

**Transform 4 European Research and
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D3.5 National policy recommendations on diversifying and flexibilising standards for scientific careers

Prepared by Work Package led by

University of Silesia in Katowice

Work Package 3: The Best Careers for the Brightest Minds

Assoc. Prof. Damian Guzek, PhD DSc

damian.guzek@us.edu.pl

Małgorzata Chrupała-Pniak, PhD

malgorzata.chrupala-pniak@us.edu.pl

Maciej Bisaga, PhD

maciej.bisaga@us.edu.pl

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Policy Recommendations

The recommendations from the Transform4European Research and Innovation (T4ERI) project, conducted under the umbrella of the Transform4Europe Alliance (T4EU) and funded by the European Commission's Horizon 2020 programme under the call "SwafS: Support for the R&I Dimension of the European Universities."

What is the aim of the policy recommendations?

Between 2021 and 2023, the T4ERI team launched a series of research-informed activities and initiatives, examining the staff of what were then seven, and now ten, universities within the alliance. The results of these activities, conducted under Work Package 3, entitled "The Best Careers for the Brightest Minds," resulted in recommendations for diversifying and increasing the flexibility of standards for the scientific careers. The recommendations may serve as a national policy framework, outlined in the five key suggestions summarized by two main objectives:

- To support and foster the career development of researchers within the partner universities.
- To highlight and emphasize the importance of career development for professional support staff and research management.

These objectives may be strengthened by the following five policy recommendations, which work well at the national level between alliances and their stakeholders, as well as at the European level by engaging the European Commission's guidelines for conduct:

1. **The transgressive approach and the science managers, not the science officers.** University alliances should embrace the full impact they can have on the higher education system as a whole by focusing on the non-academic employees and recognizing the diverse career paths within research management as equally important and varied as the different stages of researchers, from R1 novices to R4 experienced professionals. The training conducted under the T4EU Leadership Academy proved that the diversified structure of academic staff is also reflected in the various roles of managers and research support positions.
2. **Flexible fundraising focus.** Higher education sectors affected by crises, such as migration and wars, should strengthen collaboration between their University alliances to enhance their staff's ability to map funds for research. In addition to public institutions, fostering stakeholder interests will also help to explore opportunities in the private sector. The T4EU fundraising strategy, designed for turbulent times of wars and crises, should focus on the public funds. However, in more stable periods, investment from the private sector should increase.
3. **Business and Academia.** Higher education sectors should fully embrace the impact they can have on the non-academic sector by reconsidering how to communicate and enforce permeation between the science and the business. On the one hand, they should support the outstanding scientists through training and mentoring, while simultaneously connecting them with stakeholders from the business and industry, emphasizing that the majority of the target audience is in the business sector. Our analysis shows that these connections need improvement, and that it is essential to shift the focus of the communication agenda for future alumni.

4. **Careers need training and development initiatives.** Career development in the areas of research and science management is a key tool for addressing the needs and competence gaps among the staff in the academic sector. Since a vast majority of the employees expect training and development initiatives, it is highly recommended to continue actions targeted at the specific groups of researchers and the staff collaborating with the researchers in the future projects within the alliances, using the EU funds.
5. **Flexibilizing reference frameworks.** Universities and their national authorities should create much more flexible frameworks for the PhD degrees. A variety of the PhD requirements and procedures hinder the improvement of collaboration between the organizations/institutions. Our alliance presents such a strong diversity of doctoral training paths that it is difficult to establish a common European standard without prior harmonization.
6. **Promoting transparency and innovation through the open research data.** The open approach to research results is a key element of the research policy in Europe and globally. As a part of the recommendations, it is essential to implement a unified open research data policy that promotes transparency, collaboration, and innovation among the T4EU partner universities. Regular trainings for researchers and PhD students in open science and research data management is crucial for fostering collaboration with the external stakeholders, such as businesses and local governments. This in turn will enhance the competitiveness of the T4EU researchers and facilitate the transfer of knowledge and innovation to the broader economy.