

Finland – Country report

Objectives of the project

The aim of our project is to improve expertise in industrial relations in the higher education sector and to promote the exchange of information and experience among EFEE and ETUCE members. More specifically, the project aims to:

- Reach a shared understanding, and possibly a ESSDE outcome, about the specific challenges facing early career researchers in Europe incorporating the perspectives and roles of trade unions and employers and the available options for responding to these challenges.
- Provide insight to the European Social Partners in Education on what we can do to improve social dialogue on industrial relations and employment relations issues pertaining to early career researchers.
- Explore where dialogue between national social partners improves support for early career researchers.
- Improve awareness of the existing work in the area of early career researchers (among others European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (2005), the HR Strategy on Researchers (2008) and the “HR Excellence in Research logo of the EC”, The UNESCO Recommendation (1997), the ETUCE report (2011)) their implementation and benefits in improving research quality through the provision of high quality support for early career researchers.
- To understand the trends in the career progression of female researchers, including areas of progress, and identify initiatives that have been successful in improving equality in career progression, particularly those initiatives that provide support to early career researchers.
- To produce a set of resources including case studies and practitioner-oriented research and policy guidance to complement the existing international work in this area.
- To facilitate peer learning between national social partners in the education sector, especially in the higher education sector; to exchange best practices and learning experiences.
- To contribute to the European social dialogue between employers’ organisations and trade unions in the education sector, more specifically to continue the current work of the Working Group 3 on Higher Education & Research and to improve the coordination, functioning and effectiveness of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue for Education.

This case study is one of six case study reports from this research project. The case study countries are Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Italy, Romania and the United Kingdom. The final project report, due to be published in December 2014, will draw on the findings from each country. The in-depth case studies will be published as appendices to the main report.

Project partners

Leading applicant is: Universities and Colleges’ Employers Association (UCEA) of the UK.

Co-applicants are: European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) and European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE).

Affiliated entities are: Association of Finnish Independent Education Employers, Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus.



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1 Country Context

Finland is a country in the far north of Europe, bordered by Norway, Sweden and Russia. Unlike their fellow-Scandinavian neighbours to the west, the Finns are not a Germanic people but rather speak a language related to Estonian, some languages of Siberia and, more distantly, Hungarian. Finland is a large country geographically but with a relatively small population of 5.4 million people. Around two-thirds of its territory is covered by forest and about a tenth by lakes. It has been a member of the EU since 1995.

Finland invests heavily in education, training and research, delivering one of the best-qualified workforces in the world. This has been a key factor in the development of a modern, competitive economy in which an advanced telecommunications sector has been added to the traditional timber and metals industries. More recently, however, Finland's economy has seen a decline in the important electronic, ship-building and paper industries. In particular the decline of its mobile phone manufacturer Nokia, has impacted on its economy. According to the OECD, Finland enjoys high well-being, but competitiveness has deteriorated, output has fallen and the population is ageing rapidly. Structural reforms are needed to extend working lives and raise public sector efficiency and potential growth.

2 Research and innovation

Despite its relatively small population, Finland punches well above its weight in terms of investment in research and development. While total R&D expenditure decreased to 3.78% of GDP in 2011, this was nevertheless the highest value in the EU and close to Finland's national target for 2020 of 4%.¹ Public investment was expected however to decline in 2012 and 2013 and the decline of Finland's R&D intensive ICT sector was expected to have an impact on private sector R&D. The public R&D budget for 2012 was around EUR 2 billion. While this was planned to reduce by 1-2% by 2015, new R&D tax incentives put in place in March 2012 could more than compensate for this reduction. Finland has the highest proportional business R&D investment (2.67% of GDP in 2011) in the EU and there has been an increase in R&D intensity in manufacturing and services sectors in recent years. According to Deloitte, the concentration of R&D among a few large firms means that Finland is more economically vulnerable than it appears.²

Research in Finland is conducted in universities, universities of applied science (polytechnics) and government research institutes, as well as in the private sector. There are three main sources of research funding. The Academy of Finland funds basic research through competitive grants. The Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (TEKES) funds R&D projects in both the private sector and university research while the Finnish National Fund for Research and Development (Sitra) is an independent public fund operating under the Finnish Parliament and supports R&D in fields which are considered as important for the welfare of Finnish society.³

¹ Deloitte Researchers Report 2013. Country Profile: Finland

http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research_policies/country_files/Finland_Country_Profile_RR2013_FINAL.pdf

² Ibid.

³ http://erawatch.jrc.ec.europa.eu/erawatch/export/sites/default/galleries/generic_files/file_0517.pdf

3 The Finnish higher education system

Finland's higher education system covers mainly the populated parts of the country in the south. There are 14 universities and 24 universities of applied science (also known as Polytechnics) and the total number of students was 316,000 in 2014. There was a major reform of the university sector in 2010, following the Universities Act 2009. All Finnish universities are regulated under the Universities Act 2009 (as amended in 2011). In addition to this Act, Aalto University and Tampere University of Technology (foundation universities) are governed by the Foundations Act 1930.

The mission of the universities is to 'promote free research and academic and artistic education, to provide higher education based on research, and to educate students to serve their country and humanity'. In carrying out their mission, the universities must promote 'lifelong learning, interact with the surrounding society and promote the impact of research findings and artistic activities on society'. The universities must arrange their activities so as to 'assure a high international standard in research, education and teaching in conformity with ethical principles and good scientific practices'.

The universities are autonomous of the Finnish state with the aim of securing the freedom of higher academic and art education. Autonomy entails the right to decision-making in matters belonging to internal administration. The university community comprises both teaching and research personnel (although some Finnish universities are increasingly insisting that all academic staff do both), other staff and students. University academics have academic freedom in research, art and teaching but a university teacher must comply with the statutes and regulations issued concerning teaching arrangements.

In the universities it is possible to study for both lower (Bachelor) and higher (Master) university degrees and for post-graduate licentiate and doctoral degrees in academic, artistic and professional fields. Most students graduate with a Master's degree. Post-graduate education is considered to start at licentiate or doctoral level. The universities may also provide continuing professional education and distance learning 'open university' education. The higher university degree is taken after the completion of the lower university degree or a corresponding education. Education for the higher university degree may be organised without the inclusion of a separate lower university degree where appropriate in terms of the professional demands of the field. The academic, artistic and professional licentiate or doctoral degree is taken after the completion of the higher university degree or a corresponding education. The usual duration of studies for the lower (Bachelor's) degree is as follows: (1) three and a half academic years in studies leading to the degree of Bachelor of Fine Art and (2) three academic years in studies leading to other degrees.

Education leading to a university degree and entrance examinations relating to student admission is free of charge for the student, unless otherwise provided for in the 2009 Act, even for international students. For activities other than those referred to in the 2009 Act, universities may charge fees. A university may charge fees to a student admitted to a degree programme taught in a foreign language. However, fees cannot be charged to a citizen of a state belonging to the European Economic Area.

The Ministry negotiates four-year funding agreements with the universities, including annual reporting requirements. It also identifies areas where thematic reports are needed and has recently conducted work on gender equality in HE.

4 Social dialogue and HE employment relations

Tripartite negotiations between government, unions and employers are a special feature of Finnish employment relations. Labour market relations have been traditionally characterised by close cooperation between the state and the social partners and almost all legislation concerning working life is based on a tripartite consensus.⁴

This tripartite negotiation is aimed at reaching a comprehensive incomes policy settlement. This includes a general annual pay increase, job security, hours of work, training and equality as well as pensions and day care. Negotiations are not always tripartite and sometimes take place simply between the employers and the unions. The difference is that the agenda is broader in tripartite negotiation since taxes and social benefits and the legislative measures are also on the table. The national settlement provides a framework for industrial level collective agreements between employers and trade unions. The right to negotiate and reach the collective agreement is between the employers' organisation and the unions in each sector. If there is a national level incomes policy settlement (as in 2013), the clear majority of sector organisations have to accept/join the agreement before it comes into force.

This model was, however, dormant for four years during the European economic recession but in 2011 the social partners agreed a new tripartite framework for a new central agreement entitled the 'Frame Agreement' and covering the period 2011-2013. This 25 month agreement provided for a 4.3% pay increase and a lump sum payment of EURO150 at the beginning of 2012. The 'Agreement for Employment and Growth' (AEG) was agreed in 2013 and covers the period 2013 – 2016.⁵ Employees were limited to a 0.4% or €20 a month pay increase (whichever the greater) in 2014 and then 0.4% in 2015. These increases were below the prevailing rates of inflation. Both the Frame Agreement and the AEG primarily covered the annual pay increases – the minimum terms of job security, hours of work, etc are either laid down in law or through collective agreements at sector level. Both the Frame Agreement and the AEG primarily covered the annual pay increases – the minimum terms of job security, hours of work, etc are either laid down in law or through collective agreements at sector level.

A major change in Finnish HE employment came about in 2010 as a result of the 2009 Universities Act. The Act was designed to increase the autonomy of institutions and enable independent decision-making in finance and leadership. A key change vis-à-vis the academic staff was the shift from being civil servants to being employees of the universities.

The employment relationship between universities and their employees is now based on a contract of employment. The employees and the terms of the employment relation are governed by relevant statutes and terms agreed in a law, a collective bargaining agreement and in the contract of employment. The employer may not act in a manner which may endanger the freedom of research, art or education. In addition to the provisions concerning termination of the employment contract laid down in the 2009 Act, the employment contract of an employee belonging to the research and

⁴ Finland: Industrial relations profile. European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/country/finland.htm>

⁵ Ibid.

teaching personnel of the university may not be terminated or cancelled on grounds which would infringe upon the freedom of research, art or education.

4.1 Trade Unions

The Finnish trade union movement is well established and has a long history. The level of organisation of employees (union density) is one of the highest in the world (68% in 2011 according to the European Foundation for Living and Working Conditions⁶). Coverage of collective bargaining was 90% in 2011 and the percentage of employees employed by companies that are members of an employers' association was 70%. There are three union confederations. 1) SAK – The Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions – founded in 1907 and representing blue collar workers 2) STTK – The Finnish Confederation of Salaried Employees – founded in 1946 and 3) AKAVA - the Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals – founded in 1950 to represent academically qualified professional employees. There are about 70 trade unions affiliated to all three trade union confederations.

In Higher Education there are three main unions represented – FUURT (teachers and researchers), FUUP (professors) and FUUL (a part of the OAJ Teachers union that represents lecturers in both universities and Polytechnics). All three unions are affiliated to AKAVA. There are close to 30,000 staff working in universities and 7,000 members of FUURT. Around 1,500 union members retain membership, even though they are not working in HE – some members are in industry and the public sector. Some work in research institutes but there are no FUURT shop stewards in these places although there are representatives of another union present – therefore they need to contact FUURT directly. FUURT have an in-house lawyer, as do all unions, who deals with these cases. However, shop stewards at universities are trained to deal with local issues and these workplace representatives are the core of the union. All employees are members of local associations which then affiliate to one of the three unions – no one is a direct member of the national trade unions.

According to FUURT, prior to university reform in 2010, there were “cooperation” bodies at the universities but after the reform these became much weaker. Also some collegial bodies ceased to exist and a more managerial administration was introduced. There are certain requirements the employer has to follow under the law but the unions consider these requirements to be modest compared with the previous civil service arrangements. There is still some content noted in collective agreements about consultation/negotiation but the extended consultative system has gone.

4.2 Employers' associations

The Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK) is the peak employers' organisation in Finland and, like the trade union central organisation, it dates from 1907. EK represents the entire private sector and companies of all sizes. EK has 27 independent branch or 'sector' organisations. In addition there are employers' associations covering local government and the State Employer's Office, as well as bodies covering Church and Agricultural Employers. All of these employers' bodies are involved in the central tripartite negotiations.

There are two separate employers' associations covering Higher Education, one for all universities and 11/24 universities of applied science and one for rest of the universities of applied science. There is a separate collective agreement for staff working in universities and two (quite similar) agreements for

⁶ Ibid.

universities of applied science. When the universities became independent of the state in 2010 all of them decided to join the employers' association, the Association of Finnish Independent Education Employers AFIEE (Sivistystyönantajat ry) and this provides the employers' side in negotiations. The AFIEE is a member association of the 27 member Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK).

4.3 Collective agreement for universities

Collective agreements in Finland are generally legally binding and since 1971 the principle of applicability of these agreements to all employers in the specified sector (whether unionised or not) has applied. The first collective agreement for university academic staff was signed in 2010. This was not a copy of the previous civil servants' contract but there were similarities – the salary system was kept largely intact. There are national minimum salaries and a national grading structure for university staff – but there is variation in how each HEI interprets these.

The agreement covers both academic and support staff but there are different salary scales for the two groups. There are 11 academic levels. Doctoral researchers (where they have employed status) fall within levels 1-4 but the majority will start at level 2. Levels 5-7 are for lecturers and senior researchers, while levels 8-11 are for professors. Where PhD candidates have employed status they will have the same terms and conditions as other staff. Research Councils do not set employment conditions for researchers apart from some senior fellowships where it is stipulated that no more than 5% of time will be devoted to teaching.

The salary is based on three elements – a task-related element based on the task requirements, a personal element based on personal performance and a guaranteed element for those employed before the 2010 reform, based on the collective agreement for government employees in force on 31 December 2009. All jobs are job evaluated. For the personal element the principal evaluation factors are pedagogical merit, research merit and social and university community merit. In addition to the personal salary element, the employer may pay a performance bonus amounting to 50% of the salary difference between the performance level of the employee and the next higher performance level.

In terms of pay, under the universities collective agreement it is common for PhD candidates (with employed status) to start at level 2 (which is about Euros 2,000 per month). Level four is approximately Euros 2,500 per month. The union recommendation is that PhD candidates should start at level 2 as level 1 consists largely of research assistant tasks and most employers have followed this recommendation. There is a minimum salary for each level – but every salary is individual as it is determined according to the matrix. The task related element is agreed first (upon recruitment) and then progression is based on individual performance. The union says that it is more difficult as you progress up the grade structure as the criteria for a pay increase become stricter. The last researchers who were on guaranteed incremental salaries are now out of the system. Criteria for performance should be detailed at the start of the performance management process. However, the union says that the performance evaluation process is a problem. Very often there simply is a lack of money and universities just place the employees at the level they can afford. The union says that sometimes the manager may even say that the performance is improved but that they do not have the money. This way of handling the personal performance process is not in line the collective agreement, says the union, but unfortunately quite common.

5 Research careers in Finland

Finland has a higher proportion of researchers in its workforce than the EU average. The Finnish Government has put in place a range of measures aimed at training enough researchers to meet its R&D targets and at promoting attractive employment conditions in higher education and research institutions. It has done this through a number of national strategies including an Education and Research Development Plan (2011-2016), Research and Innovation Policy Guidelines (2011-2015), and a Strategy for Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland (2009-2015). The Ministry of Education and Culture's target number of newly awarded doctoral degrees is 1,600 annually for the period 2013-16. There are also some initiatives to increase young people's interest in (natural) science and technology. However, the union states unemployment among successful doctoral candidates has doubled over the last two years.

The employers generally define early career researchers as from the post-doctoral stage onwards. In contrast the unions argue that all doctoral candidates should have an employment contract. All academic staff in Finland have a teaching and research position – there are no 'research-only' posts except in research institutes and these are small in number. There are some fellowships where teaching is reduced – e.g. those funded by the Academy of Finland.

In Finland there are generally considered to be four stages in a research career. The first is at PhD level. PhD candidates may be defined as employees in Finnish universities but these are highly competitive positions in the form of both bursaries and employment contracts. Other PhD candidates are not given employment status and are considered to be students. For example, Aalto University does not see the PhD as the first stage of a research career and considers them at this stage still to be students. They view the post-doctorate stage as the first stage of a research career.

According to the union, there are 20,000 people registered on doctoral degrees in Finland but there is funding for only 7,000 and there are just 1,600 doctoral candidates on grants. Grant holders are in between employees and students and can insure themselves and receive pensions. The rest are defined as students but they are 'doctoral candidates' and the union maintains that there is a difference. Doctoral candidates need to be registered at a university so are a student in that sense. The paradox, from the union perspective, is that if they are also paid a salary they can be defined as employees. The union has had discussions with the student union, who want to represent doctoral students, about the status of doctoral candidates. The union is not concerned about the student union's ambitions to represent these people as the union only wants to represent those who receive a salary (or are unemployed) anyway. The union argues that the Bologna definition sees 'doctoral candidates' as the starting point in a research career and education is secondary. They have therefore come closer to being employees.

The union view is that people undertaking a doctorate are doctoral 'candidates', not doctoral 'students', and according to the EU Charter for Researchers are defined as ECRs. The term 'young researcher' is problematic to translate. Some universities use the nomenclature 'Thesis researcher', 'Research student' or 'Research trainee'. The union wants to avoid the terminology 'student' as this is problematic when a doctoral candidate wishes to claim unemployment benefit – students don't have a right to unemployment benefits.

The second level for academic staff is the post-doctoral researcher. Many doctoral candidates do not continue into academia (only around a fifth obtain post-doctoral positions) and around half go into industry. The third level is the established tenured academic position and the fourth level is Professor.

Higher education and doctoral studies are very popular among young people in Finland. According to the Ministry of Education, however, out of 50 successful doctoral candidates only 10 will stay on in the university as post-docs and a large number go abroad. Before the 1990s Finland envisaged the employment destination of post-docs as purely HE but since then there has been a radical shift due to a society/industry need. The early stages in a research career are the most competitive and bottle neck is forming because supply is rapidly exceeding demand. When Finland first expanded doctoral education it was a great success and was done using the same staff resources in terms of supervision. However, concerns are now being raised about what all these highly-qualified people will do? People have thus changed tack in their view of doctoral education. The union also sees the output of doctorates as a problem. There is a 1,600 target by the Ministry for Education for PhDs but only a minority of these can find employment in a university and it is reported that unemployment of doctoral candidates has increased significantly in recent years. The union makes the point, however, that unemployment among post-docs is still lower than for lower degrees (Bachelor and Master)

6 Reform of doctoral training

As well as the 2010 reforms to HE in Finland, there has also been a reform of doctoral training. In 1995 Finland set up a new national system which funded 1,600 doctoral students. The national networks representing each discipline applied to the Academy of Finland for funded places and the Ministry for Education made decisions on what numbers should be allocated. Numbers were increased gradually to 1,600. At the same time HEIs were admitting unfunded PhD students and this population reached 20,000. There was no support system for these additional PhD students and there were union concerns about fairness in terms of rights and equal treatment. Between 2011 and 2013 there was therefore a reform of doctoral training and the system of national networks applying for places has been abolished. The Academy of Finland is now investing more in post-doctoral research positions, rather than expanding further the pool of doctoral candidates. Funded places are now decided on by the universities who are explicitly responsible for admissions and support and ensuring equal treatment. The number of funded PhD places to allocate is up to each HEI. So there has been a shift to university level graduate schools that have a separate administrative structure for doctoral level education at each university. These schools are set up to be consistent with the principles for doctoral education and benchmark against each other. Graduate schools take applications for study and allocate funded places. The union says that this new system has not worked as well as the previous system for allocating PhD places.

The Ministry of Education's role is indirect although it has a national target for PhD students which it discusses with the universities. How the places are allocated, however, is up to the university. Universities now receive funding based on the number of successful undergraduate degree students graduated. However, the position has often been for universities to take in as many doctoral students as they can and this can be problematic. The Ministry has stressed that universities should take in smaller numbers of doctoral students and provide better guidance and training to a smaller cohort. The Ministry says that this has led to a stricter admissions process and a shift towards restricting admissions to the best candidates.

Employability is another issue and a key task of graduate schools is to provide transferable skills through courses and instruction in statistics, management and project management. The important thing is that all doctoral students will have access to this training and they did not prior to 2011.

7 The EU Code and Charter for Researchers in Finland

The Finnish Rector's Association has signed the Charter and Code on behalf of all universities in Finland. Fourteen HE institutions in Finland have signed up individually to the EU Charter and Code.

In the view of the employers there are no real barriers to implementation of the Charter or Code. The Code and Charter are generally not seen by the employers to be setting a high bar in terms of what Finnish universities already do – indeed these are minimum standards which the universities largely meet or exceed. Finnish institutions consider themselves already very good at managing human resources in terms of equality, transparent recruitment etc.

Universities also want the HR Excellence kite mark. There are seven Finnish universities with the HR Excellence Award so far, which are as follows:

- Aalto University
- Lappeenranta University of Technology
- Tampere University of Technology
- University of Eastern Finland
- University of Jyväskylä
- University of Oulu
- University of Turku

The University of Helsinki's application for the HR excellence award is currently in process. Aalto has only recently achieved this status and so it is too early to evaluate its impact. The University of Helsinki is in the process of improving its data and increasing resources to review data – the university is aware of the need to have relevant statistics to monitor issues concerning ECRs.

Aalto University reported that the gap analysis required by the process resulted in some small tweaks to practice but nothing major. Finnish institutions consider themselves ahead of the game in this area. The recent university reforms have provided more autonomy in HR practices and the employers say that this has resulted in a more active approach to recruitment where it was previously more restrictive.

8 Challenges for early career researchers

According to the union, the over-production of PhDs has now moved to the post-doc level. The Academy of Finland decides about grant allocations and, according to the union, out of 1,013 applications only 8% get through. For senior researchers, only 14% of those applying for grants are successful. At post-doctoral level, it is assumed that researchers will go abroad. There is a view among the ECRs that were interviewed for this research that the Finnish universities do not help as much as they can – universities suggest the ECR needs to go abroad but don't offer assistance in doing this. After completion of the doctorate, most students are exited from their institution and lose access to university services such as email and library, although some institutions use their discretion in allowing continued use.

The union sees the main challenges for ESRs as follows:

- Lack of tenure. The career path is a string of fixed-term contracts.
- Workload is not clearly defined and can vary between and within institutions.
- Lack of academic freedom – compared to established researchers. ESRs are given topics by their PIs and are not expected to follow their own interests.
- There is a high level of competition between ESRs for posts.
- The perceived need for mobility to develop a career.

8.1 Fixed-term contracts

According to the Deloitte report on researchers in Finland, some 63% of researchers in Finland are on fixed-term contracts, compared to an EU average of 43%⁷. However, the Finnish employers state that this figure includes all levels of PhD candidate, not just those on employment contracts. For those on the normal level 2-4 contracts the figure is 53% on fixed-term contracts. However, there is also an issue about the definition of short-term contracts – some are just a month while others may be for three years or even five years in the case of some professors. The major reason for the use of short-term contracts cited by employers is the precariousness of research funding. One-third of university income is external funding and this is largely directed towards research. Twice a year HEIs provide information on fixed-term contracts to the unions. The union claims that one of the big promises prior to the 2009 reform was that these fixed term contracts would diminish over time as the use successive fixed-term contracts is governed by employment law but that this has not happened.

The employers argue, however, that the proportion of fixed-term employment has reduced, albeit at a slower rate than expected. Prior to 2010 there were different rules for short-term contracts under civil service regulations and that meant that there were more fixed-term arrangements in HE. The Labour Act stipulates that all contracts should be permanent unless there is a justifiable reason for them being fixed-term and there is a view that this will lead in time to fewer such contracts. There is a high legislative bar in Finland for employers to justify the use of such short-term contracts.

8.2 Mobility

Mobility refers to both movement between the HE sector and other sectors of the economy and international mobility. In terms of mobility between sectors in Finland there are a high number of employees working in R&D in Finland and private sector R&D has traditionally been very strong, particularly in ICT. However, only 15% of those working in R&D have a PhD (most have an MSc or Bachelor's degree in engineering and other disciplines).

Internationalisation is an important issue regarding early career researchers and HE in Finland as a whole. In recent times Finland has compared poorly to its OECD and EU comparators in terms of the degree of HE internationalisation – both in terms of non-EU researchers in Finland and the number of international students – and foreign direct investment in Finland is also lower than the EU average⁸.

International mobility, however, has become a focus in Finland and is an important part of public policy – particularly in HE - with a lot of effort going into increasing this. One of the three main indicators in the funding model is the setting of targets relating to internationalisation, including

⁷ Deloitte Researchers Report 2013. Country Profile: Finland

⁸ Deloitte Researchers Report 2013. Country Profile: Finland

Supporting Early Career Researchers in Higher Education in Europe

EU DGV Project VS/2013/0399 financed under budget heading Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue

increasing the number of foreign doctoral candidates and researchers. The research councils and the Academy of Finland have also reviewed this matter and have developed policies in this area.

Individual universities encourage mobility in terms of movement to different countries and have programmes such as researcher exchanges and staff exchanges with other countries. There is an expectation that ECRs need to go abroad for a while and that this is important for broadening views and personal benchmarking. This also strengthens multi-disciplinary working and avoids narrow foci.

Finland makes sure it encourages this mobility both ways. As a small country it faces difficulties in attracting individuals but there is low mobility overall and Finland is not suffering from a 'brain drain'. There are some issues with pensions – mobility is easier between Nordic countries but more difficult outside of these areas. It is also an effort to move family and this can be discouraging. The employers and unions have done some work with the European Parliament looking at single pension system for researchers to assist mobility but this has been difficult for a range of reasons. Positive recent developments include an increase in 2013 in foreign PhD students to 20% and post-docs to 25%. Apart from EU students there are now large numbers of Russian, Chinese and other Asian students.

According to the union, at post-doctoral level it is assumed that researchers will go abroad to develop their careers but there is resistance to this among ECRs. There was a view among the ECRs interviewed for this research that the Finnish universities do not help as much as they can – the universities suggest post-docs need to go abroad to widen their experience but don't offer assistance in doing this. They also say that there is no guarantee of employment in Finland on their return and that they may have miss out on career progression by going abroad.

9 Supporting early career researchers

9.1 Employer Support for ECRs

The Ministry has a goal to increase the number of PhDs in the R&D workforce slowly towards 18-20%. To enable this process the Ministry has included goals within negotiated agreements (every 4 years) to work more closely with other sectors and has developed guidelines for developing research careers to be more dynamic. These guidelines also promote more mobility between sectors and highlight the importance of external experience in the appointment of researchers.

The universities have already made significant changes to PhD education – in particular, giving attention to providing better skills for employability. Looking at employability needs, the universities have expanded this to graduate and masters students and it is very popular – ECRs are keen to know about other work possibilities. Topics include workplace skills such as project management, presentation skills, accounting and supervisory skills. There are also pedagogical courses to develop teaching skills. Finnish universities are also increasingly working with their alumni to assist employability outside the academic sector. ECRs are provided with support in obtaining research funding – both in terms of knowledge and networks, support in joining networks, and knowing how to apply for funding, where to publish and how to write research papers. Career planning courses are also offered, which include some basic skills such as CV writing and communication skills. Some of these are centrally run by each university while some are at departmental level. However, there is no national level support for ECRs currently.

At present Finnish universities are trying to maximise four year funding for doctoral candidates – particularly where posts are funded by private foundations. Many of these only provide funding for three years for a four year PhD. Candidates can therefore struggle with this mismatch. The independent foundations are primarily in the humanities and social sciences but are important funders. Institutions are trying to reach an agreement with them to ensure that PhDs are funded properly (with full-cost accounting) but it is very difficult to persuade them to pay for overheads and this becomes an expense to the universities. It is important that there is more of a match between the candidates' needs and the funding available to ensure reasonable working environments and standards. This is not easy as it is expensive for both sides and the Foundations want to retain their independence. Some universities allow researchers a five-year period of secondment from business as 'professors of practice', often in demand areas, so the employers say that there is no problem of re-entering the HE system from the private sector.

9.2 Union Support for ECRs

In addition to the general services offered to all members, the trade union has guides for grant holders and offers reduced union membership rates at low fees (6 euros per month). The trade union also offers seminars to early stage researchers and presentations – these attempt to manage ECR expectations by warning these individuals that it will be difficult to get a tenured position and that it is not an easy career to follow. The trade union has a network for early stage researchers, which meets regularly to discuss pressing issues. It recently conducted a survey of ECR members.

10 Equality Issues

The Finnish employers stated that it is important to understand the Finnish context in terms of the social welfare model. Parental leave is designed to provide a more solid basis for individual decisions vis-à-vis work and there are other elements of the model (day child care, etc) that reduce the burden on women and its effects on employment.

In terms of representation of women in the academic profession there are now more female PhD students than males and there is a relatively even split up to and including level 3. However, at professor level (4) this drops to around 26% although there are a large number of professors due to retire so this might change quite rapidly. There is a challenge around horizontal segregation in scientific fields – both in academia and in industry – and indeed there is more segregation by academic discipline in Finland than other EU countries. Women still tend to choose humanities and healthcare and men stereotypically go into science, technology and engineering. As a consequence HEIs are not able to attract enough staff in these disciplines because of the gender imbalance.

The Finnish approach to gender equality is gender neutrality. There is a high threshold for positive discrimination actions – it was argued by some of the interviewees that Finnish women don't value these and do not want to be treated differently to men. There is also not a tradition of campaigning on separate female issues. There is a report on the Nordic countries which looks at this issue.⁹

The employers follow professor recruitment closely – at Aalto University 60% of new professorial recruits are female but the figure is only 20% nationally. At other levels the representation of female researchers is not an issue. The employers explained that this was partly to do with tradition but also that there are checks and balances such as gender representation on appointment and assessment committees. Legislation and the Finnish social model are important. Parental pay and leave arrangements are generous¹⁰ and universities allow three year career breaks. However, the union says that the situation is not as good as the civil service terms prior to the 2010 reforms.

The trade unions have raised equality issues concerning fixed-term contracts and parental leave with the ombudsman because there appear to be different approaches at different universities as to treatment.

11 Issues and actions identified

For the Ministry of Education the major issue concerning ECRs is the ability to plan the output of PhD qualified researchers to meet demand and there are also variations between disciplines in terms of demand. One problem is the imprecision in forecasting demand. The Ministry tries its best but it is very difficult, especially given time lags between training and labour market entry/competence. The weakest area is research which is seen as the least controlled and controllable part of the economy. Nokia is a good example of how difficult is the balance - Finland assumed the growth in demand for research from Nokia would go on for ever and increased investment in specific IT research. When Microsoft bought Nokia it fundamentally changed the industry in Finland. ICT is still a growth area and has bounced back but there have been fluctuations in ICT education.

⁹ <http://www.norden.org/fi/julkaisut/julkaisut/2013-544>

¹⁰ Note – OECD figures show Finland spends 3% of GDP on family / child friendly policies.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201107/20110718ATT24321/20110718ATT24321EN.pdf>

Supporting Early Career Researchers in Higher Education in Europe

EU DGV Project VS/2013/0399 financed under budget heading Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue

For the unions the major issues are the definition of doctoral candidates and the short-term nature of their contracts. The union states that the majority of research in Finnish universities is undertaken by Masters' level individuals and that the employment of more post-docs would improve the quality of research. The union argues that universities are happy to employ both PhD candidates and post-docs but that the availability of senior positions is more constrained due to the relatively higher cost of these posts which means that progression paths are closed off to the majority. The employers are using the flexibility of short-term contracts, argues the union, as a mechanism to allow financial flexibility in hard times. It claims that some researchers have been on a series of fixed-term contracts for up to 20 years.

The employers propose that the issue is not just about universities providing more employment opportunities, which is difficult given funding constraints, but about getting ECRs to contemplate careers outside academia and prepare themselves accordingly with the support of the institution.

The university academic role remains, however, an attractive career in Finland, according to the employers. Professors are highly appreciated and have the highest status of any profession. Non-pay aspects of the role are especially valued – the flexibility and autonomy. The employers say that there is no problem recruiting the best and retaining talent. In fact it is the opposite – people do not leave the sector so opportunities are becoming more limited for early career researchers.