

EU focus on open science 'detracts from research career efforts'

Leru says that commission's focus should be on improving scholars' employment prospects

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By [Holly Else](/content/holly-else/)

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Source: Alamy

The European Commission's pursuit of the open science agenda has detracted from efforts to make research careers more stable, according to a sector analyst.

Katrien Maes, chief policy officer at the League of European Research Universities, said that unappealing career prospects for researchers risk “undermining our credibility as the bedrock for scientific progress”.



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Speaking at the Vitae annual conference in Birmingham, she said that the development of research careers needed to be put “squarely back on the agenda” in Europe, which has the largest research labour market in the world.

Many researchers, particularly in the early stages of their careers, are contracted by universities to work on a series of precarious short-term contracts, and some bemoan the lack of support and career guidance offered to them by their institution.

“We know that career prospects may be called unappealing or off-putting,” Dr Maes said, adding that this might mean that universities are unable to attract the “brightest and the best”.

“[There is] a need for us and other organisations to put this squarely back on the agenda of the European Union because the current commissioner for research and innovation, Carlos Moedas, has made open science his agenda,” she said.

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“Open science, open innovation, open to the world...this sometimes detracts from where I would like to see some of the core action, really focusing on research careers.”

Dr Maes added that Europe had about 1.73 million researchers, more than China and the US. “It is the biggest labour market for research in the world,” she said.

“There are many good practices and changing practices, but where there is smoke there is fire. This is still an issue for universities because it risks undermining our credibility as the bedrock for scientific progress.”

Dr Maes added that many of the institutions that have secured Human Resources Excellence in Research Awards, instigated by the European Commission to boost working conditions for researchers, are in the UK, with far fewer going to continental universities.

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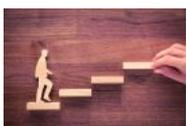


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