

Results of the Survey for identification of the obstacles for employment of foreign researchers in Serbia

In order to discover the opinion of the researchers and research staff, working in Serbian R&D organizations on the general issues regarding the research career development and mobility, EURAXESS Serbia launched the Survey for identification of the obstacles for employment of foreign researchers. The survey was implemented online on the national EURAXESS portal and 102 invitations were sent to different organizations representatives, which were already involved or informed about EURAXESS initiative and activities in Serbia. Until the mid of May, we received 31 answers, delivering the feedback rate of 30.4%. The results of the survey are presented in the remainder of this page.

44% of the respondents have opinion that their organizations do not have sufficient number of researchers in the context of ongoing projects and future plans. 47% of respondents disagree.

In 44% of organizations, management is aware about EURAXESS Jobs portal. In 10% this is not the case (however, only 20% of the organizations' management is aware about the benefits of the C&C implementation and the label – HR Excellence in Research). 47% of the respondents are not sure. Similarly, in 33% of the organizations, management is aware about Charter & Code, which is not the case for 10%. Again, high number of respondents is not sure about this – 57%.

Under assumption that a foreign researcher fulfills all the necessary criteria for employment, 60% of the respondents have opinion that management of their organizations would not favor the local researcher against the foreign one. Slightly lower rate of 50% of respondents think that the employment of the foreign researcher would be regarded as positive by the colleagues researchers. However, relatively high rate of 20% of respondents think that local researchers will not have a positive attitude towards the employment of foreign researchers and 30% are not sure.

The most dominant type of the vacancy is election to teaching rank. It is very positive to notice that 27% of the organizations publish fellowships and 40% publish vacancies for participation on the projects. However, 50% of all vacancies are published only on the

public boards, web sites on local language and newspapers or journals with local coverage. 30% of the vacancies are published in newspapers or journals with national coverage. It is regrettable to notice that only 6% and 7% of the organizations publish their vacancies on English versions of their websites and job portals, respectively.

The fact that different programs or projects with research staff or PhD exchanges are ongoing in 64% organizations show potential for facilitating the researchers mobility. In 44% of the organizations, 1 to 10 foreign researchers are hosted. In 20%, as high as 10 to 50 foreign researchers are hosted annually. However, these visits can be hardly considered as mobility, since most of them are for the period of 1-7 days (30%), while 20% are for the period of one to two weeks, and additional 10% for up to one month.

One of the biggest obstacles for mobility is the lack of PhD programs on English language. Only one respondent confirmed that his organization is organizing PhD program on English. Consequently, only this organization is hosting foreign PhD students.

The survey listed 6 possible reasons for lack of foreign researchers' employment in Serbian R&D organizations and asked respondents to rate each of the possible reasons with marks 1-5, where lower mark corresponds to more relevant reason. According to the survey results, the most relevant reason is complex and long administrative tasks (average mark 2), followed by corruption in the employment process (2.6), insufficient language skills of local researchers (2.7), non-transparent employment process (3.1), short timeframe for job application (3.2) and strong competition of local researchers (3.6).

At the end of the questionnaire, we asked the respondents to check and comment on the measures that need to be implemented in order to increase the transparency of the employment in Serbian research organizations in general. 70% of the respondents agree that implementation of flexible, shorter, transparent but a clear legal procedure is a necessity. Only 34% of the respondents think that more rigid criteria and control and increase in the vacancy duration are necessary measures.

Besides the answers on survey questions, we received a number of narrative feedbacks reflecting different opinions on how to improve the conditions for employment, both for foreign and local researchers. Some of them are:

- It is necessary to work on development of the study programs in English language.
- Increase of the researchers' salaries will surely contribute to the response of the young talents, both foreigners and locals.
- It is necessary to develop programs of external funding for foreign researchers.
- To use dormitories to accommodate foreign PhD students.
- To implement the mechanism for motivation of senior researchers who are mentoring foreign researchers – financial, career development, or other.
- Once the R&D infrastructure is more developed, it will be easier to attract foreign researchers.
- Increase in international collaboration and multi-national projects will create the awareness of the impact foreign researchers might have on national R&D landscape.
- Evaluation of the research careers should be more rigid as current human resources are not capable to perform high-quality research.