



# WALLONIA-BRUSSELS PARTNERSHIP FOR RESEARCHERS

Adopted by the Governments of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation  
and Wallonia as at 26 May 2011



**MANY THANKS TO :**

- The Research Programmes Department of the DGO6 (Public Service of Wallonia)
- The Directorate General for non compulsory Education and Scientific Research (DGNORS)
- The National Funds for Scientific Research (FNRS)

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The Wallonia-Brussels Partnership for Researchers is the contribution of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation to the implementation of the European Charter for Researchers, the European Code of Conduct, the European Commission Partnership for Researchers, the recommendations of the Helsinki Group on Women and Science and the human resources strategy of the key initiative "Innovation Union" of the European Union.

It reflects the priority given by the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, through the Declarations of Community and Regional Policy and the Marshall Plan 2.Green, to investments in research and in particular in human capital and R&D personnel. This investment is meant to be both qualitative and quantitative and to approach all the problems relating to the careers and the mobility of researchers in an integrated way.

The Partnership is meant to be an open and participatory process that allows the inclusion of the concerns of the actors in research in all their diversity and depending on the specific features of their situations.

It completes the process of signing and implementing the European Charter for Researchers

by the actors themselves (EURAXESS Wallonia-Brussels) and aims at encouraging and assisting them in this sense. This process also fits into a set of contacts and collaborations with the federal level and the other federated bodies.

The Wallonia-Brussels Partnership for Researchers is worked out in twenty-five actions divided into six chapters that include those recommended by the European Commission Partnership and enriching the concerns demonstrated in the Declarations of Community and Regional Policy and the Marshall Plan 2.Green.

In this way, the public authorities undertake, alongside the actors in research, to place researchers at the centre of the priorities given to the consolidation of research as a driver of the future.

# Open recruiting and portability of subsidies

The Wallonia-Brussels Federation undertakes to promote open and transparent selection procedures in the recruiting of researchers and to give priority concerning procedures to establishing equality of the researchers in regard to different origins, status and professional careers.



**“ Member States to ensure open, transparent, competition-based recruitment of researchers, in particular by giving institutions greater autonomy over hiring and by adopting best practice on the recognition of qualifications from other countries. ”**

*Extract from the European Commission Partnership for Researchers*

## ACTION 1

**Establish recruiting of researchers that is open, transparent, competitive and compliant with the principles appearing in the European Code of Conduct for Researchers.**

1. The first concrete measure to be established is the reform (under way) of the recruiting system of the *F.R.S.-FNRS* which involves:
  - Eliminating the age criterion formerly applied to applicants for *F.R.S.-FNRS* mandates;
  - Evaluation criteria that are defined and known to the candidates;
  - Increasing the justification for decisions: a consolidated evaluation report of requests validated by the Scientific Commission, signed by the Chairman of the Scientific Commission, and, after decisions by the Board of Directors of the *F.R.S.-FNRS*, communicated to the candidate and to his/her promoter;
  - A procedure that calls more on experts external to the French-speaking Community. This procedure takes place in two stages, with evaluation of the projects by several

individual experts, a majority outside of the CfWB, and classification in a useful order of all the projects by a Scientific Commission of 15 Members (9 international members - including the Chairman - and 6 CfWB members who are not promoters of the call under way);

- Better advertising of the calls for candidates and the mechanisms for obtaining mandates in *F.R.S.-FNRS*/Associated Funds on different internet sites (*F.R.S.-FNRS*, EURAXESS, etc.);
- A redeveloped internet site containing information of better quality on the procedures of the *F.R.S.-FNRS* (mechanisms, calls, results, etc.).

This reform has been operational since January 2010 and is the object of an evaluation and a consultation with the researchers.

2. Within the universities, these practices have already been long established and could follow an evolution similar to that of the *F.R.S.-FNRS*. The Government will examine, in consultation with the universities, the possibilities for the extension of these measures to contractual researchers.

**“ Member States and Commission to ensure that all publicly funded researchers’ positions are openly advertised online, in particular through EURAXESS. ”**

*Extract from the European Commission Partnership for Researchers*

## ACTION 2

**Promote best practices concerning the recognition of degrees and the equivalency procedures.**

1. The first measure concerns the application of the Lisbon Recognition Convention that entered into force as at 1 September 2009.

The Council of Europe Convention on the recognition of qualifications relating to higher education in the European region, signed on 11 April 1997 in Lisbon, was signed by Belgium on 7 March 2005. The Parliament and the Government of the French-speaking Community ratified the Lisbon Recognition



Convention in July 2007. This Convention entered into force as at 1 September 2009.

The basic principles contained in the Lisbon Convention are currently being complied with:

- Decisions about recognition based on relevant information;
- Responsibility of the applicant to supply the necessary information;
- Responsibility of the competent institutions and authorities to supply information to the applicant;
- Responsibility of the Member States as to the instructions given to the educational establishments to facilitate the evaluation of qualifications;
- Justification of refusals to grant recognition.

The Minister of Higher Education ensures the implementation in the French-speaking Community, with the support of the Directorate General for Non-compulsory Education and Scientific Research (*DGENORS*) within the Ministry.

It is currently examining the procedures for granting equivalency in order to improve them and bring them into complete harmony with the aforementioned Convention.

2. The second measure in this action concerns the simplification of the procedures for requesting FRIA grants for foreign degrees.

Currently the *FRIA* decree requires that candidates who have done their second cycle studies abroad be in possession of an equivalency

of their degree at the time of the submission of their application to the *F.R.S.-FNRS*.

The Government will amend the *FRIA* decree in order to eliminate this requirement, with the intention of encouraging foreign researchers to submit their application, and to simplify the administrative procedures relating to this step. Degree holders will still have the possibility of submitting a request for equivalency to the administrative services of the *DGENORS*. A discussion will also be undertaken on maintaining this requirement for candidates for *F.R.S.-FNRS* mandates and holders of a second cycle diploma issued abroad.

Parallel to this simplification, more extensive advertising will be done for this mechanism on different internet sites (see Action 3).

3. Moreover, for mandates reserved for holders of the degree of doctorate, the current procedure which is carried out in cooperation with the university institutions shows the necessary guarantees of efficiency, equity and transparency.

### ACTION 3

**Publish online, especially via the European EURAXESS Jobs portal, as well as doctorat.be, all the vacancies in university posts, the grants and mandates of the *F.R.S.-FNRS* as well as those of other actors in research.**

The Government is in favour of the consolidation of the action of the "EURAXESS Jobs" group

which since January 2010 has been bringing together representatives of the universities, of the administration and of the *F.R.S.-FNRS* with the missions of:

- Proposing a policy for publication of job offers financed by public funds and developing a communication campaign intended to support this policy.
- Publishing on EURAXESS Jobs the calls for candidates for obtaining a *FRIA* grant or a *F.R.S.-FNRS* mandate.
- Encouraging the universities to publish links to their job offers sites and to publish their vacant positions directly on the EURAXESS Jobs site.
- Ensuring the visibility of job offers of EURAXESS Jobs on the portal <http://www.euraxess-cfwb.be>
- Making an inventory of the grants and fellowships in the French-speaking Community/Wallonia-Brussels and incorporating this information into EURAXESS Jobs.

This consolidation will occur in particular through an extension to other actors in research. The institutions of higher education, research centres and other actors in the public, private and non-profit sectors will also be invited to publish their job offers online, especially on the EURAXESS Jobs platform.

In addition the Government will support the portal [www.doctorat.be](http://www.doctorat.be) through which all the CVs of the PhDs of the French-speaking Community are put online, as well as job offers of companies and research institutions. The convergence and the synergies between this portal, other similar initiatives and EURAXESS Jobs will be encouraged.

### ACTION 4

**Improve the information on services to researchers, in particular researchers in situations of mobility.**

The universities and the *F.R.S.-FNRS* are developing an information policy for hosting researchers IN and assistance to the mobility of researchers OUT with specific tools. This approach will be coordinated and encouraged.

The information on the research conditions in the French-speaking Community will be designed not only for researchers in a situation of mobility and their specific needs, but also more generally for all researchers.

A discussion will also be carried out in regard to researchers pursuing their career outside of the academic and university framework, including the way of offering them a structural connection with recognised institutions.



# Social security, tax system, visas and other matters falling under federal authority

The Wallonia-Brussels Federation undertakes to promote conditions regarding taxes, social security and the granting of visas that favour the equality of conditions between researchers of all origins, within the scope of the federalism of Belgian cooperation and in keeping with Belgian traditions concerning the social model and hosting.



## ACTION 5

**Encourage setting up permanent consultation between levels of power in Belgium on issues of federal competence that have an impact on the careers of researchers.**

On the occasion of the Belgian Presidency of the European Union (second half of 2010), especially the seminar of 8 November 2010 on scientific visas and the conference "Careers and Mobility of Researchers" of 9 and 10 November 2010, the importance of a multi-level approach to all the problems connected with the careers and the mobility of researchers was confirmed. In a federal system like Belgium's, all the levels of power must cooperate for this purpose.

This is why the Government will propose, on behalf of Wallonia and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, to the other levels of power (Federal Belgium, Flanders, Brussels-Capital Region) continuous consultation on issues of federal or

shared competence that have an impact on the careers of researchers, in particular social security, tax issues and visas.

## ACTION 6

**See to it that research grants awarded in the French-speaking Community and in Wallonia are subject to social security.**

It is important to provide social coverage to the beneficiaries of research grants in order to improve the working conditions and strengthen the attractiveness of our Community for foreign researchers.

The Government will identify the situations for which corrective measures will be necessary, without the measures representing a financial surcharge for the host institutions.



# Employment and working conditions

The Wallonia-Brussels Federation undertakes to promote attractive working conditions for the researchers, and to harmonise them whatever their origins, status, contracts or financing methods.



**“ Member States, funders and employers to progressively introduce more flexibility in contractual and administrative arrangements and relevant national legislation for senior and end-of career researchers to reward good performance and allow non-standard career paths. ”**

*Extract from the European Commission Partnership for Researchers*

## ACTION 7

**Through appropriate legal and/or financial measures, support the efforts to implement the Charter and the Code made by universities, institutions of higher education, authorised research centres and the F.R.S.-FNRS.**

The “EURAXESS-Rights” group, which since 2010 has been bringing together representatives of the universities, the F.R.S.-FNRS and the administration, has defined a communication plan in the French-speaking Community Wallonia-Brussels for the implementation of the Charter and the Code.

Then, in order to encourage establishing a human resources (HR) strategy, in each institution (including the F.R.S.-FNRS), and each according to its own means, the group was mandated according to a procedure in four stages:

- Analysis of conformity of the procedures of the institutions in respect of the 40 principles of the Charter and the Code.
- Definition of the priorities of the HR strategy for each institution.



- Knowledge of the strategy by the Commission.
- Self-evaluation after two years, and external evaluation after four years.

Setting up the HR strategy within the universities also constitutes a means of identifying the problems encountered by researchers and research institutions and developing legislative and regulatory adaptations that are able to respond to them.

The institutions of higher education (via the CGHE and ADISIF) and the research centres (via ACCORD-Wallonie) have also been invited to participate in this initiative. Information sessions have been held within these institutions by the administration at their request. The divisions of the Walloon Agricultural Research Centre (CRA-W), the Scientific Institute of Public Service (ISSeP) and the Permanent Conference of Territorial Development (CPDT) have also been made aware of the advantages of this procedure through the intermediary of the supervisory Ministers.

In December 2010 the universities started to submit their HR strategies to the European Commission, and some of them have already received from the Commission their logo of HR excellence that recognises this effort.

The Government’s objective is the recognition of the HR strategies of all the research organisations of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, and especially of the universities and the F.R.S.-FNRS, by the granting of this logo by the European Commission.

In addition, the Government will support the implementation of the HR strategies within the research organisations, within the limits of the budgetary resources available.

## ACTION 8

**Evaluate the implementation of the decree of 19 July 1991 relating to the careers of scientific researchers.**

A procedure for evaluating the implementation of this decree will be set up by the Minister of Research, jointly with the Minister of Higher Education.

This evaluation will be carried out on the one hand with the public research organisations concerned, and on the other hand with the trade union organisations.



## ACTION 9

### Promote the quality and the continuity of researchers' careers as well as the legibility of their status.

The profession of "researcher" is currently exercised under a multiplicity of statuses covering very diverse pay grade conditions and career prospects. This diversity and this spread of careers lead to a significant rotation of teams, which harms both their stability and the quality of their work. This finding was the object of an inventory within a working group of the Council on Scientific Policy submitted as at 19 May 2006 as well during the research sittings organised from November 2008 to May 2009.

The declaration of the Community policy drew from this the conclusion that it was necessary to progress on the path toward harmonising and strengthening the statuses in order to promote the quality and the continuity of researchers' careers as well as the legibility of their status and the portability of their rights and their seniority. Round tables relating to higher education have also tackled the problem of the status of staff members.

On 6 September 2010, the Bureau of the *CESRW* adopted Opinion A.1011 of the Council on Scientific Policy on this subject and transmitted it to the Minister of Research.

The sectoral protocol of agreement for Education 2011-2012 also attacks this problem through several measures.

The Ministers of Higher Education and of Research will make up a working group to

present new proposals to the Government, connected with Action 8.

## ACTION 10

### Examine the methods of creation of a scientific status for the "new activities" in research.

The research sector, in particular the Walloon Council on Research Policy and the *F.R.S.-FNRS*, has brought out the necessity of recognising certain specific activities of research which do not always benefit from such recognition, in particular those of:

- ↔ confirmed senior researcher and project coordinator;
- ↔ joint research programme manager;
- ↔ technological platform manager (or scientific logistician connected with large equipment);
- ↔ assessor (technological intermediary);
- ↔ etc.

The Government will start up an examination of this question with the actors concerned.

## ACTION 11

### Ensure the monitoring of the "EURAXESS-Rights" process at a high level.

In view of the quality of the inter-university group procedure "EURAXESS-Rights" concerning information, awareness raising and evaluation by peers on a voluntary basis, the Government wants

to make this permanent at a high level. Its composition will reflect the development of the research organisations involved in implementing the HR strategies.



# Training

The Wallonia-Brussels Federation undertakes to strengthen its training measures for researchers, whether before, during or after the doctorate.



***“ Member States to develop and support ‘national skills agendas’ to ensure that researchers are equipped with the necessary skills to contribute fully to a knowledge-based economy and society throughout their careers. ”***

*Extract from the European Commission Partnership for Researchers*

## ACTION 12

**Evaluate and identify good practices concerning doctoral training programmes.**

The Government will put in place the evaluation of doctoral schools close to the *F.R.S.-FNRS* created by the decree of 31/03/2004 as well as the organisation of doctoral training programmes by the university academies.

The Government will examine the conclusions coming from the actions carried out within the framework of the workshop project “the transition between the university and the professional world: the case of the Doctorate in research” organised in 2010 by the Foundation of European Regions for Research in Education and Training (*FREREF*).

Within the framework of this evaluation, special attention will be given to the acquisition of so-called transversal competences (not connected with the scientific discipline of the area of research).

In addition, the Government will examine how to improve the interactions between universities, companies and other actors in civil society in



the training for research and in the acquisition of transversal competences.

## ACTION 13

**Encourage stimulation of international doctoral schools by the teams of the CfWB.**

The Government will examine the procedures for support to university teams that coordinate and/or participate in international doctoral schools or international networks of doctoral schools.

It will establish mechanisms for information on international financing (Initial Training Networks of the 7<sup>th</sup> PCRD, Erasmus Mundus Doctorate, programmes of the *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie* (University agency of the French-speaking world)) and forms of support appropriate for putting together projects. In order to do this, it will depend upon the existing National Contact Points (NCP), the administrations (including Wallonia-Brussels International) and the bodies that represent the research sector (*CPS, FRS-FNRS, CIUF, CREF, CGHE, ACCORD-Wallonia*, etc.).

***“ Member States to ensure better links between academia and industry by supporting the placement of researchers in industry during their training and promoting industry financing of PhDs and involvement in curriculum development. ”***

*Extract from the European Commission Partnership for Researchers*



# Gender equality

The Wallonia-Brussels Federation undertakes to promote equality between men and women in scientific careers and to incorporate this dimension into all the existing tools with regard to equal opportunities.



***“ Member States and public research institutions to achieve adequate gender representation in selection and funding bodies, and to systematically adopt policies that enable both men and women to pursue a scientific career with an adequate work-life balance such as developing dual career policies. ”***

*Extract from the European Commission Partnership for Researchers*

## ACTION 14

**Issue recommendations concerning leave for special circumstances.**

The Government will examine the recommendations of the “Women and Sciences” group on the subject of implementing legislation on leave due to circumstances in order to promote the best practices within all the research organisations of the French-speaking Community. Following up on these recommendations will form part of the implementation of the present Partnership, in particular in relation to actions 8 and 9 above.

## ACTION 15

**Issue recommendations on the subject of the composition of juries and scientific commissions.**

The Government will examine the recommendations of the “Women and Sciences” group concerning the composition of juries and scientific commissions in order to promote best practices in all the research organisations of the French-speaking Community. It considers in general that



this composition must in the end tend toward parity. Following up on these recommendations will form part of the implementation of the present Partnership.

## ACTION 16

**Adopt measures aiming at integrating the problem of differences in life courses into the evaluation of scientific dossiers.**

The Government will examine the recommendations of the “Women and Sciences” group on the subject of assessment criteria of the dossiers and the evaluation of scientific production as well as the facilitation of mobility in order to promote best practices within all the research organisations of the French-speaking Community. Following up on these recommendations will form part of the implementation of the present Partnership.

## ACTION 17

**Support associations for promoting women in scientific careers.**

Within the limits of the budgetary resources available, special attention will be paid to the financing of associations aiming at equality between men and women in the area of research.

## ACTION 18

**Incorporate the question of gender into course programmes.**

The question of gender, its incorporation into course programmes and its visibility as a research discipline will be examined depending on the recommendations previously issued by several actors in the area of higher education and research.

## ACTION 19

**Strengthen at a high level the following up of these decisions by the “Women and Sciences” working group.**

Within the context of implementing the recommendations of the Helsinki group concerning equality between men and women in scientific careers, the French-speaking Community has established a “Women and Sciences” working group that brings together representatives of the universities, the *F.R.S.-FNRS* and the administration and whose objectives are:

- ↔ the identification of problems encountered by female researchers;
- ↔ the exchange and dissemination of good practices;
- ↔ the development of solutions to the problems identified (legislation, university regulations, university practices, etc.).

This working group will be made permanent and its action will be fully integrated into the implementation of the present Partnership as well as into the Government’s roadmap on Equal Opportunities.



# Promote access to jobs after the doctorate

The Wallonia-Brussels Federation undertakes to promote access to jobs for holders of a doctorate.



## ACTION 20

**Support the initiatives facilitating the access of doctorate holders to jobs in the private, public and non-profit sectors.**

The information on the career possibilities for doctorate holders and relating these to the different professional milieus will be enhanced. Besides putting this information online, especially via EURAXESS Jobs and doctorat.be (see Action 3), activities putting people in contact with the professional milieus will be encouraged.

Support for this purpose will be found in particular in the learning from the interregional initiatives *PRODOC*<sup>1</sup> and *UGR*<sup>2</sup>, financed under INTERREG-IV, which will make it possible to fit the question of careers into a geographical space expanded to the neighbouring countries.

1. PRODOC is a regional collaboration through which the organisations of the regions involved (Nord Pas-de-Calais, Hainaut-Namur) work on the professional integration of PhDs and young researchers in the cross-border area. PRODOC aims at promoting encounters between doctoral candidates, young researchers and economic actors via cross-border events like the Doctoriales franco-belges and job forums. It will also make possible a discussion on making use of doctoral skills and their repercussions for regional development and on putting in place, within the laboratories of partner universities, networks of professional integration correspondents/agents, in charge of initiating a rise of awareness of doctoral students and PhDs of the importance of defining a professional and personal plan. Thanks to the participation of the association Objectif Recherche as well as the Wallonia-Brussels and Louvain Academies, this project will cover a majority of the doctorate holders trained in the French-speaking Community.

2. The Université de la Grande Région (UGR), in which the Wallonia-European university Academy (University of Liege) is participating, benefits from INTERREG-IV financing whose ambition is to create a cross-border space of initiative and cooperation in the area of research, through the improvement of the free movement of researchers, thus contributing to a greater attractiveness of the Grande Région. Located within the extension of the project UNISALLL (UNiversities of SArre, Luxembourg, Lorraine and Liege), previously set up in response to the call launched by DG Research of the European Commission, within the framework of the People Programme of the 7th R&D Framework Programme of the European Union, the UGR initiative also covers a significant share of the doctorate holders trained in the French-speaking Community.



A discussion will be carried out with the university institutions and the *F.R.S.-FNRS* on the means for supporting this learning and making it on-going.

## ACTION 21

**Create a partnership with companies in order to supply the EURAXESS Jobs site with job offers.**

Together with the Walloon Union of Enterprises (Union wallonne des entreprises) the Government will examine the way to supply the EURAXESS Jobs (and doctorat.be) sites with job offers coming from companies.

With the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region it will examine the interaction/interconnection with similar measures being carried out in the Brussels Region.

## ACTION 22

**In the end, increase the number of PhDs in the research sector.**

The European Commission evaluates at one million people the number of research posts to be created in the European Union by 2020 within the framework of the implementation of the trajectory for 2020 toward an R&D intensity corresponding to 3% of GDP (1% of it coming from the public authorities). For its part, the Federal Planning Bureau stressed in its report in February 2010 on the system of innovation in Wallonia that one of its primary weaknesses was too low a proportion of staff in R&D in the companies.

Among the efforts to be carried out within this context, the actors in the research sector emphasise the importance of an increase in the number of people holding the title of PhD in this sector, both in the private sector and in the public research organisations.

Such an increase constitutes an objective of the Government among the priorities to be set in the event of the allocation of new resources to research within the context of EU 2020, and within the limits of the budgetary resources available. It will be designed from the point of view of maintaining the quality of working conditions and job security.



In addition, the support of candidates for the European Research Council and the European Marie Curie grants or similar grants via the NCP-FNRS will be strengthened. Incentives for submitting applications will be the object of a discussion with the universities and the *F.R.S.-FNRS*.

### ACTION 23

#### Improve the system of FIRST POST-DOCS.

Launched in 2005, the FIRST Post-Doctorate mechanism of DGO6 aims at the training of young researchers within the framework of two years of post-doctoral research. The sponsoring of the project by a company or an approved Walloon research centre has the objective of transferring scientific and technological potential toward the private sector.

This system is the object of an evaluation within the framework of the Marshall Plan 2.Green.

The Government will examine the proposals for improvement of the system that are presented within this framework.

### ACTION 24

#### Improve the status of PhDs in public service.

Within the framework of the Marshall Plan 2.Green (2009-2014), a discussion will be carried out with the intention of improving the recognition of the doctorate title within public service, under the responsibility of the Minister of Public Service.

In the same spirit, the Government will propose a similar action, on behalf of Wallonia and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, to the other levels of power (Federal Belgium, Flanders, Brussels-Capital Region).

## With the actors, steer the Wallonia-Brussels Partnership for Researchers

### ACTION 25

#### Develop transversal actions intended to promote the implementation and the monitoring of the Partnership for Researchers within the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

The Government will establish a process of monitoring and steering the Partnership by incorporating, on the one hand, the administrative and policy actors concerned with this monitoring, and on the other hand the different actors in research.

The Government and the research administration of the Brussels-Capital Region will be partners in it.



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