



the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

turning policy into practice:
building the pool of talented researchers to achieve Europe's goals and
future innovation

**8 - 9 September 2005
Victoria Park Plaza, London SW1**

Preliminary Outcomes

Summary

The conference was attended by over 250 people from 35 countries across the EU Member and Associated States. Through a mix of strategic plenary presentations and practical workshop sessions, participants were able to gain an understanding of the context of the development of the Charter and Code, and identify the implications of adopting them on personal, institutional and national levels. The conference speakers provided various explorations of the potential gains and obstacles of implementing the Charter and Code and the surrounding issues. Through the workshops and discussions conference participants identified various topics provided some conclusions and finally recommendations to all stakeholders, from individual researchers to political leaders. A summary of these topics, conclusions and recommendations are provided below.

Emerging themes

A range of emerging and recurring key themes was identified during the conference. There was general agreement that for Europe to achieve its objectives of becoming the most dynamic knowledge economy by 2010 we cannot afford not to create a positive environment in which our researchers can fulfil their professional potential. A recurring topic was the importance of interlinking the activities of the European Research Area and European Higher Education Area into an integrated "Europe of Knowledge".

An overarching theme of the conference was the need for substantial cultural change in the way researchers are perceived, managed and conduct themselves. The recognition of research as a profession - with researchers recognised as well as recognising themselves as professionals - is a key aspect of this change in perspective. It was felt that all those involved in the development and/or management of researchers – from political leaders to employers and the researchers themselves – have a collective responsibility to implement and apply the principles of the Charter and Code. There is a need to improve both the visibility and management of research training as an integral and natural part of a researcher's role. This needs to be acknowledged by all – employers in their appraisal systems, funders in their conditions of grant, and researchers in terms of their professional skills. It was agreed that the Charter and Code itself is not the end of the process, but rather the beginning of a shift in perception at the European level of its understanding of research and the talented individuals that carry it out.

Acknowledging the Charter and Code as a driver for change, participants recognised that despite all efforts to date, there are high percentages of researchers, employers and funders who are unaware of its existence and therefore potential. There was support to increase efforts in raising awareness.

It was also felt that the issue of the diversity of research staff needs to be addressed explicitly in any further debate, especially noting that many researchers do not fit a single profile, whether in terms of working part-time or full-time, gender, ethnicity, disabilities and funding source.

Whilst acknowledging the differences between the academic and industrial sectors, each with their own pressures and objectives, it was considered important that both sectors should be viewed as career possibilities for researchers. Two-way mobility between the sectors should be actively encouraged and valued for the new skills and experiences researchers can bring. With respect to supporting researchers in their career, it was clear that large companies provide many examples of good practice from which other employers of researchers could learn in terms of supporting researchers

Although outside the intention of the Charter and Code, several presenters highlighted the importance of attracting more people into research careers. Presenters from industry particularly highlighted the lack of a pool of suitable talent for recruitment. The variety of motivations for entering into a research career were mentioned throughout the conference, such as; a fascination for research, prestige, career opportunities, working conditions and personal circumstances. It was clear from discussion that the key motivation varied from individual to individual. However, a clear message was that more needed to be done to promote the attractiveness of research at school age level.

Finally a consistent discussion topic was for the Charter and Code to be a useful tool, it should be implemented on a voluntary basis. However, it is also important to recognise the national legal and institutional context within which the Charter and Code should be implemented, e.g. the Fixed Term Directive. It was strongly emphasised that positive drivers for change are more likely to encourage adoption of Charter and Code than negative ones. In line with this, the importance of not increasing any level of bureaucracy was supported by all.

Key conclusions

Several conclusions evolved from the themes that developed throughout the conference, particularly during the discussions in the six different workshops. Participants confirmed their commitment to a need to invest in Europe's researchers to create a platform for Europe's future prosperity. Participants agreed that the Charter and Code's principles are beneficial to the development of the ERA. The Charter and Code should be used to inspire cultural change at all levels: from recognising the value of trans-national and intersectoral mobility, to acknowledging researchers as professionals.

It is important to acknowledge the "multiplicity of visions of research careers" within the research community as well as the diversity of those who carry out research. This multiplicity of researchers and research careers should be reflected in any implementation and development activities related to research training policy.

Currently there is fragmentation between disciplines, countries, sectors and perceptions of when an individual becomes a researcher. There is a general lack of recognition of research as a profession, reflected in its status and working conditions. There is a strict one-dimensional view or appreciation of what it is to be a researcher, so assessment and evaluation focuses on research outputs rather than reflective of all aspects of the job. Recognition of the researchers as professional means acknowledging the fact that the role is varied. The merits of mobility – both trans-national and sectoral – should be embedded in approaches to career development, starting with institutional appraisal systems. These appraisal systems should provide support and encouragement for those who could and would like to benefit from a period of mobility, but not enforcing it as a direct indicator of competence.

Within the public perception it is felt that there is a general anti-science wind, coupled with a disregard for the contribution made by researchers in social sciences, humanities and the arts. There is a perception that a research career is less exciting than other careers and is pursued in isolation. If we are to achieve the Europe of Knowledge we need to change these perceptions.

The adoption of the Charter and Code is a key milestone in addressing the issues around the retention of researchers. In acknowledging the potential of the Charter and Code to inspire this cultural change, it was agreed that the word should be spread more aggressively than it has been so far. It is a good message that has to be understood by all. The methods will vary depending on the country, the environment and the target groups; it is important to know transmission chains for information dissemination. It is necessary to focus on creating this new approach to supporting researchers as well as strengthening existing ones. There is no short-term solution to achieve cultural change.

To facilitate cultural acceptance the implementation of the Charter and Code must remain voluntary. Whenever appropriate it should be linked to funding mechanisms, though it is important not to increase the level of bureaucracy. Time must be allowed for implementation - though not too much. To this end, positive incentives rather than negative ones will provide the desired results. Complementarity can be

found in the implementation of both FTD and Charter and Code, as they share common aims in terms of providing equal opportunities for research staff.

Key recommendations

The conference developed a set of recommendations to all involved in supporting researchers aimed at maintaining the momentum to implement and apply the Charter and Code.

General recommendations to all

All those involved in developing and supporting researchers are asked to take personal and collective responsibility to disseminate the message of the Charter and Code to all relevant individuals.

Researchers are invited to take their future in their hands and take responsibility for their career development and promoting the need for a cultural change.

If we are to achieve the cultural change necessary to recognise the profession of researcher, our language and actions must reflect and strengthen the message. This includes the need to:

- Acknowledge the diversity of career paths and the diversity of those involved in research by recognising there are a multiplicity of visions of research careers and researchers.
- Recognise that 'research' covers all academic disciplines, including the social sciences, arts and humanities.
- Use the term 'Early Career Researchers' to reflect the continuum from Early Stage Researchers / doctoral candidates through to postdoctoral researchers / 'contract' researchers.
- Encourage and ensure that staff within academe perceive and treat researchers as professionals at all stages of their career. This includes:
 - provision of adequate material conditions and social rights for the researchers
 - base career progression on assessment of research processes, rather than exclusively on scientific output
 - recognise need for and value of transferable/additional skills
 - reconnect and better position a research career in the innovation system, in a knowledge society full of highly qualified people
 - develop and implement proper training and offer incentives for supervision of early stage researchers according to defined standards

And finally, we individually and collectively need to promote the public understanding of research and to increase the attractiveness of research as a potential career option. We need to increase interest in and the quality of science teaching, starting in primary school and underline the need for developing critical thinking.

Recommendations for the European Commission

The Commission is asked to commit to the synergy between European Research Area and European Higher Education Area by referring to it as "Europe of Knowledge".

The Commission should reflect and build on the outcomes of its work so far, and continue to address the issue of recruitment and retention in the research profession through the work of its Human Resources Steering Group and Advisory Group. In particular, by investigating the "multiplicity of visions of research careers" (intersectoral mobility, non-traditional career paths); multiplicity of researchers (diversity issue); the breadth of research areas (from arts and humanities to physical sciences); and research as a profession (recognition of 'researcher' on the IOSC).

In order to further raise awareness of the Charter and Code, the Commission is asked to facilitate its dissemination by, for example, providing user-friendly versions in multiple languages, targeted at various groups, to be disseminated to employers, funders and researchers themselves.

The Commission is asked to reflect its commitment to the Charter and Code in its role as a major funder of research by being an exemplar in adhering to its principles in the management and operation of EC funding programmes e.g. the Framework Programme and specifically, Marie Curie Fellowships.

EC funding programmes should recognise the need to funding related specifically to the career development of researchers.

Recommendations for Member States

Key political leaders, national stakeholders, funding organisations, professional organisations and any other national bodies are asked to pledge support for the Charter and Code.

Member States are asked to provide appropriate and adequate legislative support to organisations to implement the Charter and Code by, for example, analysing the Charter and Code in the context of national structures, including the Fixed-Term Directive, third country visa directive and other national specific conditions that may hinder its implementation.

Member States are invited to map the Charter and Code against existing legislative code and common practice and to change their legislative framework accordingly. In the process, they are asked to look at ways of offering incentives such as tax relief to encourage intersectoral mobility.

Recommendations for Funders

All funders are invited to recognise the importance of a stable and sustainable funding environment in order for employers to provide adequate working conditions and career framework for its researchers.

National funders are invited to embed the Charter and Code in their conditions of grant and work towards providing a change in perception about the importance of research training and its management and the necessity for career development. Funders are asked to consider providing positive incentives such as making available more funds or to providing flexibility in existing funding sources to improve researchers careers by for example, moving researchers from a stipend to an employment contract, offering extensions or providing training opportunities.

Funders are invited particularly to consider two principle aspects of the Charter and Code in their conditions of grant: transparency in recruitment procedures, and the provision of minimum social security coverage including health, accident coverage and maternity leave.

Funders are invited to provide a public description of how they will implement the Charter and Code, specifying a clear timetable for implementation and evaluation procedure.

Recommendations for HE institutions and other employers of researchers

Leaders of organisations that employ researchers should provide clear recognition of the importance of career development, research training and its management, by embedding it within institutional practice. Organisations are invited to sign up to the Charter and Code with a visible statement as part of their branding. The Charter and Code should be disseminated within the organisation, alongside an analysis of how it relates to institutional practice.

Organisations should embed the Charter and Code in their appraisal systems, including acknowledgement of the benefits of inter-sectoral and trans-national mobility. Leaders may wish to consider making a public statement to reflect their commitment to research training and its management.

Leaders are asked to create an environment that allows researchers to take responsibility for their career development by providing access to career guidance, skills training and development. They may wish to offer incentives for the supervision of early stage researchers according to defined standards. They are also asked to consider the complementarities of FTD and Charter and Code in supporting career development

Recommendations for individuals

Managers who support the development of researchers should take this responsibility seriously. They should be honest about career prospects within an institution or the wider profession of research.

Researchers should take responsibility for their career development by being pro-active and look for opportunities to be more informed about the career options available, to develop their competencies accordingly and to engage in the research community.

It is important that researchers have a voice and they are encouraged to engage in the debate and support the implementation of the Charter and Code. It is necessary to develop more effective mechanisms for two-way communication and gathering feedback.

Next steps

Both the European Commission and the UK Presidency provided their strong endorsement of the key issues and recommendations from the conference.

The UK Presidency stated that it endorsed the Charter and Code and intends to play a significant role in its implementation. It views the Charter and Code as an important instrument in improving European competitiveness, and the conference as a beginning of a journey and not a destination in its own right. It aims to provide a plan of work to aid implementation in the UK.

The European Commission pledged that it would take forward the outcomes of the conference by:

- analysing the key conclusions with the Member States and the other stakeholders
- deepen the discussion through ad hoc working meetings, that may focus on particular difficult issues,
- organising a follow-up meeting at which progress would be assessed and evaluated.

The full proceedings of the conference will be available early November and will be disseminated to all participants and other stakeholders throughout Europe through our collective networks.