



**Departement Economie,
Wetenschap en Innovatie**

Koning Albert II-laan 35, bus 10
1030 Brussel

T +32 (0)2 553 59 80

F +32 (0)2 553 60 07

E info@ewi.vlaanderen.be

Verslag

onderwerp EWI-Focus 4 – Een aantrekkelijk Vlaanderen voor internationale onderzoekers

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Panel discussion: highlights

N.B. The Belgian EU presidency is organizing a conference on mobility and careers of researchers on 9-10 november 2010: for more information and registration, see <http://www.researcherscareer2010.be>.

- 1) The **Euraxess jobs portal** can be an important tool to recruit abroad. **Awareness raising activities** and **political commitment** are the most important motor for the Euraxess portal. Much effort has been put into the job portal to make it more user friendly, but it will not be widely used until people are more aware of its existence and added value. People who know about the portal should be ambassadors and spread the word.
- 2) It is clear that research surroundings and status of the employer are quite important as pull factors for international researchers. **Visibility** of research centres can help create a better visibility for Flanders. Three factors can contribute to this: quality, the perception of the quality (enhance visibility through publications, flyers, representations abroad) and a continuous feeding of the quality through good recruitment and intelligent budgeting of funding.
- 3) Flanders should be **more outward looking** and should stress its positive sides, e.g. the good quality of life.
- 4) The Flemish minister for innovation is very committed to promoting the **added value of researchers**. An important policy objective is strengthening the linkages between universities, research centres, companies and to enable an easier switch between an **academic and an industrial career path**.
- 5) Arranging **social issues** should be a priority if we wish to attract people. Going abroad or filling non-tenured positions should not have an effect on pension rights. Neither should the expense of going abroad hold back good people. As it is, it happens too often that people opt out, e.g. of an ERASMUS stay, because it is too expensive. The Flemish minister for innovation is very concerned about social rights for researchers, the complexity of which are an important obstacle for mobility and prevent a continuous career. A working group will be set up on this topic.

- 6) **Collaboration** is key. Orpheus institute, for example, welcomes top researchers from many different nationalities, whose salaries are paid by the sending institute or? are being funded by other institutes. This collaboration offers a win-win situation.
- 7) A precondition to attractivity is that the research institutions are **open**. The government can provide financial means to attract top researchers (e.g. Odysseus), but opening up should be a bottom-up initiative. It is clear that for the last decade a generation shift has been going on at university, with more internationalization and more openness.
- 8) It is very important that **researchers make their voice heard** about their needs, e.g. regarding social security, and raise the sensitivity and interest of all the stakeholders. When the suggestion for a researchers visa for third country researchers came to the table for the first time in 2002, everyone considered it to be visionary. Only three years later EU succeeded in having a directive on scientific visa. This proves that, if everyone commits, everyone can benefit. Belgium implemented the visa five years ago. On 8 november 2010 a workshop on the scientific visa will be organised by the Belgian EU presidency (<http://www.belspo.be/WorkshopVisa/programme.stm>).
- 9) A more flexible **language legislation**, e.g. in education & administration, would offer an important asset. Even though it can be useful in the long run, learning Dutch should not be the first priority for short term visitors. English is the main working language in research environments, even more so as the world is becoming more and more international. It is clear that one cannot expect international researchers to speak every different European language. Within some constraints, the Flemish government has the intention of making the language legislation more flexible, esp. for the master programmes