



Equality of opportunities for next generation researchers: bridging the gap between theory and practice in Eastern Europe

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Twenty-five years after the fall of the Berlin wall and the historical opening of the European Union to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, there is still a striking difference in the success of European countries in attracting research funds and talented researchers. A number of indicators document the differences in research success and research opportunities between Eastern and Western European countries, and even between Northern and Southern Europe. Differences, as described for example by a number of secured ERC grants, apply to all research fields and to researchers at all stages of their careers.

While statistical analysis document large gradients in research performance across the continent, the underlying issues that young researchers struggle with are common across Europe, although they impact research environment to a different extent. These issues are presently being discussed within Sci-Generation, a COST Targeted Network that aims to enhance the European research environment for the next generation of young researchers. The major goal of the network is to contribute ideas towards overcoming these differences in opportunities across Europe. Targeting researchers in the early stage of their independent carrier or in the transition to independence, Sci-Generation is devoted to inclusiveness in order to represent a diversity of issues in science policy in Europe. In particular, the network's Working Group 1 focuses on the countries of Eastern and Southern Europe with less success in attracting European research funding. Among other issues, we considered the involvement of young researchers in decision-making processes at all levels important in order to increase the systems' transparency.

As shown by an ongoing study of how language affects the evaluation of research applications, the use of the local language serves, in some cases, as one of the last stands of "science-managing elites" that grew up in systems before 1990. We discuss how a lack of research opportunities and "brain drain" in parts of Eastern Europe are not only due to economic constraints; but, on top of these challenges come opaque selection procedures that can keep even the most enthusiastic and "home sick" talented young researchers abroad.

The atmospheric and ocean circulation know no borders, and it is thus not strange that the earliest international collaborations developed in meteorology. An example of the 20-year long collaboration in atmospheric sciences among countries of Central and Eastern Europe devoted to the improvement of numerical weather prediction will be presented with focus on its impact on applied sciences and the society.