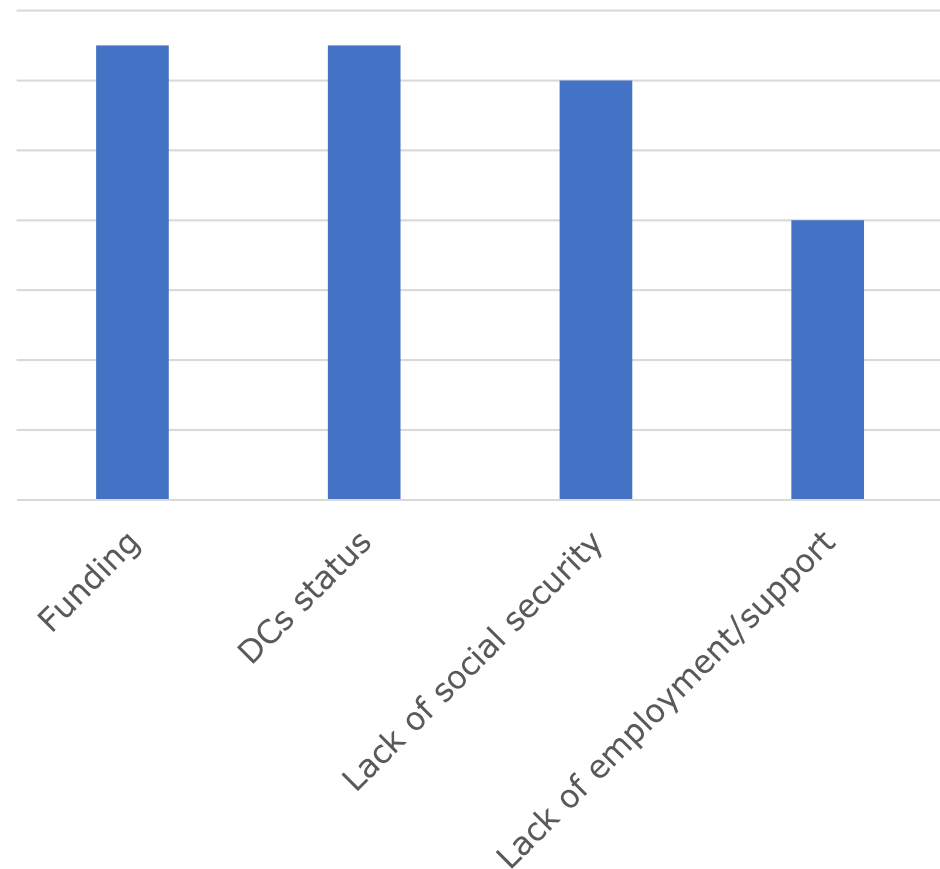
- supervisor's/R&D units disengagement
- inadequate definition of rights and responsibilities



Low levels of job satisfaction and of satisfaction with training

Decreased wellbeing/mental health

Working conditions and opportunities



C&C recommendations

Employers and funders should ensure:

- A career development strategy, and the opportunity for professional development and for improving employability (e.g., through access to measures for the continuing development of skills and competencies)
- Career advice and job placement assistance for all researchers
- The recognition of the value of mobility (geographical, intersectoral, inter- and trans-disciplinary and virtual mobility as well as mobility between the public and private sector)
- Recruitment procedures that are open, efficient, transparent, supportive and internationally comparable, as well as tailored to the type of positions advertised and clearly specified

Main issues

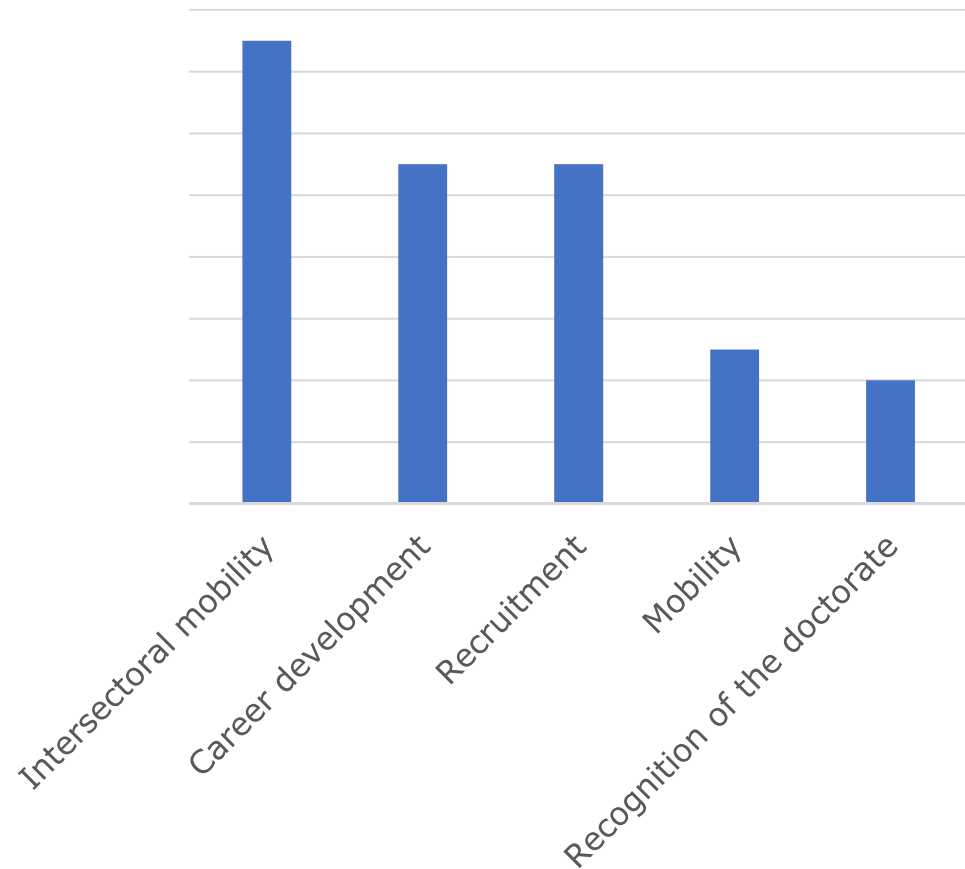
Recruitment

- R2 researchers are the least satisfied with the levels of openness, transparency and the degree of open-based recruitment (overall 34-40% dissatisfaction)

Mobility

- International mobility ($\geq 3M$) was not beneficial for $\sim 31\%$ of researchers (MORE2) \rightarrow decrease in job options (academia) and progression in remunerations and reputation
- Mostly intra-sectorial (HE)

Recruitment, employability, and career development



Main issues

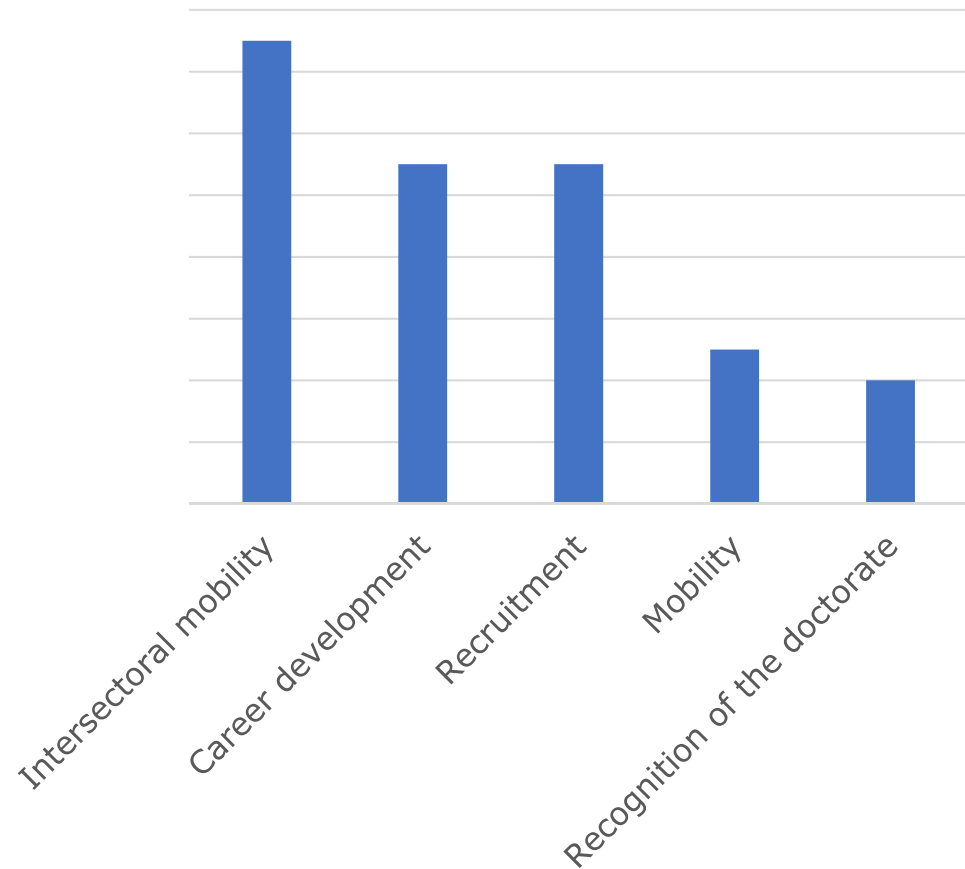
Training and supervision

- crucial role in ECRs career development and prospects
- great variations in quality of supervision and in the type and quality of career management and support structures
- roles and responsibilities not always clearly defined

↓

Career development of ECRs →
“no man’s land”

Recruitment, employability, and career development



In sum...

HRS4R → good but not sufficient policy

C&C → framework for regulating the system

- can make a change to the recruitment and working conditions of researchers ← opportunistic behaviours
 - i. how to ensure awareness and enforcement of the C&C principles?
 - ii. what could/should Eurodoc/NAs be doing differently?

Recommendations

1. Promote and endorse the C&C
2. Keep research careers on the agenda
3. Positive discrimination is needed → implementation of the C&C as funding criterion

Recommendation: Promote and endorse the C&C

- all Eurodoc member organisations should officially endorse the C&C
- put information incl. links to the C&C and HRS4R on websites
- actively disseminate the C&C and advocate for its implementation
 - i. refer to the C&C (meetings, presentations, etc.)
 - ii. send emails or documents to researchers, employers, partners etc. explaining the C&C and its importance

Recommendation: Keep research careers on the agenda

- Eurodoc/NAs → continue to create a community of ECRs across Europe and be their voice
- Work to increase the social recognition of the doctorate
- Push for employee status and adequate working conditions for all researchers (incl. employment outside academia)
- Examples:
 - i. PNN fight against bursary experiment & internship program
 - ii. Several NAs collaborate with governments/funders to improve the system (e.g., recruitment, intersectorial mobility); do seminars/workshops for ECRs (e.g., transferable skills)
 - iii. pressure governments/funders to monitor implementation of C&C principles (e.g., RMU)



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Thank you!

filomenaparada@gmail.com

anna.tschaut@thesis.de

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