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Researchers' Mental Health in Times of Crises, Disasters and Wars

**ReMO Stakeholders Meeting
Ankara, Turkey
April 17, 2023**

Swift summary of ISE

Initiative for Science in Europe (ISE) is an independent association bringing together European learned societies and scientific research organisations operating throughout all disciplines and across all research sectors.

ISE supports all fields of science and technology (including the humanities and social sciences) all over Europe, involves active researchers in the design and implementation of European science policies and advocates sound independent scientific advice in the development European policies.

ISE has been instrumental in promoting disruptive excellence-based funding programmes for scientific research and played a central and decisive role in the creation of the European Research Council (ERC).

ISE Background

ISE was initiated in 2003 by a **movement of researchers** in the life sciences which was quickly joined by researchers from all other fields of science.

It led to the creation in 2004 of an **informal platform** for learned societies, academies, and other non-governmental research organisations in Europe, with the initial goal of rallying the European scientific community around the objective of creating a brand-new EU funded organisation promoting exploratory research, it became the European Research Council.

Since then, it has been active in making the **voice of the scientific community** heard in number of key science policy questions. It has been active in promoting the European scientific community's views on the framework programmes and their budgets, on scientific advice, open science, research assessment, and support to next generation researchers.

For many years, ISE was an informal, de facto organisation, housed by EMBO. Since 2017, ISE has been registered in Strasbourg as not-for-profit organisation ("association de droit local"). [Its statutes can be read here.](#)

ISE Two Core Ideas

Idea that all goes through **Science advice**. How science advice is provided to political decision makers in national ministries and EU institutions must be a major concern of researchers. Effective provision of science advice together with science diplomacy requires specific knowledge and methodologies for facilitating evidenced-based decision making. ISE will be finalising a document to be published in 2023.

Idea of **joining forces is a must**. Proposal to build an informal “umbrella coalition” of research representative European associations and jointly support common interests and thereby enhancing impact, with the goal of having a real weight in the definition and implementation of research policies in Europe. (in spite of a successful meeting in Brussels in November 2021, and an online meeting in May 2022, there is a reluctance to engage).

Dear Colleagues,

this is to synthesize the main takeaways of the journey we started in Brussels on 19th October 2021 and continued by the smaller group that was tasked with working on the next steps before the meeting in Paris on the 17th of May 2022. (Marta Agostino, Enrique Sanchez, Laura Keustermans, Gabi Lombardo, Silvia Gómez Recio, and ourselves: Marco Masia and Martin Andler).

We all agree on the starting point: in spite of tremendous efforts by the research community, and quite a bit of coordination between our organisations, both the total budget and the share for basic research in Horizon Europe are far from our expectations. As European Research is increasingly called for delivering (excellent) results in view of current global challenges and the recovery from the pandemic, the resources provided are not sufficient.

Thus, our main goal is to increase the resources dedicated to Research at both European and national levels. The specific goals are to decide if and how we want to form a coalition to successfully achieve the main goal and plan for the Paris meeting in May during the French Presidency, which we consider the first important milestone for the coalition.

Three main questions arose in the Brussels meeting:

1. Why should the research community come together for a common advocacy?
 - a. All of our organisations face the same challenge: insufficient resources (mainly funding) for research. There is a common interest in joining efforts to deliver a wider and louder message.
 - b. There are many different actors to target, which are difficult to be reached by our organisations individually.
 - c. Raising the importance of research to equip our society with the right knowledge and tools, therefore the need to invest in research is crucial.
2. How should the research community deliver such a common advocacy?
 - a. By joining a coalition for research with clear, selected and specific messages.
 - b. Coordinating our communication on the specific main goal jointly to maximise the impact of each organisation's voice.

ISE 3 Key Policy Priorities

- 1° **Advocating for Academic research.** ISE was founded on the idea of an urgent need to create a European programme dedicated to basic research. Arguing for a strong role for basic academic research in all of the EU's Research programmes remains an overarching priority.
- 2° **Widening participation.** ISE considers making ERA a fair and inclusive area for R&I is a priority for a balanced and competitive European Union. The ISE task force is currently finalising its final report. This concern remains a priority for ISE for the years to come, with continued lobbying efforts on the basis of the ideas proposed.
- 3° **Focus on researchers' careers.** Precarity and disillusion endanger research in Europe, ISE has taken up the concern of early researchers' careers which led to the Manifesto published in September 2022 and handed over to Commissioner Mariya Gabriel in January 2023.

ISE Other Key Priorities

4° **Horizon Europe follow-up.** FPs are the instrument to implement EU R&I policy. After publishing its position paper in July 2021, ISE has submitted a response and [position paper](#) to the EC Consultation closed in February 2023.

5° **Reform of the Research Assessment.** Following the delivery of the document on “Centrality of researchers in reforming research assessment: Routes to improve research by aligning rewards with Open Science practices”, ISE has engaged in the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA). ISE has Toma Susi as representative, who was elected into the Steering Board. **WGs are currently established.**

6° **ERA Forum for Transition.** This is the platform to elaborate EU R&I policy. ISE is among the few stakeholders admitted, which is essentially composed of representatives of member states. ISE has Renaud Jolivet as representative. **Actions are currently in place.**

ISE Focus on Researchers' Careers

The outcome of a process which started in 2021.

- Early 2021: ISE starts a dedicated WG on Researchers' careers and publishes a document on "[academic precarity](#)"
- January 2022: ISE published a statement supporting Jean-Pierre Bourguignon's appeal to study the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young researchers
- ISE involves with: JP Bourguignon, Manuel Heitor, Ciencia Viva, CNRS, and M. Gabriel
- February 2022: Putin's war against Ukraine starts
- June 2022: "4th Gago Conference" on [Europe supporting young researchers in times of uncertainty](#) in Brussels (including its member organisations : MCAA, Eurodocs, EEA...)
- September 2022: Publication of The Manifesto [Europe supports early research careers and stimulating research workplaces](#) , calls for action at EU and national levels
- January 2023: Event with Commissioner Gabriel and Handover Ceremony; she announces her will to act through a "partnership"
- March 2023: Link with Widening participation

ISE Call for Action

Covid pandemic, war in Ukraine, earthquake in Turkey and Syria, democracies in danger, and general feeling of uncertainty, adding to precarious employment situations, often poor working conditions, threatened academic freedom, pressure through constantly growing demands and increasing competition faced by early career researchers, have a **negative impact on their motivation and mental health.**

Research careers have been problematic for too long. **It's time to act!**

We must inspire and support the next generation to engage in research, increase our capacity to meet challenges, build and consolidate our continent's future, promote peace and live in a healthy world.

Manifesto to support Early Career Researchers

In these times of uncertainty and upheaval, vigorous support for early career researchers, for their research work, for a stimulating research environment and best working conditions, is essential.

The Manifesto calls for:

- 1. Europe-wide monitoring of young researchers' situation*
- 2. Improving research careers and working conditions in Research Performing Organisations (RPOs), Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs) and in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)*
- 3. Enhancing research careers in the third sector, including NGOs and governmental organisations*
- 4. Involving national funding agencies in cooperation with the European Commission.*

Handover of the Manifesto to Commissioner Mariya Gabriel January 10, 2023



MG with Sebastian Dahle (Eurodoc)



MG with Alexandra Dubini (MCAA)



MG with Agnieszka Wykowska and Axel
Cleeremans (AERG)

What is Mental Health?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Over the course of your life, if you experience mental health problems, your thinking, mood, and behavior could be affected. Many factors contribute to mental health problems, including:

- Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry
- Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse
- Family history of mental health problems
- External events such as war, earthquakes, climate change, etc.

[What Is Mental Health? | MentalHealth.gov](https://www.mentalhealth.gov/what-is-mental-health)

Who does what is Mental Health?

In recent years, there has been increasing acknowledgement of the important role mental health plays in achieving global development goals, as illustrated by the inclusion of mental health in the Sustainable Development Goals.

...

Increased investment is required on all fronts: for mental health awareness to increase understanding and reduce stigma; for efforts to increase access to quality mental health care and effective treatments; and for research to identify new treatments and improve existing treatments for all mental disorders.

[Mental health \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/mental_health)

Mental ill-health can have devastating effects on individuals, families and communities, with one in every two people experiencing a mental illness in their lifetime. During the COVID-19 crisis many people's mental health worsened; at the worst points in the crisis prevalence of depression and anxiety increased significantly, and even doubled in some countries.

[Mental Health - OECD](https://www.oecd.org/mental-health/)

ISE calls for Action

Define a “**European Framework for Research Careers**” with definitions of appropriate career paths of researchers in Europe.

Put in place the “**European Research & Innovation Careers Observatory**” to monitor jobs, working conditions, mobility of skilled workforce in research and innovation, including institutional data on research career paths, disaggregated by gender and other characteristics that can lead to discrimination: a stepwise process.

Promote but monitor the existing “**Human Resources Strategy for Researchers**”, pushing research institutions to appropriate research career paths (including creation of HR jobs specialising in the professional and enlightened follow-up of scientific and associated careers, with specific education and long-life trainings for HR services).

Anticipate a new **dedicated Programme** with a significant own budget, in the 10th Framework Programme (2028-2035), engaging Member states and committing stakeholders.

Read and Sign our Manifesto

Pease see here:

[Manifesto - Initiative for Science in Europe \(initiative-se.eu\)](https://initiative-se.eu)

Or scan here:



Thank you for your attention !

For more information see :

[Home - Initiative for Science in Europe \(initiative-se.eu\)](http://initiative-se.eu)

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