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**EPWS Position Paper  
on the European Parliament Resolution on better careers and more mobility:  
a European partnership for researchers**

**Introduction**

The European Platform of Women Scientists EPWS welcomes the *European Parliament Resolution on better careers and more mobility: a European partnership for researchers* and congratulates MEP Pia Elda Locatelli to her own Initiative Report.

EPWS fully acknowledges the need for researcher mobility within the European Union. The mobility of researchers is essential to successfully ensure the full implementation of the European Research Area (ERA) and to increase knowledge transfer between EU member states and European research institutions. It is also a determining element to retain researchers in Europe and attract others, thereby contributing to the promotion of excellence in European science and technology.

Mobility may however affect women and men researchers in different ways. Especially issues addressing training skills and experience as well as social security and pension rights would need to pay specific attention to social differences and potential inequalities between men and women if they want to reach their intended target. They have to take into consideration that mobile women researchers, for various reasons, tend to be disproportionately disadvantaged regarding their future pension rights due to often longer periods of stipend-based qualification, not eligible for social security, and a very likely higher number of often relatively poorly paid short-term contracts.

Also, mobility may force some researchers with caring responsibilities to choose between career and private life. Since caring responsibilities are still predominantly assumed by women, obstacles to mobility may be higher for women scientists than for their male colleagues. Societal values and expectations also still make women more likely than men to forfeit their own career prospects for the mobility of their partner.

Making mobility a (mandatory) requirement for a successful career in research may therefore, under some circumstances, be incompatible with the promotion of women scientists.

Against this background, EPWS strongly welcomes the special attention paid in the Resolution to the situation of women scientists, particularly in relation to open recruitment and attractive employment and working conditions. EPWS would however like to stress the importance of addressing these issues in relation to the other aspects and suggest some complementary measures to be taken.

## **Comments**

### *1. Open recruitment*

Transparent and open recruitment procedures are necessary to increase equal opportunities for all applicants, minimise the risk of biased selection and thereby enhance the promotion of excellence in research. Transparency of information on recruitment opportunities and selection criteria contribute to foster a fair competition between European researchers and between women and men scientists. Measures to facilitate better transparency, as stressed in the Resolution, as well as increased involvement of all partners and stakeholders and more publicity about position openings have to be encouraged.

The Resolution's call to make the processes for the selection and the promotion of male and female researchers completely open and transparent is an excellent initiative but should be complemented by a call for transparent evaluation processes as a decisive second step.

The Resolution's call on Member States to ensure a better balance between men and women within the bodies responsible for hiring and promoting researchers is a further important measure to contribute to more equal opportunities in recruitment procedures. It should be accompanied by measures to implement gender awareness among those responsible for the recruitment and the selection of candidates.

### *2. Attractive employment and working conditions*

Measures to back up or to encourage researchers with caring responsibilities to be mobile as well as measures that ensure equal treatment are of primary importance if mobility is to be compatible with equal opportunities for all scientists and researchers within ERA. A large number of these principles are set up in the European Charter for Researchers and The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. It is therefore important to call on Member States for more consequent implementation of the requirements and principles included in these documents.

The elimination of the gender pay gap for researchers is a must for overall gender equality and a precondition to the mobility of women researchers. This issue is thoughtfully addressed in the resolution and, if followed, will enhance the attractiveness of working conditions for women scientists.

Incentives such as measures to initiate more flexibility in working conditions or overall packages including childcare, lodging and school facilities are necessary, and EPWS welcomes the Resolution's call on Member States and public research institutions to adopt such measures. Moreover, to effectively reach the intended target groups, gender experts and diversity managers should be involved in the establishment of these incentives.

In addition, EPWS encourages the adoption of mobility schemes, such as mentoring schemes to support and coach mobile researchers with dependents, or extra funding schemes in mobility grants taking into account recipients' family situation. The call on Member States to take measures to facilitate the reunification of families when both spouses are researchers is also an important element toward higher equal opportunities when addressing the issue of mobility. These measures should be complemented by best practices to facilitate the mobility of dual career couples in research enabling both partners to pursue their research activities.

Encouraging greater mobility by making employment and working conditions more attractive can be positive for researchers, women and men. Providing incentives for mobility such as mobility being regarded as a strong recommendation upon appointment and career advancements may however cause substantial inequalities and discrimination for researchers, who for private reasons, can or could not afford to be mobile. Mobility of researchers, therefore, can hardly be valued with the same criteria as student mobility without risking to disadvantage certain groups or researchers, especially women. Other criteria, such as family statute, should be taken into consideration when valuing mobility.

Also mobility, per se, may not generate good research. Outstanding research is the result of a large number of variables and differs widely in its requirements from discipline to discipline. Mobility, therefore, is not necessarily synonymous with scientific excellence. Furthermore, the positive impacts on a researcher's career traditionally associated with mobility, such as work experience in an international environment, may also be acquired otherwise, e.g. with the help of modern technologies, and without having to be *geographically* mobile. When evaluating the impact of mobility, therefore, additional criteria need to be taken into consideration.

### *3. Other items*

Regarding training skills and experience as well as social security and pension rights, social differences and potential inequalities between men and women would need specific consideration. Including stipends, especially PhD grants, into social security relevant income, would be an important step in addressing existing imbalances between men and women, since it is still harder for women than men to finance their scientific qualification, including their PhD, by full positions with adequate pay and social security benefits. Attention also needs to be paid to parental leave and other caring responsibilities that might have influenced researchers' career paths. This is particularly true when age requirements are involved. Easily accessible and comprehensive information on pension rights in security systems, therefore, is a fundamental prerequisite to mobility.

## **Conclusion**

Encouraging mobility in Europe is necessary to ensure the full implementation of the ERA and make Europe the first knowledge based economy in the world. This should not, however, be detrimental to the promotion of women scientists. EPWS therefore would like to point out the possible incompatibility between mobility and the Commission's aim to increase the number of women in science – any mobility that would be mandatory or a pre-condition to career advancement would strongly enhance that risk. Instead, EPWS encourages the adoption of mobility policies, measures and procedures that support the mobility of researchers with caring responsibilities and take into consideration gender perspectives.

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