

Key principles for attractive and sustainable academic careers

Final report of the EUA Task-and-Finish Group on Academic Careers

May 2025



This publication is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial CC BY-NC

This information may be freely used and copied for non-commercial purposes, provided that the source is acknowledged (European University Association).

European University Association asbl

Avenue de l'Yser 24

Rue du Rhône 114

1040 Brussels

Case postale 3174

Belgium

1211 Geneva 3, Switzerland

+32 (0) 2 230 55 44

+41 22 552 02 96

www.eua.eu · info@eua.eu

Preface

Universities have a long tradition of being society's hubs of knowledge creation, innovation and excellence. In this context, careers in academia have been considered highly desirable, offering a stimulating working environment and tasks, competitive salaries and stable future prospects. To a certain extent, this is still the case, but precarious contracts are becoming more widespread and early-career academics are increasingly questioning whether universities can offer them attractive, long-term employment. At the same time, universities themselves are breaking down walls and opening up to more flexible and permeable career paths, for example by hiring personnel from outside the university sector. All of these developments necessitate a re-evaluation of how academic careers are structured and supported, in order to ensure they remain attractive and sustainable in the long term.

As an association of more than 800 universities, EUA's membership comprises a substantial portion of academic employment in Europe. This puts the Association in the right position to forge a new narrative for academic careers. With this report, EUA's Task-and-Finish Group on Academic Careers is proud to present a set of five key principles that aim to support higher education institutions in upholding the excellence and relevance of academic careers in Europe. These principles are needed because universities are not only centres of knowledge creation and innovation but also crucial societal actors. As such, they must reflect the diversity and inclusivity of the communities they serve and provide an environment that nurtures personal, professional and intellectual growth. The principles outlined in this report encourage a holistic approach and are designed to guide institutions in fostering an academic environment that balances the demands of competition with the collaborative spirit of academic citizenship.

We hope that these five key principles will serve as guiding beacons and support universities in navigating the complexities of modern academic careers, thus safeguarding higher education's role as a pivotal contributor to societal advancement and innovation. The attractiveness and adequacy of academic careers depends to a considerable degree on adequate funding, and which depends on external factors that are beyond the immediate control of universities. Nevertheless, there are many actions that universities can take to maintain the attractiveness of the academic career path, as this document shows.

As Chair of the Task-and-Finish Group, I had the pleasure to jointly reflect with colleagues from various European higher education systems and other EUA expert groups on the common challenges we face in managing and assessing academic careers and the good practices that are already in place to overcome these challenges. I wish to thank first and foremost the members of the Task-and-Finish Group, but also the EUA Board and Council for their invaluable input throughout the past year.

Prof. Ivanka Popović
EUA Vice-President



Introduction

Academic careers have always been competitive, yet have become even more so in recent years, due to profound shifts in demographics, higher education participation and graduation rates, and funding streams for research, innovation and education. As a result, academic careers are changing across Europe, both in terms of their perception and their reality, and the change has not gone unnoticed. A [Eurydice report from 2017](#) already announced that “job security is no longer the norm in the academic world”, while also citing increasing performance pressures and a disproportionate relationship between the commitment required of aspiring academics and the professional acknowledgement and rewards they receive. Seven years later, the trend continues, with a [2024 OECD report](#) on the state of academic careers pointing to increasingly high workloads despite precarious and casual contracts, among other issues. What was once by default considered a highly desirable professional path with many perks and a robust future outlook is slowly but steadily losing in attractiveness.

At the same time and as demonstrated through several EUA activities, for example on [career paths in teaching](#), research is often still substantially more valued than teaching for career progression, even though academics’ work is (expected to be) multifaceted and includes a varied portfolio of activities that span education, research, innovation, society outreach, administration and governance, to name only the most prominent examples.

In addition, societies profoundly depend on excellence in research and education in order to remain relevant and competitive in today’s turbulent times marked by technological advances and by substantial changes in skills needs and global relations. Highly skilled staff are needed to deliver innovative solutions that meet current and future challenges and to educate the next generation of highly skilled, ethically and globally minded professionals, innovators and citizens. Yet despite these needs, political tensions across the globe challenge the free movement of talent, a cornerstone of the academic drive to ensure excellence. Nationalist tendencies and security concerns, including around research security, increasingly prohibit universities from freely recruiting staff and students. It is thus paramount that higher education institutions consider ways to balance research security and academic freedom, in an effort to keep academic careers competitive and attractive. The need for such a balance has been recognised at a European level through the adoption of a [Council](#)

[Recommendation on enhancing research security](#) (2024), which stresses the need to maintain openness and internationalisation for the sake of innovation capacity. Similarly, a [report by former Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta](#) from the same year argues for the introduction of a fifth freedom of the EU Single Market – the free movement of research, innovation, knowledge and education – in order to strengthen the EU’s knowledge economies and competitiveness. Universities have a role to play in ensuring that these and other common European and democratic values – such as openness, diversity, equity, inclusion, international cooperation and academic freedom – stay at the forefront of European higher education.

In the face of these challenges which jeopardise the long-term sustainability of the academic sector as a place of excellence in education, research and innovation, a reform in how academic careers are shaped and decided is thus needed, as is outlined as well in EUA’s vision document “[Universities without walls: a vision for 2030](#)”. To support this objective, the Association launched an EUA Task-and-Finish Group on Academic Careers for a period of one year and tasked it with developing key principles pointing towards a holistic approach to academic careers, ensuring that academia remains an attractive career option.

The key principles are presented in this document. Each principle is introduced by a short section on the background from which the need for the respective principle arises, and a rationale for how the principle contributes to the realisation of attractive and sustainable academic careers. The introductory sections are followed by a short list of factors that support the successful implementation of the respective principle. The key principles outline an aspirational, visionary status for academic careers in Europe. Moreover, to illustrate how the principles might look in practice, short examples from the countries represented in the Task-and-Finish Group are referenced in a dedicated annex. In this sense, the five key principles outlined in the document point towards academic citizenship as a transversal value and objective, as the principles aim to provide ideas for higher education to create adequate conditions in which academics can develop and thrive. [Academic citizenship](#) is a concept that throws a spotlight on the collaborative aspects of academia by viewing academics as members of an academic community. Academic citizenship will be covered as a success factor under Key Principle 3 below.

Another transversal principle is that of the need for a balanced approach to academic careers. This balance involves several levels: between university missions and academics' activities, between the use of qualitative and quantitative indicators when assessing academic performance, and between the need for academia to be both competitive and collaborative. The five key principles presented in the document highlight what the Task-and-Finish Group considers the most impactful considerations that universities should keep in mind to ensure academic careers remain attractive and sustainable in the long term, yet none of the principles is intended to diminish the attention paid to other areas of a university's activities. The group's work and findings complement those of related activities focusing on academic careers, including work conducted at the EU level, where 2023 saw a [Council Recommendation on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe](#), including a revised [European Charter for Researchers](#). These documents were followed by the launch of a [Council Recommendation on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education](#) in 2024, calling for a more diverse range of career paths and greater recognition of the different tasks performed by academics. These initiatives at the EU level complement the issuing of the [HR Excellence in Research award](#). An initiative of the [ERA Talent Platform](#), the award is a personnel development certification given by the European Commission to universities and research institutions.

Reforming academic careers also includes reforming academic career assessment. EUA has advocated for a more balanced approach between qualitative and quantitative assessment, with due acknowledgement of the complexity of academic career paths across higher education systems in Europe. This is reflected in the five key principles. At the same time, the [CoARA Working Group on Academic Career Assessment](#) (2023-2025), co-chaired by EUA, has been collecting more in-depth [data on practices in academic career assessment](#) and is in the process of developing a toolbox on career assessment. Similarly, the Erasmus+ funded and EUA-coordinated "[Staff development for learning and teaching at European universities](#)" (STAFF-DEV, 2024-2026) project aims to strengthen institutional capacity and strategies in staff development and academic assessment.

The five key principles are primarily targeted at leadership and staff at higher education institutions in Europe, and aim to support them in reflecting on their own policies and practices in academic career management. As such, the key principles are accompanied by a call for higher education leadership to support their institution-wide dissemination, in an effort to spread the values and ideas behind the principles. At the same time, the principles may also serve as inspiration to policy makers with a stake in academic careers. Of note, the principles are meant to encompass all types of higher education institutions and various national contexts, in due acknowledgement of the European higher education sector's great diversity.

Key principles for attractive and sustainable careers

The Task-and-Finish Group's five key principles for attractive and sustainable academic careers are outlined below. Regarding excellence as the core concept on which academia and careers in academia are based, together with the societal context which may influence how universities, and thus academic careers, operate, the principles address: 1) the role of professional development, rewards and recognition in shaping careers; 2) the need for academic careers to reflect the diversity and inclusivity of higher education in Europe; 3) the vital role of the institution as a space that balances competition and collegiality; 4) the role and needs of early-career academics as the most vulnerable group of academics; and 5) the links between academic careers and the societal embeddedness of higher education.



Key principle #1

Universities actively and transparently support academic quality through continuous professional development, and through adequate recognition and rewards for excellence.

Background and rationale

Although universities may vary in mission, vision, size and context, they all depend equally on the high-quality work of their staff to achieve their goals. Consequently, universities need to provide a supportive and stimulating work environment for their staff. Most universities already support the professional development and capacity building of their staff, albeit to varying extents and through different measures. Yet, regardless of their starting point, universities ultimately benefit from establishing and actively promoting opportunities for continuous professional development and subsequently recognising and rewarding staff achievements.

Continuous professional development provides staff with knowledge and skills for sustainable career advancement as well as personal development, for example through soft skills training which might enable an individual to become a more confident leader or flexibly pursue career paths within and outside of academia, or by conveying interpersonal and intercultural skills that contribute to the creation of an open and inclusive working environment. Universities themselves benefit from continuous professional development through their staff's enhanced potential for innovation and sense of empowerment. Professional development, however, goes hand in hand with adequate recognition of achievements. The proactive promotion of rewards within the academic community fosters an atmosphere of encouragement and academic quality.

Success factors

1. **Academic quality**, understood as the pursuit of excellence in research, innovation, teaching and other university missions based on academic and scientific merit and clearly defined and objective criteria, is and remains the key concept driving academic careers and how they are assessed. What exactly defines excellence and academic quality is established by each institution, but might not be self-evident to those who need to demonstrate it and thus requires active and transparent communication through institutional policies. Clearly elaborated and

communicated **institutional policies for continuous professional development** help to point to the diverse skills portfolios that academics may need or want to develop throughout different stages of their career, such as in project management, innovation or leadership skills, depending on whether they are early-career or senior academics. It is important for all academics to be made fully aware of the options ahead and how they can enhance their professional competences, as an investment in those competences is ultimately an investment in their career. This investment requires time, which academic policies need to acknowledge, alongside the fact that the lengthy process of investing in professional development, shaping excellence and training junior academics to become excellent in their turn, is valued as much as the result of the investment.

2. **Fair and clear policies for the recognition of individual and collective achievements and the granting of rewards** further help to communicate an institution's understanding of academic quality. These policies may be based on the university's mission, vision and priorities. Transparent dissemination of calls for recognition and rewards' procedures further promotes academic quality and provides a stimulating and inspirational academic environment.
3. **Competitive contracts and salaries, as well as appropriate appointment and promotion procedures** based on a broad and balanced set of assessment criteria, help to protect the academic profession from unnecessary precarity, which is detrimental to academic quality. Fixed contracts are necessary to cover specific short-term employment needs, such as for projects or during parental leaves. However, they should be complemented by long-term contracts in order to safeguard the attractiveness of academic careers and thus help universities to attract and retain talent by providing stable employment, clearer career progression, and better work-life balance, remuneration and other financial support of academics. An appropriate balance between external and internal funding sources is another key objective when securing attractive academic careers in the long term. While external funding sources secure short-term, project-based employment for many academics, thus making them a vital component of the higher education sector's financial ecosystem, it is the task of universities to offer attractive long-term employment prospects to ensure academic careers do not become synonymous with insecurity and precarity. Another reason for universities to match external funding streams through their own resources is that external funding is typically awarded for research, not for teaching. A balanced focus on the diverse university missions thus goes hand in hand with balanced funding streams.

Key principle #2

Universities are diverse and this diversity is also reflected in academic staff profiles and career paths.

Background and rationale

One defining trait of universities across Europe is their diversity. They operate in different contexts and vary greatly in terms of their missions, organisational structures, and areas of focus. Depending on their institutional profiles, they pursue different paths to fulfil their missions in teaching, research and innovation, and outreach to society. This variety is mirrored in the backgrounds, profiles and career paths of academic staff within and across institutions. Academic staff may specialise in a wide range of disciplines, work in different types of roles, or engage with society in diverse ways. Diversity in academic staff backgrounds, profiles and career paths ensures that academia remains dynamic, reflects the diversity of society and is thus capable of responding to real-world challenges. It also enables universities to be knowledge creators and active agents in societal transformation and is thus essential for enhancing the missions of universities.

Since diverse academic staff backgrounds, profiles and career paths are crucial for the long-term sustainability of universities, equity and inclusion need to be defining principles throughout a university's policies for recruiting and developing staff, alongside targeted measures to counter explicit and implicit bias in recruitment and staff development processes. A reform of academic careers may thus, among other things, pursue the aim of fostering a diverse, dynamic and agile academic environment. The functioning of this environment depends on adequate inclusion and acknowledgement of the efforts of diverse staff categories, including support staff who effectively contribute to the efficiency and success of a university's teaching, research and innovation, and outreach activities. It is also in the interest of universities and society to develop flexible and attractive career frameworks. Flexible career progression models are vital not only for individual career development but also for the broader alignment of academic expertise with societal needs. Career models that accommodate a variety of professional goals ensure that academics can live up to their full potential while contributing meaningfully to the institution's societal mission.

Success factors

1. Universities that ensure **permeable, equitable and inclusive access to academic careers** for individuals from diverse backgrounds, cultures, nationalities and professional experiences play a key role in addressing social disparities and fostering a more inclusive academic environment. In return, such universities benefit from being able to recruit and retain talent from a wide pool and, thus, from the innovative potential of a diverse workforce.
2. Using a **wide range of evaluation criteria and practices**, while still maintaining the understanding of academic quality as outlined above as a basis for academic career assessment, helps to adequately acknowledge the contributions of diverse academic profiles to the achievement of the university's goals. Additional aspects to be considered in career assessment may include, but are not limited to, entrepreneurship, research impact beyond traditional bibliometric indicators, innovation in teaching practices, and outreach activities such as citizen science. Including such factors in assessment procedures does not need to be a zero-sum game at the detriment of research excellence, nor should it incentivise the overburdening of academics with ever more tasks. Instead, an expanded range of evaluation criteria would support beneficial links between academics' diverse activities while also further promoting the parity of esteem between university missions and staff categories (including support staff).
3. **Flexible career paths** support easier transitions between academia and other sectors, such as industry or public administration, for example by allowing researchers with non-academic professional experience to access or return to university careers. This flexibility has the potential to attract a wider range of experiences into academic roles and foster knowledge transfer, adding to the vitality, innovative capacity, societal relevance and sustainability of universities.

Key principle #3

Universities are spaces for personal, professional and intellectual growth. The institutional working environment fosters collegial interaction, exchange and support.

Background and rationale

Universities consist of individuals that together form a community, which is the backbone and foremost resource of a university. Nevertheless, reward mechanisms are typically based on individual achievements, and universities typically rely on a combination of competition and cooperation for the achievement of best results. A certain level of competition is necessary to achieve academic quality and it is unavoidable in the pursuit of external research funding. However, by acknowledging that teaching, research and innovation are fundamentally collective endeavours and by providing an ambitious yet supportive academic culture, universities can ensure that the unique selling point of academic environments – providing spaces for original thought and knowledge creation – continues to attract the brightest minds for the future. Indeed, to be an attractive employer, universities need to offer sustainable career paths within a working environment that encourages collaboration and a mutual sense of responsibility and respect. Being a member of an academic community comprises obligations, rights and responsibilities, which are all essential for the development of high-quality knowledge, teaching and a good work environment. It is thus vital to include in the understanding of academic merits: the values and responsibilities of academic citizenship; responsible and accountable leadership; both formal and informal mentorship; and various forms of collaboration and support provision, including administrative support in particular. Such a collaborative and egalitarian understanding of what it means to be an academic contributes to a positive work environment and fruitful intellectual exchange.

Success factors

1. A **clear commitment to and adequate recognition of academic citizenship** is a vital precondition for ensuring a collegial, attractive working environment. This may include the **recognition of academic leadership**, which may be understood both as a formal role and responsibility and also as collegial, informal mentorship towards junior colleagues, who may particularly benefit from the guidance of a compassionate leader or an inspiring colleague.
2. **Collegial engagement for the greater benefit of the academic environment** is an additional aspect that merits recognition, for example in career assessment or through dedicated rewards.
3. Transparent top-level **communication about potential needs for collaboration and mentorship** supports staff in understanding what is expected of them and helps to proactively promote the university as a social space. At the same time, the institution needs to provide continuous support to its staff, covering the whole lifecycle of academic careers from the junior to the senior level, in order to demonstrate clearly that it plays its part in creating an academic community and facilitating collaborative mindsets.

Key principle #4

An investment in early-career academics is an investment in the sustainability of the higher education sector.

Background and rationale

Developments over the past two decades in university funding and workforce composition have forced universities in many countries to rethink their responsibility towards early-career academics, including doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers. Early-career academics are at the highest risk of precarious employment and uncertain future prospects, as universities often cannot offer them long-term employment. Instead, many universities opt to offer an investment in the long-term employability of these academics by making sure they have the skills and aptitudes to establish rewarding career paths in or outside academia.

In the 21st century, a doctoral degree is no longer a guaranteed entry ticket to an academic career. While there are many benefits in careers becoming more fluid and in staff switching more easily between academic and non-academic jobs, the lack of secure, long-term career paths poses risks. Early-career academics, especially those at the doctoral level for whom the path ahead is the longest, may find the lack of clarity and security at the start of their career unsettling and experience the work environment as overly competitive. Universities may appear unattractive as a sector of employment, in particular if the lack of stability at the early-career stage is combined with a lack of adequate working conditions, unreasonable workloads or limited access to training and development opportunities. Universities now compete for talent just like other employers do, and they should therefore make sure that they remain attractive to early-career academics, particularly in the light of career insecurity.

Success factors

1. Despite existing barriers, universities can be **more creative and less risk-averse in providing long-term career opportunities** despite short-term funding availabilities. In countries with a large availability of research funding, precarity is often linked to short-term, competitive appointments. A structured dialogue with governments or funding agencies can help in adjusting regulations that

currently limit attractive career paths in academia. Also internal regulations may need to be adapted so that funding from different sources or on different time frames can be combined into longer, more diverse, more sustainable career paths in universities.

2. The provision of **clear and transparent career paths, with honest information, merit-based criteria and equal opportunities**, is a crucial factor in retaining talent. Early-career academics may have unrealistic expectations compared to what universities can offer as employers. Clarity on career paths, next-step requirements and future opportunities, including that of open, flexible career trajectories, is therefore crucial. Fairness in career paths entails an open and honest acknowledgement that some groups may have a competitive advantage and that, to a certain degree, personal commitment and compromises (such as in family time, financial security or work-life balance) are needed to succeed in academia. Yet universities should not take these compromises for granted but proactively reduce barriers to successfully pursuing an academic career and provide support to staff through an adequate working environment and conditions, as well as through measures to enhance a sense of belonging and institutional community among staff. The success of such measures may be enhanced by a clear dialogue and adequate involvement of supervisors and other senior staff in a mentoring position, as such staff members often play a key role in shaping the image of academia among more junior staff.
3. **Adequate workloads** for early-career academics are key to avoid burnout and disillusionment and it is the task of universities to monitor their workloads. Academics are known to be intrinsically motivated, which makes them vulnerable to overcommitment. For early-career academics in particular this adds to the precarity of their position. University services and those in a leadership role have a role to play in setting boundaries between work and personal time and in protecting academics' right to disconnect. Clarity about task expectations can help to maintain a healthy balance between academic work and personal life. This will also reduce mental health risks.

Key principle #5

Universities serve society, hence career models are aligned with a university's mission and objectives.

Background and rationale

Universities develop their activities in alignment with three main missions: education, research and innovation, and outreach to society. The intersection of the three missions has been central to the societal role of academia for centuries and has led to its establishment as an autonomous sector in society – be it in the form of a more research-oriented university, as a teaching institute or in the applied sciences. Academic careers are, to a certain degree, designed to respond to and drive this intersection. Academic teaching aims to educate a highly skilled workforce with transversal skills that will benefit society as a whole, while also exploring the edges of knowledge and innovation. Thus, teaching in academia is strongly related to research, and research in academia is connected to teaching by exploring the pathways of knowledge as a steadily growing societal contribution. Academia also contributes to the common good by monitoring and critically reflecting on societal developments, supporting community building, social cohesion and resilience, and enhancing societal transformation and innovation in diverse sectors of society, for example through knowledge transfer. Universities are thus important components of societies' education and innovation ecosystems.

The societal value of academic careers lies thus in how they contribute to the adequate fulfilment of academia's role in society, in particular through the degree to which the diverse societal missions are reflected in how academic careers are shaped. The unique selling point of an academic career is that it offers an opportunity to produce, transfer and apply knowledge in a holistic way. However, the long-term sustainability and attractiveness of academic careers depend on how they relate and critically respond to societal expectations, without being subjected to short-term economic and political exploitation. Academic research and teaching take time and need to be aligned with a long-term vision. Career paths are thus ideally designed to allow for continuous development, as well as flexible and permeable intersections between teaching, research and innovation, and outreach activities.

Success factors

1. Universities play a key role in society and understanding this connection helps to **align academic careers with the institution's mission and goals**. Proactive reflection on and communication of this self-understanding both internally and externally support stakeholders in understanding the role of academic careers within the institution's identity.
2. Embedding a **commitment to societal impact and outreach to society as a criterion in career assessment** processes helps to clearly and transparently link the institution's societal responsibility with academic careers. This is especially true if societal impact and outreach are a transversal career requirement, starting at the recruitment phase and continuing throughout an academic's career path.
3. **Well-equipped and accessible internal services**, such as human resource offices, pedagogical training programmes, and pre- and post-award assistance and outreach offices, play a key role in fostering sustainable and attractive academic careers that reflect the university's societal responsibility. Such services figure as a link between a university and society, as they can help to align the ambitions of individual academics with those of the institution and the wider society in a multidirectional way.

Acknowledgements

The process of drafting the five key principles was a collective effort undertaken by EUA's one-year Task-and-Finish Group on Academic Careers. EUA would like to express its gratitude to the group's members for their commitment and guidance:

- ❖ Ivanka Popović, Task-and-Finish Group Chair, EUA Board Member and Vice-President/Former Rector, University of Belgrade, Serbia
- ❖ Beatrice Beck-Schimmer, Vice-President for Medicine, University of Zurich, Switzerland
- ❖ Peter Hanenberg, EUA-CDE Steering Committee Member and Vice-Rector for Research and Doctoral Education, Catholic University of Portugal
- ❖ Finn-Eirik Johansen, Board Member, University of Oslo, Norway
- ❖ Anne Lequy, EUA Learning & Teaching Steering Committee Chair and Professor/Former Rector, Magdeburg-Stendal University of Applied Sciences, Germany
- ❖ Vaiva Lesauskaitė, EUA Research & Innovation Strategy Group Member and Vice-Rector for Research, Lithuanian University of Health Sciences
- ❖ Rebecka Lettevall, Pro Vice-Chancellor of Global Engagement and Human Rights, Malmö University, Sweden
- ❖ Pastora Martínez Samper, Co-Chair of CoARA Working Group on Academic Career Assessment and Commissioner for International Action, Open University of Catalonia, Spain
- ❖ Ildikó Matušiková, Vice-Rector for Science and Research, University of SS Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovakia
- ❖ Manuela Raith, Vice-Rector for Resources and Digitalisation, University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna (until April 2025)/Vice-Rector, University of Leoben (as of April 2025), Austria
- ❖ Kalle-Antti Suominen, Former Vice-Rector for Research, University of Turku, Finland
- ❖ Karen Vandeveld, HR Director, University of Antwerp, Belgium

Annex: practice examples

To illustrate how the key principles provided in this document may be translated into practice, a selected list of practice examples is provided below. The examples refer to specific national contexts and are not meant to provide a practice template, as each institution is invited to draw inspiration as it sees fit. Further inspiration may be found in the [collection of case studies on academic career assessment](#) gathered by the CoARA Working Group on Reforming Academic Career Assessment.

Key principle	Practice example
<p>#1: Universities actively and transparently support academic quality through continuous professional development, and through adequate recognition and rewards for excellence.</p>	<p>The University of Antwerp in Belgium provides a generous training and development offer for all academic staff, including programmes on leadership, supervision, giving and receiving feedback, innovative teaching methods, and avoiding implicit bias during selection procedures. Not only is excellent performance rewarded in research and education, but so is the way in which results are achieved. A competency framework, applicable to junior and senior academics, helps to make behaviour less abstract and easier to articulate in discussions on expectations, development and assessments.</p>
	<p>The University of Oslo in Norway issues five awards to acknowledge the exceptional achievements of its staff in five categories: research, teaching, communication, innovation (since 2011) and young researcher (since 2019).</p>
	<p>The University of Minho in Portugal is establishing a comprehensive system of teaching awards to support innovations in teaching and learning (T&L). The university promotes an annual recognition of merit in T&L that is on par with its recognition of achievements in research. UMinho academics can also apply for the “Teaching Excellence Award” through the ARQUS European University Alliance, which honours innovative practices implemented in the preceding year. Additionally, several schools within the university have begun delivering recognitions in T&L as part of their efforts to motivate academics to invest in teaching and learning.</p>
	<p>In Spain, the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) is driving a process of reforming research and academic career assessment, fostering an alignment of universities and research centres with CoARA principles. The process includes, among other things, a reform aimed at greater recognition of diverse academic profiles, careers and research outputs, as well as the social impact of research.</p>

Key principle	Practice example
<p>#2: Universities are diverse and this diversity is also reflected in academic staff profiles and career paths.</p>	<p>In Finland, responsible assessment of research and researchers is now considered not only an integral part of research careers in academia, but also a tool for enhancing mobility between academia and other sectors in society. Finnish universities, research organisations and research funders, in large numbers, have signed the CoARA agreement and take an active part in CoARA working groups, and a national chapter is now being formed. The Finnish Career Assessment Matrix (FIN-CAM) will be published in 2025. The matrix is being implemented by universities across Finland, including through their HR policies.</p>
	<p>In addition to tenure-track positions, the concept of the Third Space is emerging as an important instrument to open diverse career paths for talented individuals in academia. The Third Space refers to roles that bridge research, teaching, and academic administration, offering highly qualified professionals an alternative to traditional professorships. The positions include research management, science communication or policy advising, all of which are crucial for the functioning of universities. By expanding career opportunities beyond the conventional academic track, the Third Space allows institutions to retain skilled individuals who contribute to innovation and academic excellence in different ways. It also provides researchers with career flexibility while fostering institutional development.</p>
	<p>In Germany, the government-funded FH-Personal programme strengthens academic careers at universities of applied sciences in Germany by improving recruitment and career development. It provides funding for new professorships, qualification programmes and networking opportunities to attract skilled professionals from industry and academia. The programme aims to bridge the gap between academic research and industry needs.</p>
	<p>The SECURE (Sustainable Careers for Researcher Empowerment) project aims to improve the attractiveness and reduce the precarity of research careers. As part of this objective, it launched tenure-track-like models based on practice examples from multiple European higher education systems.</p>
	<p>Permeable career paths by which academics and researchers seamlessly switch between academic and non-academic employment, to the mutual benefit of both, are supported by international platforms that foster the mobility of researchers, such as EURAXESS.</p>

Key principle	Practice example
<p>#3: Universities are spaces for personal, professional and intellectual growth. The institutional working environment fosters collegial interaction, exchange and support.</p>	<p>In Sweden, Chalmers University of Technology has introduced the concept of academic citizenship in its employment regulations as a criterion for promotion and recruitment. Academic citizenship encompasses the foundational work that supports the entire academic community, such as collegiality, leadership, peer review, and both formal and informal mentorship. These tasks are essential for fostering an excellent academic environment, even though they may not always be highly recognised.</p>
<p>#4: An investment in early-career academics is an investment in the sustainability of the higher education sector.</p>	<p>In Slovakia, grants from the Slovak Recovery and Resilience Plan support early-stage researchers and outstanding doctoral candidates. In addition, several universities offer internal funding schemes to assist doctoral candidates and young researchers. More comprehensive support for doctoral candidates is offered through doctoral schools, although only a small number of universities have established such schools so far. These doctoral schools have also been introduced as an optional indicator within the new performance contracts of universities, influencing their funding based on meeting agreed-upon criteria.</p> <p>A comprehensive overview of institutional measures in place to support postdoctoral researchers is available in the EUA report "Postdoctoral researchers at European universities: profiles, roles and institutional support structures" (2024).</p>
<p>#5: Universities serve society, hence career models are aligned with a university's mission and objectives.</p>	<p>European Universities alliances play a growing role in the support of academic careers. For example, the Transform4Europe Alliance is developing a work package called "T4EU Early-stage Researchers' Academy", which offers training and career opportunities based on the shared experiences of good practices among the partners of the alliance.</p> <p>The Graduate Campus of the University of Zurich (UZH) in Switzerland is dedicated to supporting the academic and professional development of doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers. It promotes interdisciplinary research by encouraging collaboration across fields, while also fostering excellence through the provision of resources, funding, and training opportunities. The campus plays a crucial role in career development by offering workshops, mentoring, and networking platforms to prepare researchers for diverse career paths. Additionally, it focuses on building a vibrant academic community through events and initiatives that connect researchers within and beyond UZH.</p>

The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 48 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Thanks to its interaction with a range of other European and international organisations, EUA ensures that the voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact their activities.

The Association provides unique expertise in higher education and research as well as a forum for exchange of ideas and good practice among universities. The results of EUA's work are made available to members and stakeholders through conferences, seminars, websites and publications.

www.eua.eu

