



*International experience -
important for Early Career
Researchers?*

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Fostering geographical mobility

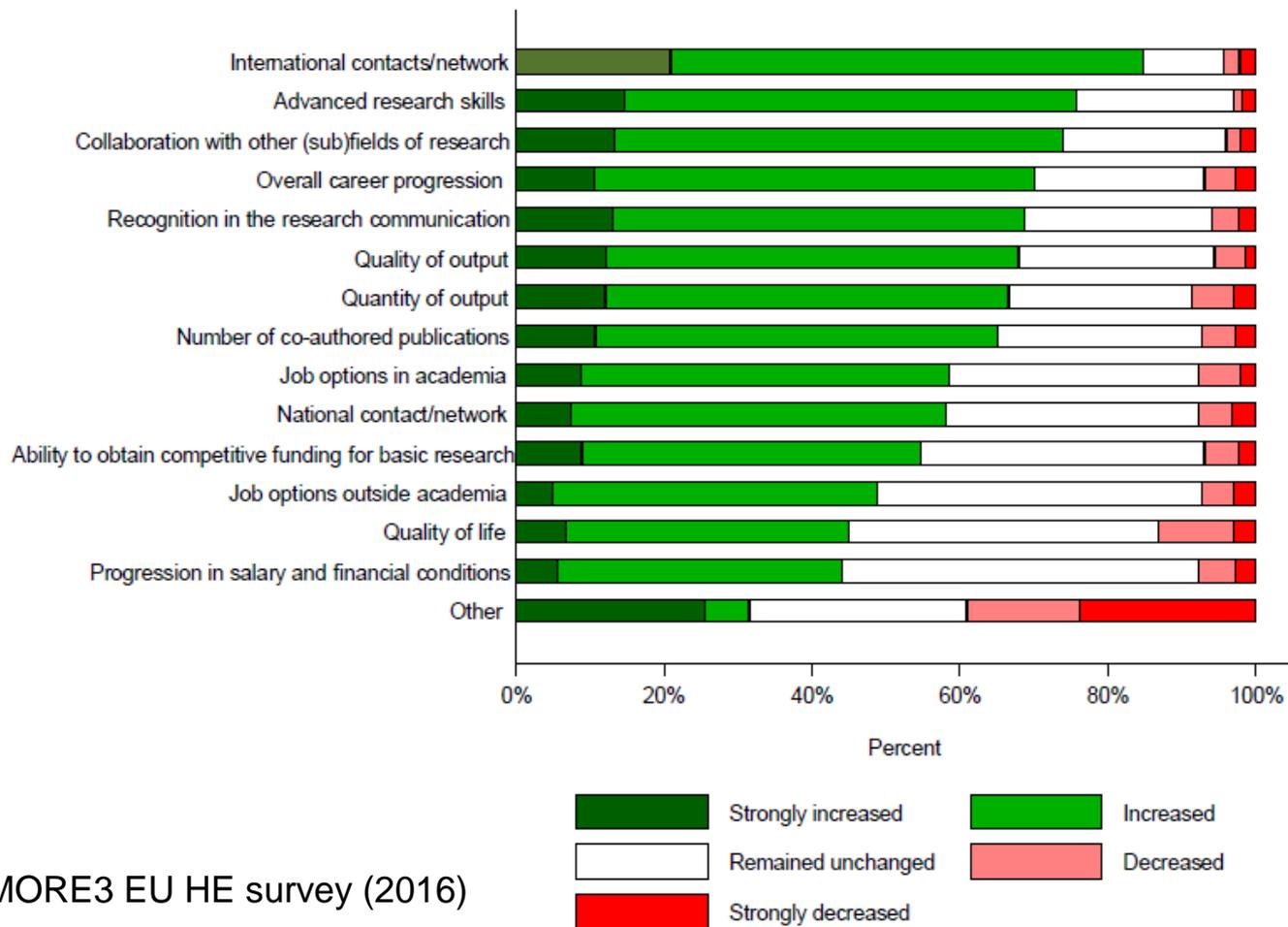
- enables wide and balanced circulation of talent
- access to the research facilities and infrastructures required for making important progress
- early scientific maturity and independence
- learn to be flexible and open-minded and to easily adapt to new situations and global structures



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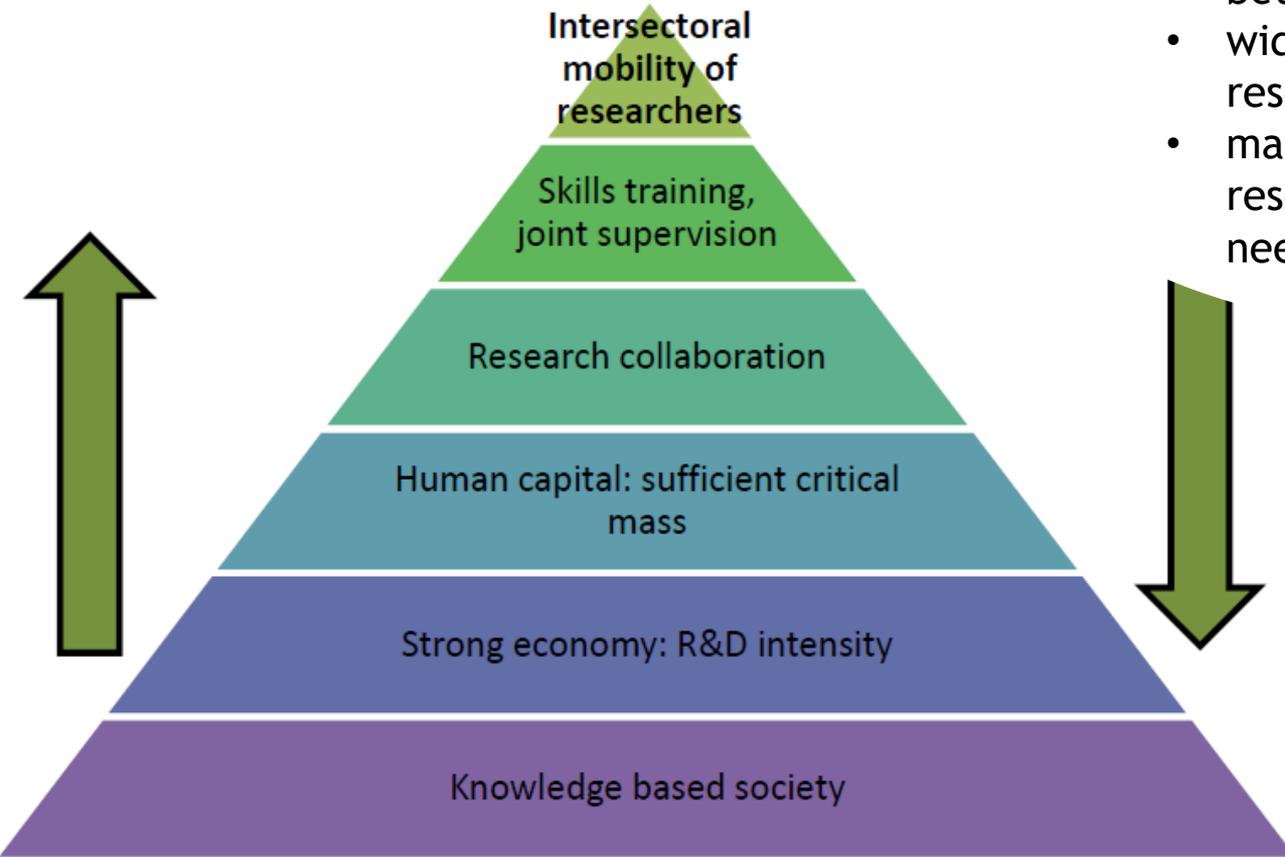
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Effects of entire mobility experience on the research career (EU28)



Source: MORE3 EU HE survey (2016)

Fostering intrasectoral mobility



- better knowledge exchange
- wider set of research-related skills
- matching academic research results to the needs outside academia

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The aftermath of the pandemic for ECRs in the Europe

Halt on mobility

- The lockdown has interrupted or stopped most research visiting periods abroad (geographical mobility), and work periods in sectors different from academia (intersectoral mobility).
- These activities **can often be a mandatory requirement for PhD defense**, or required for awarding research positions or funding.



The aftermath of the pandemic for ECRs in the Europe

EU research funding

- Post-pandemic research project funding is a source of concern for ECRs, for both projects started before the pandemic and for future projects.
- In the first case, there might be issues with funds reallocation where the money was not spent or is now not spendable according to pre-agreed conditions (e.g. consumables, travel grants, research visits abroad, courses, congresses).
- In the future, different post-COVID-19 R&D budget investments may increase funding inequalities among different European countries.
- Budget cuts may heavily impact ECRs, hindering contract extensions, increasing the ratio of short-term, part-time and partially-funded research contracts, and even increase self-funded or unpaid positions.



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Lower productivity and increased precarity

- From the ECRs' point of view, the COVID-19 crisis may amplify and accelerate the workforce casualization process in universities and research institutions.
- Combined with funding cuts, this may lead to redundancies and will especially affect researchers with short-term and precarious contracts, who are most vulnerable.
- EU institutions, universities and research institutes acknowledged the problem, and provide the possibility for contract and project extensions.
- However, several funding bodies did not funding extensions, and ECRs were left with the only choice of working unpaid to finish their research.



The aftermath of the pandemic for ECRs in the Europe

Barriers in doctoral training

- Doctoral candidates are sometimes required to complete a visiting period in another research institution or private lab, representing geographical or intersectoral mobility.
- This was impossible during lockdown, and many doctoral candidates must reschedule or revise their research plans - an operation that is especially difficult for people near the end of their training
- Some institutions and programs require an international committee to approve the thesis, and bureaucracy may complicate moving the final examination online.



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Doctoral candidate's supervision: between neglect and added pressure

- Higher education institutions are focused on students and researchers holding permanent contracts, with doctoral candidates being sometimes left behind.
- Many remote-working doctoral candidates highlighted a lack of interaction with supervisors and mentors, with obvious effects on their work.
- Others, including postdocs, feel an increased pressure from supervisors to produce results and publish, in the wake of possible funding cuts and grim career prospects.



The aftermath of the pandemic for ECRs in the Europe

Lack of an adequate working environment

- Most ECRs stress that working from home does not guarantee the same productivity of office work: spaces are frequently shared with other family members or are inadequate for work, and some ECRs must divide their time between work and caring activities dedicated to children, elders and relatives with health conditions.
- ECRs complain about increasingly blurred borders between working and private time.
- Lack of interaction and collaboration with colleagues is also a concern for remote-working ECRs.



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Increased sense of isolation and anxiety

- The lockdown has had a serious impact on ECRs mental health.
- Remote working has increased researchers' sense of isolation and this discomfort contributed, with other factors, to reduced productivity.
- High levels of anxiety related to fear of infection, possible lay-offs in research institutions and fewer career opportunities contribute to psychological turmoil.



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Thank you!



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