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ERUA

Early Career Researchers Development Strategy



MS.17 ERUA Early Career Researchers Development Strategy

WP no: WP3

Lead Beneficiary: UP8

Description: Research conducted and
strategy developed

Means of Verification: Publication of the
strategy.

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1. ABOUT THE ERUA ECR STRATEGY

The ERUA Early Career Researchers Development Strategy (hereinafter, ERUA ECR Strategy) was developed with the contributions of the ERUA Doctoral School Assembly members to support the career development of ERUA Early Career Researchers. The strategy is devised with the objective of establishing a common framework for the development of ERUA ECRs, with a specific focus on internationalization and networking capacities. To this end, a targeted needs analysis was conducted via an online survey between June and July 2024, targeting PhD students (R1) and researchers within 7 years of completing their PhD (R2) within the alliance, as part of ERUA - Work package 3. The objective of the survey is to ascertain the needs and expectations of the ECR population with regard to academic internationalization, networking, scientific collaboration, career advancement, and the various forms of support required throughout the research process. The results of the data analysis from this survey informed the formulation of this strategy. For further comprehensive details regarding The Survey on Internationalization and Networking Needs of ERUA Early Career Researchers, please refer to [this complementary document](#). The following sections will primarily outline the goals of this approach, along with the action plan, roadmap, and implementation tools designed to achieve them. The operational component of this strategy will primarily require collaboration among WP3, the members of the Doctoral School Assembly, and the WP2 Research Support Group, a part of Re: ERUA's research support network.

2. MAIN AIMS OF THE ERUA ECR STRATEGY

1. **Identify** the specific needs of the R1 and R2 populations within the alliance through an analysis of data from the ECR needs survey.
2. **Strengthen** cooperation between the doctoral schools of partner universities and promote the exchange of their expertise at the European level.
3. **Integrate** early career researchers into the research clusters of ERUA.
4. **Facilitate** international scientific international scientific collaboration and enhance mobility opportunities for ERUA early career researchers.
5. **Expand** networking opportunities with peers, mentors, and external stakeholders.
6. **Promote** interdisciplinary research and encourage the exchange of ideas.

7. **Equip** early career researchers with the skills necessary for successful international engagement. Develop an online support platform for early career researchers, including training programs and tools to enhance competencies.
8. **Monitor** the success of the ERUA ECR Strategy in achieving its objectives and to ensure continuous improvement by establishing a feedback mechanism.

3. CONTEXT OF UNIVERSITIES

The ERUA ECR Strategy has been developed with consideration of the distinctive and shared characteristics of eight European universities within their respective social and academic contexts. These diverse settings provide an opportunity to exchange best practices aimed at enhancing the internationalization and networking capacities of ERUA ECRs. A concise overview of each ERUA collaborating university will be provided under this heading.

University of Paris 8 Vincennes - Saint-Denis

Paris 8 University hosts a diverse community of 23,935 students and offers a wide range of academic programs across five major disciplines: Arts, Law, Economics & Management, Humanities & Languages, and Sciences & Technology. This variety makes Paris 8 a leading institution for education and research in the humanities within the Île-de-France region. The university consists of 11 faculties and five institutes, providing 36 undergraduate degrees, 40 graduate programs, and 80 doctoral programs. It is home to four doctoral schools—Practices and Theories of Meaning; Aesthetics, Sciences, and Technologies of the Arts; Cognition, Language, Interaction; and Social Sciences—offering rigorous academic supervision and research training, preparing students for professional careers post-PhD. With 1,084 doctoral students and 110 postdoctoral researchers, Paris 8 supports research through 33 research units, including nine Mixed Research Units (UMRs). Annually, around 170 PhD theses are successfully defended at the institution.

As a public university, Paris 8 is committed to several missions: supporting students in their academic and professional journeys through both initial and continuing education; promoting high-quality, original research that contributes to national and international scientific policy; ensuring the inclusion of all students and staff; and playing an active role in environmental protection. Paris 8 also strives to create an environment that offers a welcoming, supportive, and inclusive atmosphere for both students and staff, simplifying admissions processes and

maintaining a high standard of respect for fundamental rights, tolerance, inclusion, social assistance, and civic engagement.

University of the Aegean

The University of the Aegean is a multi-campus institution located across six islands in the Aegean archipelago, comprising six schools and 18 departments. These include the School of Social Sciences, School of Environment, School of Business, Polytechnic School, School of Sciences, and School of Humanities, each offering a variety of programs across disciplines like Social Anthropology, Marine Sciences, Business Administration, and Engineering. Over the past seven years, around 800 doctoral candidates have been active in the university's doctoral programs, which foster research development within specific disciplines while encouraging innovation in new research areas.

PhD candidates are accepted after an evaluation process and are supervised by a three-member Counselling Committee. Doctoral studies can involve interdepartmental or inter-university collaboration, with a minimum duration of three years. Studies are free of charge, and students are entitled to various support services. Participation in seminars, conferences, and academic publishing is often required. Scholarships for doctoral research are available annually through external organizations.

New Bulgarian University | NBU

New Bulgarian University, founded on 18 September 1991, was the first in Bulgaria to introduce a credit system and offer Professional Bachelor's, Bachelor's, and Master's programs, as well as distance and continuing education. Its mission is to be an autonomous liberal education institution dedicated high-quality, interdisciplinary education and research opportunities.

NBU has the following academic departments: Anthropology, Archeology, Architecture, Arts Studies and History of Culture, Business Administration, Cinema, Advertising and Show Business, Cognitive science and Psychology, Design, Economics, English Studies, Fine Arts, Health Care and Social Work, History, Informatics, Law, Mass Communications, Mediterranean and Eastern Studies, Music, National and International Security, Natural Sciences, New Bulgarian Studies, Philosophy and Sociology, Political Science, Public Administration, Romance and Germanic Studies, Telecommunications, Theater.

NBU offers forty doctoral programs where twenty-two PhD students are trained. NBU's research centers include: Bulgarian Institute for Human Relations, Center for Cognitive Science, South-East European Center for Semiotic Studies, Bulgarian Institute of Egyptology.

SWPS University | USWPS

Established in 1996 by three eminent professors of psychology, SWPS University has grown dynamically over the past two decades into a vibrant academic community. Today, it boasts over 500 faculty members, consisting of researchers and experienced academics, who teach 16,000 students across nearly 50 undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs at six campuses in major cities across Poland. Among its diverse educational offerings, SWPS provides 18 undergraduate and graduate programs taught entirely in English, serving more than 1,100 international students from over 80 countries.

Guided by the vision to "Explore and Change the World", SWPS University focuses on understanding human behavior through scientific research, aiming to contribute to both social and individual development. Their research emphasizes the study of individuals and social groups, addressing their needs and motivations. By specializing in scientific disciplines that drive social progress, SWPS aims to improve the quality of life and foster societal advancement.

University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria | ULPGC

The Doctoral School of the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (EDULPGC), established in 2012, plays a central role in the university's strategy to advance research through high-quality doctoral education. Following the Salzburg (2005) and Berlin (2010) principles, the school focuses on enhancing doctoral training, fostering diversity, creativity, and mobility. EDULPGC also wants to improve the professional preparation of doctoral students, promoting interdisciplinarity, offering transversal activities to all doctoral programs in all areas of knowledge, always keeping in mind the values related to respect for human rights, equality, social progress and sustainable development. The School is committed to defending equity and equal opportunities, respect for the ideas of freedom, intercultural coexistence and social justice.

During the 2023-2024 academic year, the Doctoral School has offered 13 doctoral programs with 170 newly admitted doctoral students, 89 men and 81 women. Out of these, 109 have been full-time and 61 have been part-time. EDULPGC has had a total of 768 doctoral students this year (409 men and 359 women). Of these, 114 are foreigners (62 men and 52 women). As of July 30, 2024, 59 doctoral theses have been defended, 53 of them with a Cum Laude mention. 18 of these theses have been presented with the international mention and 2 with the industrial mention.

University of Macerata

The University of Macerata, founded in 1290, offers 32 degree programmes in the Social Sciences and Humanities, spanning from Languages to History and Philosophy, from Education to Tourism and Cultural Heritage, from Economics to Business, from Law to Political Science and Communication. Around 9500 students are enrolled in the 3-year Bachelor's and 2-year Taught Master's degrees, and a further c. 350 students are enrolled in postgraduate courses, 115 of whom in the Doctoral School.

UniMC offers five doctoral programmes: (i) Law and Innovation, (ii) Education, Cultural Heritage and Territories, (iii) Global Studies. Institutions, Rights, Democracy, (iv) Quantitative Methods for Policy Evaluation, (v) Humanism and Technologies; in addition to these, UniMC hosts the Didactics & Humanities curriculum of the Italian Inter-University program in Teaching & Learning Sciences. Each programme has its own coordinator and scientific committee, but all are ultimately organized into a university-wide Doctoral School.

European University Viadrina | EUV

The European University Viadrina (EUV) Frankfurt (Oder) is a university with 4,000 students, located on the German-Polish border, focusing on Social Sciences and Humanities. Since its founding in 1991, EUV has specialized in European Studies and Central and Eastern European integration. Recognized as one of Germany's top international universities by the DAAD, EUV conducts research through its three faculties (Law, Social and Cultural Sciences, Business Administration and Economics) and four trans-faculty research centers, including the Viadrina Center B/ORDERS IN MOTION and the European New School of Digital Studies (ENS).

EUV provides robust research infrastructure and support for academic career development, particularly for its 350 doctoral researchers. These PhD students benefit from specialized training through the Viadrina Center for Graduate Studies (VCGS), which offers services such as project management, proposal writing, and career development. The university emphasizes internationalization through Cotutelle partnerships with 14 universities globally and encourages PhD students to engage in international research exchanges, conferences, and academic collaborations.

Mykolas Romeris University | MRU

Mykolas Romeris University (MRU) is Lithuania's largest university specializing in social sciences, focusing on law, public security, and public administration. MRU offers doctoral studies in five social science fields: economics, education science, management, psychology, and law (the latter in collaboration with other Lithuanian universities). These programs are

spread across its four faculties: Law School, Faculty of Public Governance and Business, Faculty of Human and Social Studies, and Public Security Academy. MRU's Social Innovation Doctoral School coordinates all doctoral studies, promoting internationalization and quality, while supporting both doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows.

MRU currently has 177 doctoral students, with 15.25% being international. About 20 dissertations are defended annually, 20% of them in English. In the last five years, MRU has signed nine cotutelle agreements with prominent European universities, and the first five Doctor Europeans certificates were awarded between 2023 and 2024. Additionally, 35 young researchers have engaged in postdoctoral fellowships funded by the Research Council of Lithuania. MRU has successfully led major international projects, including the "Law, Science and Technology Joint Doctorate" and the upcoming "Harnessing AI and Data-Intensive Technologies" starting in 2025.

4. KEY COMPONENTS OF ACTION PLAN

4.1. Establishment of International Research Partnerships

The establishment of robust international partnerships is essential to enhance the global visibility, networking opportunities, and research capabilities of ECRs. By building strategic alliances with ERUA partner universities and their research centers, the plan aims to facilitate interdisciplinary research projects, promote knowledge exchange, and provide ECRs with access to international funding opportunities, collaborative platforms, and diverse academic communities through the following methods.

4.1.1. Virtual networking events

Virtual networking events create opportunities for connections and knowledge exchange in a digital environment. These events, such as virtual workshops, roundtables, webinars, or "research cafés" will be designed to foster interaction between ECRs and international scholars and stakeholders, enabling meaningful collaborations and discussions.

4.1.2. Formation of peer review groups

The formation of peer review groups enables ECRs to share draft papers, receive constructive feedback, and refine their manuscripts. These groups promote a collaborative environment and foster a culture of mutual support among researchers within the alliance.

4.1.3. Implement mentorship programs

Establish mentorship programs that connect ECRs with mentors from partner universities, providing valuable guidance on both research projects and career development. This initiative aims to support ECRs in navigating academic and professional challenges while fostering cross-institutional collaboration.

4.1.4. Centralized database of ECRs

Create a centralized database of ECRs within the network to promote collaboration and co-publications. This database will serve as an extension of the existing Research Portal (<https://researchportal.erua-eui.eu/>), with a specific focus on ECR profiles, facilitating networking and research partnerships.

4.1.5. Long-term and Short-term Mobility Opportunities

These long-term and short-term mobility opportunities aim to enhance international collaboration, foster academic exchange, and support the professional development of ECRs by allowing them to engage with diverse research environments and build global networks. In terms of financing, there is a limit of financing 8 mobility opportunities per year. Each university is responsible for covering the mobility expenses of its own ECRs. The mobility objectives must clearly align with the ERUA ECR Strategy framework.

4.1.6. Exchange Programs

ERUA aims to create exchange programs that provide short-term visit opportunities and joint supervision for doctoral students in the long term, promoting collaboration and the exchange of knowledge across partner universities.

4.1.7. Co-host international conferences

It is aimed to increase networking and encourage collaboration between ECRs and global academic communities by organizing co-host international conferences focused on ERUA thematic axes.

4.2. Develop Skills for International Collaboration

This section emphasizes the importance of equipping ERUA Early Career Researchers with the necessary skills to succeed in international collaboration. By fostering competencies such as cross-cultural communication, project management, and navigating international research frameworks, ERUA aims to enhance ECRs' ability to engage in global research partnerships.

4.2.1. Design training programs

The training workshops will be structured to help ECRs capitalize on internationalization opportunities by offering sessions on managing cross-cultural academic collaborations, preparing submissions for international grants, and building interdisciplinary teams.

4.2.2. Grant Application Assistance

Workshops will be developed to help ECRs in writing successful applications for international funding and fellowships with guidance from experienced grant writers and alumni.

4.2.3. Language and Communication Support

Training sessions will be provided to support researchers to improve their ability to communicate and present their research effectively in English both in academic and non-academic settings.

4.2.4. Career Development Assistance

Career development programs will be established to inform Early Career Researchers about opportunities both within and outside of academia, helping them to create solid career plans. For instance, events like the PhDTalent Career Fair in Paris, the world's largest forum for PhD recruitment, may serve as key platforms for this purpose.

4.2.5. Best Practices for International Collaboration

Clear guidelines will be developed to assist ECRs in effectively managing international research collaborations, with a focus on key areas such as communication, intellectual property management, data sharing protocols, and ethical considerations.

4.3. Raise International Visibility and Promote Collaborative Publishing

This initiative focuses on enhancing the international visibility of ERUA Early Career Researchers and promoting collaborative publishing efforts. By encouraging joint research projects and co-authored publications across and/or beyond eight partner universities, ERUA aims to increase the global visibility and impact of ECRs' work.

4.3.1. Increase Academic Visibility Using Technological Tools

Early Career Researchers will be supported in enhancing their academic visibility by providing information on new technological methods, open access publishing, open science, and other relevant topics. This will help ensure that their work reaches a global audience and has an impact on a global scale.

4.3.2. Collaborative Publishing Networks

An online platform will be developed to facilitate international co-authorship opportunities, allowing post-doctoral researchers and doctoral students to identify potential collaborators based on shared research interests, methodologies, or geographical focus.

4.3.3. Research Matchmaking Events

ERUA Research Matchmaking Events aim to foster international collaboration among researchers and will be implemented in the following two ways: (1) Organize virtual or in-person events where researchers present their work and seek co-authors for projects that require diverse expertise. (2) Organize thematic "publishing sprints," wherein groups engage in intensive drafting of papers over a designated period (e.g., a weekend or a week).

4.3.4. Publication Mentorship Program

Early Career Researchers will be paired with senior researchers or successful alumni to receive guidance on the process of publishing in high-impact journals. This mentorship focused on journal article writing and publishing will include advice on selecting appropriate journals and managing the submission process.

4.3.5. Integrating Early Career Researchers into the ERUA research cluster

ECRs will be integrated into the ERUA research clusters, providing them with opportunities to collaborate on research initiatives within a supportive network. This integration not only fosters their academic development but also enhances the cluster's overall research capacity and promotes interdisciplinary collaboration.

5. TOOLS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

ERUA needs the tools and resources to successfully implement the strategies and actions outlined in the action plan. These tools will support the effective execution of initiatives aimed at enhancing international collaboration, mobility, and visibility for Early Career Researchers. By providing practical frameworks, digital platforms, and institutional support mechanisms, these tools will ensure that the goals of the strategy are met efficiently and sustainably.

- **Create a Doctoral School Assembly:** The implementation and planning of all activities and actions related to ECRs are discussed and decided in consultation with the members of the Doctoral School Assembly at thematic meetings. This assembly is composed of individuals with academic and/or administrative roles within the doctoral schools, and its decisions guide subsequent actions.
- **Create an ECR working group:** A working group consisting of 1 or 2 ECR representatives from each university will serve as a communication bridge with the R1 and R2 populations, and regularly convey the evolving needs of early career researchers to the Doctoral School Assembly.
- **Support Platform:** A blended training portfolio will facilitate digital access to resources, training materials, and workshops. This portal will serve as a centralized hub for ECRs to engage in professional networking and participate in continuous learning opportunities.

- **Establishing a Doctoral Community:** Formal PhD working groups, doctoral clubs, and follow-up committees might be established with the objective of sharing experiences, offering scientific input, and establishing a network of support to prevent Early Career Researchers from becoming isolated in their collaborations. This initiative is being carried out in conjunction with Work package 7, which aims to shape ERUA through student engagement.
- **Formation of research groups by early career researchers:** Through the formation of clusters initiative of ERUA that aims to foster collaborative, interdisciplinary research across the ERUA network and beyond. This initiative will allow ECRs to form their own scientific team.
- **Researcher Database:** Create a centralized database of researchers within the network to encourage collaborations and co-publications (as an extension of the Research Portal).

6. 3 YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2025-2027

2025: Laying the Foundation

Focus on building connections, virtual networking events, offering initial workshops, and setting up a mentorship program and peer-review group.

2026: Expansion and Strengthening

Expand international exchanges and the co-hosting of conferences and co-publication, or research projects that are colocated and published in collaboration.

2027: Refinement and Dissemination

Evaluate the impact of the initiative, refine the strategy, and expand the database of researchers. Share best practices for international collaboration as an outcome of the process. Additionally, enhance the existing *Collaboration Guide: Exploring Dilemmas for Societally Engaged Best Practice* (http://ruc.dk/collab_dilemma), or develop an updated version inspired by it, to support future scientific partnerships. This guide will address the challenges and strategies essential for successful international collaboration, based on concrete efforts and their outcomes.

7. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Although this strategy is designed to address the specific needs of ECRs and certain obstacles they face (such as limited research funding and mobility funding, among others). However, ERUA may not have the resources to fully meet every need identified. Instead, the ERUA ECR Strategy focuses on optimizing support for ECRs, particularly by leveraging its financial and networking capabilities as far as available resources allow. Another core goal of this strategy is to raise awareness of the obstacles ECRs face in achieving international connections and collaborative growth. By highlighting these issues, the strategy aims to contribute to addressing these challenges while recognizing the resource limitations that may impact these experiences. This focus on bringing attention to ECR needs is intended to help drive forward efforts to find practical solutions, even when full resolution may not be immediately feasible.

Additionally, this strategy is also considered to be adaptive, meaning it will evolve in response to the changing needs of Early Career Researchers (ECRs). To achieve this, the strategy prioritizes open communication, ensuring that ECRs' voices are heard, and that they are clearly informed about activities tailored to support their development. One proposed idea is to create dedicated ERUA ECR mailing lists or to expand the existing ERUA Research Portal with ECR profiles. However, in developing a communication strategy, alternative methods will also be explored to avoid conflicts with data protection regulations (GDPR), particularly concerning the exchange of personal data. This approach seeks to balance effective communication with adherence to data privacy standards, ensuring both responsiveness to ECR needs and regulatory compliance.



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