



**EURYDICE
REPORT**

Academic staff in Europe

2025

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Academic Staff in Europe —2025

Eurydice report

Foreword

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Introduction

Policy Context

The academic profession is the heart of European higher education, and European steering documents recognise that high-quality academic staff are indispensable for thriving European higher education institutions and deeper transnational cooperation. Yet the profession faces numerous challenges in a fast-changing higher education landscape. Higher education systems are increasingly focused on quality, efficiency and accountability whilst facing an expansion of their roles broadening participation in teaching, engaging in research for public and other funders, and developing their role in service to society. The working conditions for academic staff are not only impacted by this, but are also understood as a tool to adapt to these changing circumstances. As the Eurydice 2017 study (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice (2017)) concluded, academic staff represent a broad spectrum of employees undertaking a variety of different roles, rather than a homogeneous group.

The 2024 Council Recommendation on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education (European Commission, 2024) addresses the attractiveness of academic careers in a holistic way, highlighting many interlinked issues. In particular, the text stresses a need to integrate and reward similarly a range of diverse roles of academic staff, starting with parity of esteem for teaching compared to research in appraisal and promotion, but also extending to entrepreneurship and innovation, knowledge valorisation, transnational cooperation, business and community engagement, regional and local development, mentoring, administration and management, and participation in institutional governance.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published an evidence review (OECD, 2024), which examines the state of academic careers in higher education systems in OECD countries, providing an overview of available data, research evidence, as well as examples of policy and practice. The review looks at a range of topics related to academics and their careers, including basic employment conditions (contractual status; responsibilities and workload), appraisal and career progression (performance appraisal; professional learning; flexible career paths) and broader working environment (internationalisation; academic freedom). The review concluded that the academic career model could prioritise moving more people towards stable positions, while also creating systems with the fewest possible bottlenecks in career progression. For this to be achieved, action would be required at system and institutional level, and could be framed by updated international policy documentation.

Content and structure of the report

This report aims to provide a concise analysis of the current state of policies and actions to address academic staff issues in Europe, highlighting some of the complexities and differences between national systems.

The analysis is structured in two parts. The first part of the report sets the context for studying policy developments related to academic staff matters. It highlights several interconnected factors that shape academic staff policy, as well as some key international developments and trends. It examines the structural aspects of higher education systems, including the different models of academic careers, including employer relations, civil servant and other employments status, as well as the dependent contractual arrangements.

The second part of the report examines recent developments in national policies affecting academic staff. It highlights the various strategies, reforms and other policy initiatives introduced by European countries to address the management of academic staff. The report also analyses the main issues addressed by these actions, including recruitment, working conditions, inclusiveness, diversity, and gender equity, mobility and continuous professional development.

Methodology and data sources

The report relies on qualitative data on policies and support measures that have been collected by means of a Eurydice data collection survey.

The Eurydice indicators are based on information derived primarily from national regulations or other official top-level education documents, such as guidelines or similar steering documents. Where available and relevant, the comparative indicators are supplemented by examples from specific education systems.

The Eurydice data collection covers tertiary education (ISCED 5 (when part of the higher education system), ISCED 6, ISCED 7 and ISCED 8).

The report covers 38 education systems across the 27 EU Member States ⁽¹⁾, as well as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia and Türkiye ⁽²⁾. All contributors are acknowledged at the end of the report.

The reference year is the 2024/2025 academic year.

⁽¹⁾ Each of the three Belgian Communities (Flemish Community, French Community and German-speaking Community) is considered a separate education system.

⁽²⁾ One education system that is part of the Eurydice Network and is commonly included in Eurydice reports – North Macedonia – is not covered by this report. Neither are new Eurydice Network members – Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – that do not yet participate in comparative reports.

Part 1: Academic staff policy context

Policy developments related to academic staff matters are shaped by various interconnected factors, which are both national and international. At the national level, historical, cultural, political, economic and social factors come into play. These factors are commonly articulated alongside global developments and trends. In other words, developments in the higher education sector, including those related to the academic profession, are always embedded locally and, at the same time, they are always looking beyond the local (Marginson, 2022).

This first section of the report aims at presenting a selection of elements to consider when analysing policy developments related to academic staff matters across European higher education systems. The section starts by outlining some key international developments that are shaping higher education systems in Europe, and then explores some differences in the national models of academic careers. The information presented can be seen as an introduction to the second part of the report, which investigates recent and ongoing national developments related to academic staff matters.

1.1. International developments in the higher education sector

To make sense of national developments related to the academic profession, it is necessary to consider global trends and developments in the field of higher education. Indeed, national policy developments in higher education cannot be fully understood without considering a broader context characterised by globalisation and expansion of the sector. Expanded access to higher education brings the challenge of keeping costs manageable without compromising quality. Globalisation, on the other side, brings different standards that national systems need to accommodate (Finkelstein et al., 2019).

The globalisation of higher education goes hand in hand with the increased role of supranational processes, associations and agencies in steering higher education (Finkelstein et al., 2019). The Bologna Process, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, enhanced the comparability of higher education degree structures and qualifications in Europe (and beyond) and led to the creation of the European higher education area. This intergovernmental cooperation process has also enabled the adoption of various international guiding principles for higher education, including the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*, first adopted in 2005, and then in a revised and updated form in 2015 ⁽³⁾. More recently

⁽³⁾ European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, European Students' Union, European University Association and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education, *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*, 2015, Brussels, https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf.

Principles and guidelines to strengthen the social dimension in the EHE were adopted as an annex to the *Rome Ministerial Communiqué* in 2020 ⁽⁴⁾.

Institutions of the European Union also contribute to the internationalisation and globalisation of higher education. One of the key contributing elements is undoubtedly the Erasmus+ programme, which promotes the international mobility of both students and academic staff.

When it comes, more specifically, to academic staff, European institutions address related matters within various steering documents. For example, the 2022 European Commission's Communication on a European strategy for universities ⁽⁵⁾ highlights, among other matters, the need to tackle academic careers in a systemic and comprehensive way, with the aim of promoting flexible and attractive career structures, along with appealing working conditions in academia. The above objective was further developed in the 2024 Council Recommendation on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education ⁽⁶⁾, which approaches the attractiveness of academic careers in a holistic way, highlighting many interlinked areas. In particular, the recommendation stresses the need to:

- integrate transnational mobility into academic career pathways and recognise it within the appraisals and/or working hours of academics;
- recognise and reward in a similar way the various academic staff roles, such as teaching, research, entrepreneurship and innovation, knowledge valorisation, transnational cooperation, business and community engagement, regional and local

development, mentoring, administration and management, and participation in institutional governance;

- promote parity of esteem between teaching and research in staff appraisal and promotion, and provide appropriate training and support to academic staff conducting teaching activities;
- promote approaches that value, acknowledge and reward diverse academic career paths for the permeability of careers across the different academic staff roles;
- improve recruitment practices and working conditions in academia;
- provide commensurate remuneration in academia, free from gender pay gaps;
- ensure work-life balance and flexible working conditions;
- provide adequate social protection;
- ensure gender equity and gender balance, and equal opportunities and inclusiveness for academic staff from all backgrounds;
- promote and defend academic freedom.

The existence of the above objectives is one of the elements to consider when analysing national developments and trends related to the academic profession. Indeed, a key question that may be raised as to whether national policy developments related to the academic profession address (some of) the above objectives and/or whether they specify other goals.

⁽⁴⁾ European Higher Education Area and Bologna Follow-up Group Advisory Group 1 on Social Dimension, 'Principles and guidelines to strengthen the social dimension of higher education in the EHEA', Annex II to *Rome Ministerial Communiqué*, 2020, https://ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique_Annex_II.pdf.

⁽⁵⁾ European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee et the Committee of Regions on a European strategy for universities, COM(2022) 16 final of 18 January 2022, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022DC0016&qid=1753117685909>.

⁽⁶⁾ Council of the European Union, Council Recommendation of 25 November 2024 on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education, *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 7282, 5 December 2024, p. 1, ELI: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/7282/oj/eng>.

1.2. National contexts

Europe is characterised by a diversity of higher education systems. This diversity can be apprehended by looking at various system-level features. Finkelstein et al. (2019) highlight four structural aspects that can help capture some key differences between higher education systems, namely 1) the extent to which a system is 'unitary' (i.e. a single central-level authority is responsible for higher education matters) or 'federated' (i.e. the national government plays a more limited role in favour of state or provincial governments); 2) the degree of institutional differentiation (i.e. a single type of higher education institution *versus* a variety of institutions); 3) the degree of autonomy experienced by institutions; and 4) the meaning attributed to academic freedom. These different structural aspects go hand in hand with different models of academic careers.

The following subsections examine some differences in the national models of academic careers, while paying attention to the above structural aspects. While these aspects are crucial, they are far from complete. Indeed, many other dimensions could be looked at when it comes to the academic profession. For example, within its previous analyses, Eurydice investigated, among other themes, topics related to human resource management in academia, including recruitment procedures, performance appraisals and promotion practices (European Commission et al., 2017). Other areas investigated included the status of doctoral candidates, which differs greatly across European countries (European Commission et al., 2017).

Academic employer relations

One possible starting point for framing the relationship between the national system and an academic career is to investigate who the employer of academic staff is (Finkelstein et al., 2019; OECD, 2024). Closely related to the employer's identity is the question of who has control over the pathways that structure academic careers (Finkelstein et al., 2019; OECD, 2024). A key distinction in this regard can be made between systems where academic careers are prescribed or regulated by top-level authorities and systems where institutions, rather than top-level authorities, play a key role in determining the structure of academic career pathways.

Figure 1 examines the first dimension mentioned above, namely the identity of the employer of academic staff (7). The figure shows that in most higher education systems investigated, all academic staff working in publicly funded institutions providing higher education programmes are employed directly by the institutions. In contrast, in a limited number of higher education systems, the government (the state), or another system-level authority (such as a ministry), is the employer of all academic staff. Several countries show a mixed pattern, with some academic staff employed by the government, while others are employed directly by the institutions.

(7) This report does not directly investigate the second aspect, i.e. who has control over the pathways that structure academic careers. This is because this aspect includes several dimensions and is, therefore, more challenging to survey across multiple countries..

of Education, whereas most staff at the University of Luxembourg, which delivers programmes at higher levels, are employed by the university. Similarly, in French universities, staff are employed by the institution thanks to state funding, but in the case of certain undergraduate or professional degrees, often provided outside universities, the majority of staff are employed by the Ministry of Education. Spain belongs to the same country cluster, with all staff delivering short-cycle tertiary education employed by the state or by the autonomous communities that have been granted educational competencies, and all academics delivering the three main cycles of higher education employed directly by higher education institutions (or institutions attached to them).

Overall, Figure 1 suggests that higher education institutions are nowadays a more prevalent employer for academic staff than governments or other system-level authorities. This is enhanced by the fact that in several countries for which Figure 1 displays the mixed pattern, the government is a marginal employer compared to higher education institutions. For example, in Czechia, academic staff are generally employed directly by higher education institutions, except for staff in two state-run higher education institutions, namely the University of Defence, a military higher education institution that is overseen by the Ministry of Defence, and the Policy Academy, where the rector is employed by the Ministry of the Interior. In Malta, staff in the three main higher education institutions, namely the University of Malta, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology and the Institute of Tourism Studies, i.e. virtually all academic staff, are employed by the respective institutions, while staff at the Institute for Education, which employs less than 1% of all academic staff, are employed by the state. In Austria only around 4% of academic staff are exclusively employed by the government. Since 2002 employment by the government is being phased out and

academic staff are being hired directly by higher education institutions. Similarly, in Denmark, almost all academic staff are employed directly by higher education institutions, except for a very small number of academics who are civil servants and are employed by the king or the minister (this arrangement is also being phased out).

Academics as civil servants

Closely related to the question of the employer's identity (Figure 1) is the question of whether academic staff benefit from the status of civil servant (Figure 2). While these two questions are tightly linked, they do not fully overlap and, therefore, require separate investigations.

A traditional general understanding of the civil service is that civil servants are public administration employees nominated by the state on the basis of a public law that defines all the basic terms of the relationship between the civil servant and the state. No contract is established between the two parties, but the public law defines the respective obligations and rights. The second key dimension of the traditional understanding of the civil service is that civil servants are generally nominated with tenure lasting until retirement age, meaning that the status brings major benefits in terms of employment security (SIGMA et al., 2000). However, this traditional understanding is challenged by a long-lasting trend of introducing temporary or contractual public employees (SIGMA et al., 2000).

A study discussing the scope of civil service employment across Europe (SIGMA et al., 2000) distinguishes between countries with well-established traditions of professional civil services, which mainly include older EU Member States⁽⁹⁾, and countries without such traditions, situated mainly in the eastern part of Europe, and having in place civil services with a reduced scope. The reduced scope of civil services

⁽⁹⁾ This should be understood as the situation prior to the EU expansion in 2004.

means that civil servants are generally only those holding public authority or directly involved in policy making, while those working for institutions delivering public services, such as higher education institutions, usually do not fall under the scope of the civil service (although managerial positions at such institutions may be considered civil service positions). In other words, in the systems with a reduced scope of the civil service, academics generally do not benefit from the status of civil servant.

Figure 2 displays that in less than half of the higher education systems investigated, at least some academics are civil servants. In line with the above study, the figure shows that civil servant status for academic staff is more commonly found in south-western Europe than in eastern Europe. It is also quite uncommon in the northern part of Europe.

When in place, the civil servant status commonly goes hand in hand with a high degree of job security for academic staff. Generally, academics who are tenured civil servants can only be dismissed under very narrowly defined legal conditions, such as if they are convicted in disciplinary or criminal proceedings (e.g. Germany) and they benefit from a guaranteed job even in the case of organisational restructuring (e.g. Portugal¹⁰). Alongside enhanced protection against dismissal, their benefits commonly include assured career progression and salary stability (e.g. Luxembourg) and/or fixed retirement age and higher protection against transfers (e.g. Austria). Nonetheless, not all civil servants benefit from the same degree of job security. For example, in France, there is only one status of civil servant but two types of indefinite employment – civil servant status or indefinite

contracts, the latter being characterised by less substantial job security (¹¹).

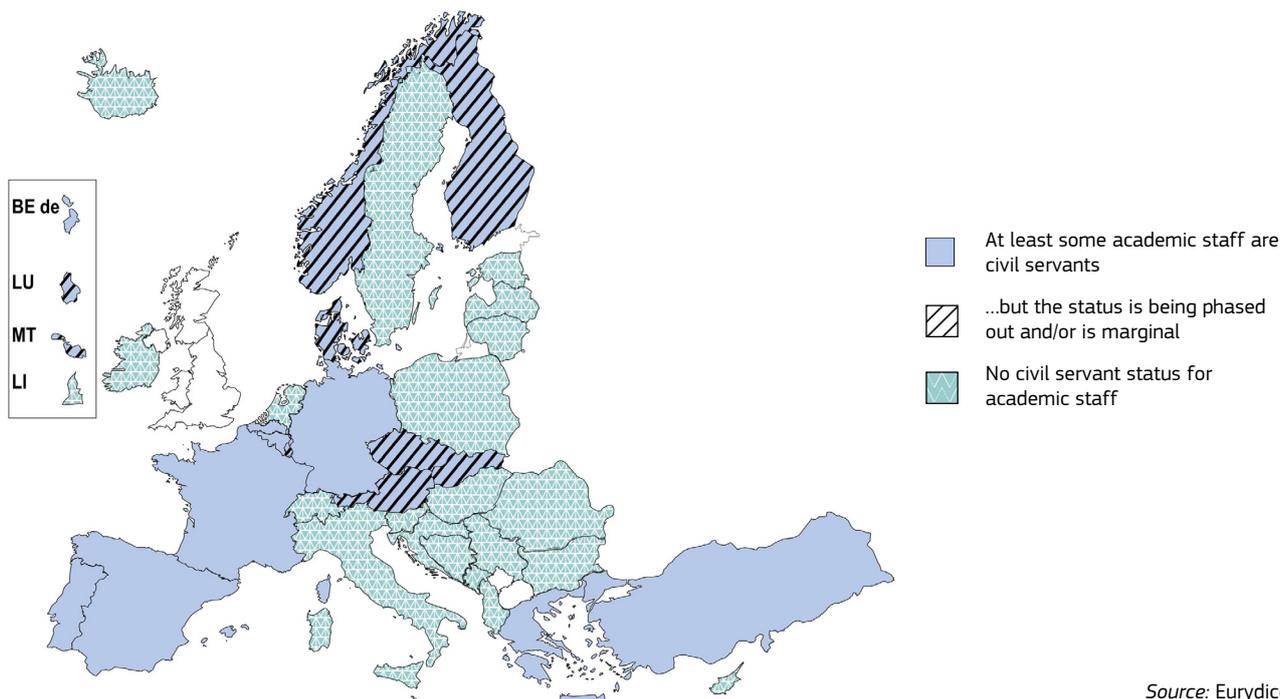
Figure 2 also demonstrates that in several countries with the civil servant status for academic staff, the status is being phased out and/or is marginal. This is aligned with the observed trend of moving away from employing academic staff as civil servants towards more hybrid models of staff management (Finkelstein et al., 2019; OECD, 2024).

The move towards hybrid models of staff management sometimes implies rather complex employment arrangements for academics who are civil servants. Indeed, when higher education institutions are entrusted with more autonomy, including the autonomy for strategic decision making regarding their human resources, the government is not necessarily (seen as) the employer of civil servants. In France, for instance, a 2007 regulatory framework (¹²) entrusted public higher education institutions with the autonomy in managing their human resources. As a result, the institutions are now responsible for recruitment and partly also the management of academic staff careers and, in this sense, they can be seen as the employer of academic staff, although the rules governing salaries and career progression are still solely dependent on the state. Luxembourg provides another example illustrating the complexity of employment arrangements for academics who are civil servants. In this country, since the creation of the University of Luxembourg in 2003, the civil servant positions of professors have been being phased out. The few professors who still hold the civil servant status have become employees of the university. Nonetheless, their remuneration is still fully processed through the state budget.

¹⁰ Legal protection defined in Article 20 of the University Higher Education Teaching Career Statute ([Estatuto da Carreira Docente Universitária - ECDU](#)); and in the Article 10-A of the Polytechnic Higher Education Teaching Career Statute ([Estatuto de Carreira do Pessoal Docente do Ensino Superior Politécnico - ECPDESP](#)).

(¹¹) For details regarding the 'open-ended contracts of the state civil service', see the Circular issue 2017-038 dated 20 March 2017.

(¹²) Law No. 2007-1199 of 10 August 2007 on the freedoms and responsibilities of universities.

Figure 2: Existence of civil servant status for academic staff, 2024/2025

Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory notes

The figure understands civil servants as public administration employees nominated by the state on the basis of a public law that differs from general employment law and defines all the basic terms of the relationship between the civil servant and the state. Civil servants are commonly nominated for tenure lasting until the retirement age. Usually, mobility from one institution to another does not affect their status.

When academic staff are recognised as ‘public servants’ or ‘public employees’, based on a regulatory framework that differs from the framework applicable to civil servants, the figure does not display the civil servant status.

The figure should be interpreted with caution, considering that, despite the above guiding principles, some countries may be at the boundary of different categories. This is because the civil service is defined differently across countries.

Country-specific notes

Czechia. The civil servant status for academic staff is marginal. It exists in two state-run higher education institutions, namely the University of Defence, a military higher education institution that is overseen by the Ministry of Defence, and the Policy Academy, where the rector is employed by the Ministry of the Interior.

Denmark. The civil servant status is being phased out. At present, only a limited number of academics at universities and university colleges (universities of applied sciences) still maintain civil servant status.

Malta. Only academic staff at the Institute for Education, which was set up in 2015, are civil servants (less than 1 % of academic staff). Academic staff delivering programmes in other higher education institutions are employees of the respective institutions.

Austria. Academic staff with civil servant status can be found at universities and university colleges of teacher education. However, since 2002, academics at universities have no longer been hired as civil servants, and this status is being phased out. There are no civil servants at universities of applied sciences.

Luxembourg. In short-cycle tertiary education (ISCED 5) programmes, which are offered by secondary schools, most of the teaching staff are employed as civil servants. When it comes to programmes situated at levels ISCED 6–8, since the creation of the University of Luxembourg in 2003, civil servant positions have been being phased out. There are still some professors who hold civil servant status. While their contracts have been taken over by the University of Luxembourg, and they are therefore employed by this higher education institution, their remuneration is still fully processed through the state budget.

Slovakia. The civil servant status for academic staff is marginal. It exists in two state-run higher education institutions, namely a military higher education institution and a police higher education institution, where the rector and some academic staff are employed by the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior respectively.

Liechtenstein. Academic staff at the public university have very similar rights to civil servants, but they are not directly employed by the government.

Iceland. The term ‘civil servant’ designates only a specific group of government employees, namely top officials and heads of state agencies, such as rectors of universities. Academic staff, other than sessional teachers, are designated as ‘state employees’. Nonetheless, their actual employers are higher education institutions.

Norway. The civil servant status is being phased out. At present, only a limited number of academics at universities still maintain civil servant status, and they are also employed by the institutions themselves.

It is also noteworthy that when academic staff are not recognised as civil servants, they may still be covered by a regulatory framework that differs from general labour legislation. Indeed, several countries recognise academic staff as ‘public employees’ or ‘public servants’, this status being commonly covered by a separate legislation that applies neither to civil servants nor to any other employees. For example, in Hungary, the civil servant status is limited to governmental employees working in direct government institutions (e.g. ministries), meaning that the status does not apply to academic staff. Nevertheless, academic staff that work in (a few) state owned institutions are recognised as public employees, which is a status covered by a separate regulatory framework. Academic staff working in private publicly subsidised higher education institutions, i.e. most higher education institutions, are employees working under general labour legislation.

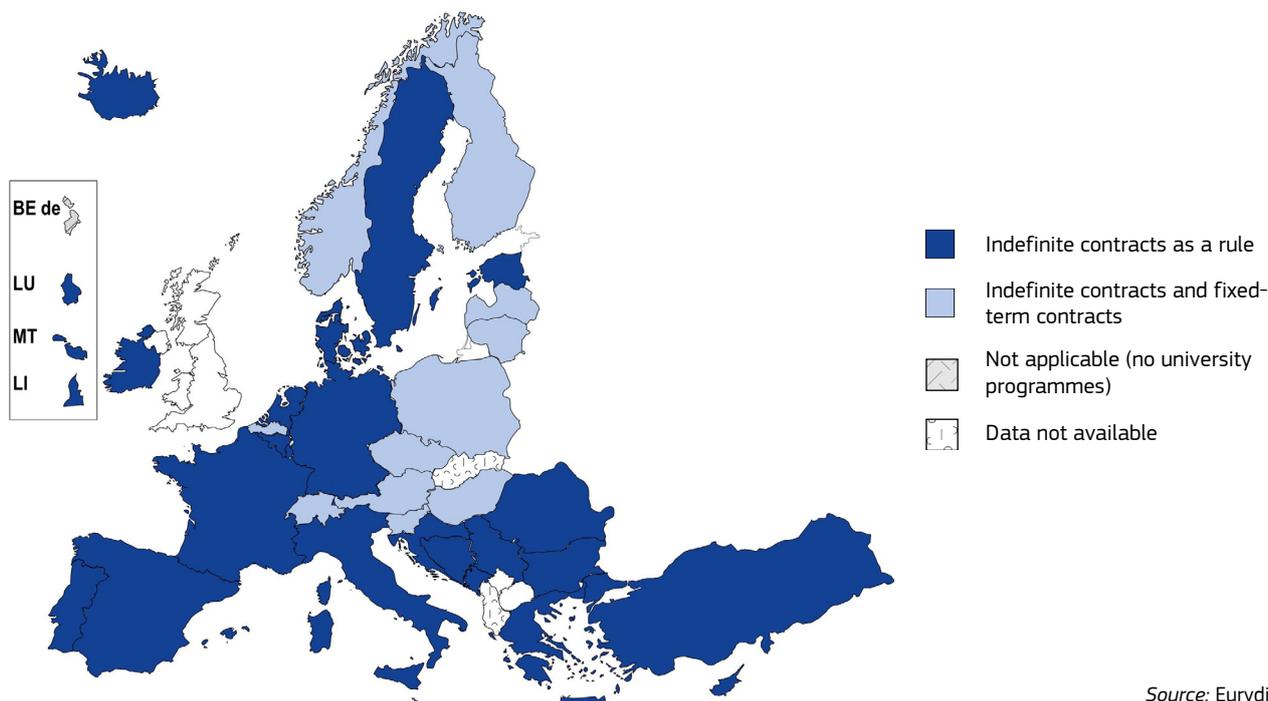
Types of contracts in academia

Another key dimension to consider when comparing academic careers across Europe is the contractual status of academic staff. While in all higher education systems investigated both fixed-term and indefinite contracts are used to employ academic staff, there are differences across countries in how different contracts are used and allocated. At the same time, some trends and patterns are common.

Starting with a common pattern, the career stage commonly affects the contractual stability

of academic staff. More specifically, junior positions in academia often involve fixed-term or project-based contracts, whereas advanced stages of an academic career go hand in hand with more stable contractual arrangements. In some countries, this pattern follows regulatory prescriptions defining different stages of an academic career, along with the contracts that go with them and career promotion arrangements. For example, in Croatia, assistants and senior assistants have fixed-term contracts (lasting, respectively, six and four years) that involve an annual evaluation. Lecturers have indefinite contracts but must undergo a re-election or promotion procedure every five years. The promotion process ends when a lecturer is appointed as a full professor with tenure.

Although the most senior positions in academia generally procure the most employment stability, the academic staff holding them do not always benefit from an indefinite contract. This is noticeable when comparing the contractual arrangements of university professors across European higher education systems. Indeed, as Figure 3 shows, in around two thirds of European higher education systems, all or virtually all university professors (more than 90 %) have an indefinite contract. In contrast, in around one third of the systems, indefinite contracts coexist with fixed-term contracts, meaning that some university professors have an indefinite contract, whereas others have a fixed-term contract.

Figure 3: Employment contracts of university professors, 2024/2025

Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory notes

For the definition of 'indefinite contract' and 'fixed-term contract', see the Glossary.

When referring to 'indefinite contracts as a rule', the figure refers to situations where all or virtually all university professors (more than 90 %) have an indefinite contract.

When referring to 'university professors', the figure refers to academic staff at the highest level of the academic structure designated as 'professors' or equivalent (see the national diagrams annexed to the 2017 Eurydice report on academic staff: European Commission et al., 2017, pp. 107-144).

The contractual arrangements for professors who have reached the legal retirement age, if specific contractual arrangements apply, have not been considered.

Country-specific notes

Belgium (BE de). There are no university programmes.

Czechia. Fixed-term contracts last a maximum of three years, and may be repeated twice. After this time (nine years) the employee must either receive an indefinite contract or leave the post.

Germany. The figure does not cover junior professors who are employed on fixed-term contracts.

Malta. The figure shows the situation for full-time academic staff in public higher education institutions. Part-time and visiting staff are generally employed on fixed-term contracts.

Slovakia. Academic staff enter into fixed-term contracts for up to five years. There is an exception for academics who have worked in the position of professor or associate professor for at least nine years and have been given a fixed-term contract at least three times. These academics receive a contract up to the age of 70. While the contract is limited by age and, therefore, is 'fixed-term', it is seen here as 'indefinite', considering that its finishing age extends beyond the legal retirement age. Since no consolidated top-level data are available on the proportion of professors who hold this type of contract, the figure indicates the non-availability of data.

Sweden: For professors in disciplines in the fine, applied or performing arts; indefinite contracts may not be used.

Another dimension to consider when investigating the contractual stability of academic staff is that not all academics occupy positions within the main career pathway going from junior through intermediate to senior positions. Indeed, as the 2017 Eurydice report on academic staff shows (European Commission et al., 2017, pp. 107-144 ⁽¹³⁾), higher education

systems commonly include academic staff categories or positions that are not part of the (most typical) academic career progression pathway. These positions generally imply fixed-term contracts. At the same time, hiring procedures related to these positions are usually lighter and/or more flexible compared to procedures related to positions in the main

⁽¹³⁾ Please refer to the last category displayed in the national diagrams annexed to the quoted Eurydice report. Moreover, the OECD provides comparative quantification regarding different staff categories, including the category 'other' (OECD, 2024, p. 14).

career path. For example, in Estonia, the employment contracts of ordinary teaching staff and researchers, which are mostly indefinite, must be filled through open competitions. It is also possible to fill an academic position without organising a competition, but this implies a fixed-term contract. This arrangement allows higher education institutions to invite scientists, distinguished creative staff or practitioners to carry out teaching for up to five years without launching a competition.

Contractual stability can also be linked to the nature of tasks that academics carry out. In this context, some countries register notable differences between academics with (mostly) research-oriented profiles, who commonly work with fixed-term contracts, and those whose tasks include both research and teaching. For example, in the Netherlands, most university lecturers work with indefinite contracts, while most researchers work with fixed-term contracts. In Italy, as a rule, university professors, i.e. the category involved in organisational, teaching and research activities, work with indefinite contracts. In contrast, staff falling under the category of 'researchers', i.e. scholars contributing to university scientific research and conducting teaching tasks that supplement official courses, work with fixed-term contracts.

It is also noteworthy that, while academics who are civil servants commonly have indefinite contracts, civil servants may also work with fixed-term contracts. For example, in Germany, the academic staff consists of either salaried employees of higher education institutions or civil servants (the latter category applies to university professors). Civil servants and salaried employees can both have indefinite and fixed-term contracts. Nonetheless, it is (more) common for academics who are civil servants to have an indefinite contract, and it is (more)

common for academics employed as salaried employees to have a fixed-term contract.

Furthermore, in education systems with several types of higher education institution, different institutions may be characterised by varying arrangements or situations in terms of contractual stability. For example, in Finland, fixed-term contracts dominate in universities, while in universities of applied sciences indefinite contracts prevail.

Figure 4 aims to provide an overall picture regarding contracts in academia, considering all academic staff categories and all types of publicly funded higher education providers ⁽¹⁴⁾.

The figure shows that in most countries for which data are available, indefinite contracts are more common than fixed-term contracts. However, this should be interpreted with caution, since countries where indefinite contracts dominate may still register a substantial proportion of academic staff working with fixed-term contracts. For example, in Slovenia (according to unpublished data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia) and Sweden, where indefinite contracts are more common, around 30% of all academics work with fixed-term contracts. In Sweden this can be compared to just under 16% in the overall labour market. This higher share is partly due to regulations and collective agreements requiring certain academic positions to be fixed-term.

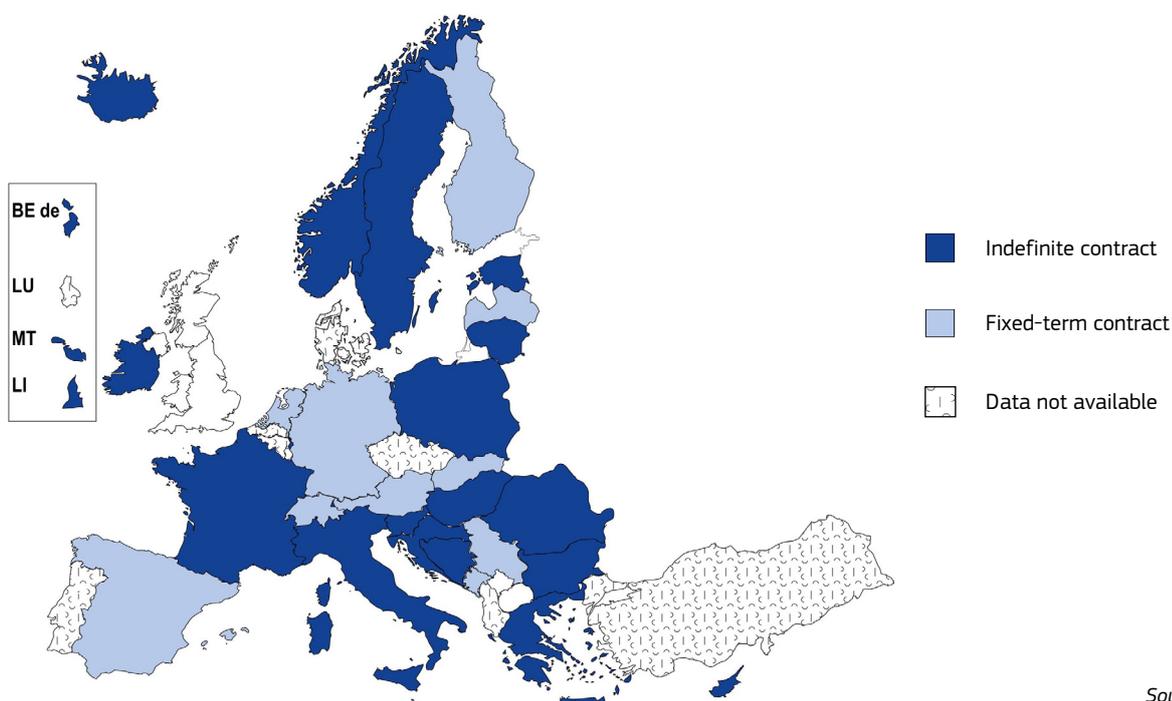
⁽¹⁴⁾ For Spain and Finland, the figure does not consider all higher education institutions and/or programmes (see the country-specific notes).

The cluster of countries where fixed-term contracts dominate also covers a variety of situations. In Spain, for instance, just slightly above half of all academics delivering programmes at ISCED levels 6-8 work with a fixed-term contract, while almost half have an indefinite contract ⁽¹⁵⁾. The situation is very similar in Serbia. In contrast, in Latvia, where indefinite contracts for professors were introduced only in 2020, there were only 30 professors in 2024 with tenure contracts, out of

around 5 000 full-time academic staff (according to indicative data available to the Ministry of Education and Science).

Finally, one important message emerging from the figure is that consolidated system-level data on contracts of academic staff are often unavailable at the country level (more than a fifth of the countries investigated were unable to supply this type of information).

Figure 4: The more common type of contract for academic staff, ISCED 6 – 8, 2024/2025



Source: Eurydice.

Explanatory notes

For the definition of 'indefinite contract' and 'fixed-term contract', see the Glossary.

When considering the 'more common type of contract for academic staff', the figure considers the 50% threshold.

Both system-level statistics and estimates are considered in the figure.

Country-specific notes

Spain. The figure only considers staff working in institutions delivering programmes at ISCED levels 6–8 (i.e. the three main cycles of higher education). When it comes to programmes at ISCED level 5 (i.e. the short cycle), most staff are civil servants with indefinite contracts.

Finland: The figure shows the situation for staff delivering programmes at universities. However, at universities of applied sciences, indefinite contracts dominate. Considering the whole higher education sector, the share of indefinite and fixed-term contracts is quite even.

France: The most common type of employment for academic staff is indefinite/permanent employment, which includes both tenured civil servant positions and public employees with indefinite contracts.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Based on statistical data on university staff .

Final notes

The figures and analysis in this section have highlighted some notable differences between European higher education systems in matters related to the academic profession. They have, for example, demonstrated that higher education systems differ in terms of academic employer relations. Moreover, there are differences not only between the systems, but also within the systems. This goes hand in hand with the fact that higher education systems sometimes consist of several (sub)sectors (e.g. universities and universities of applied sciences;

institutions providing short-cycle higher education and institutions providing other higher education programmes), each characterised by specific employment and/or career arrangements. Additionally, academics within the same (sub)sector are not a homogeneous group: they commonly belong to different ranks and categories, each characterised by distinct employment conditions. These differentiations are relevant to bear in mind with regard to the nature of the strategies, reforms and policy initiatives examined in the second part of the paper.

Part 2: Strategies, reforms and recent developments

The first part of this paper highlighted major policy developments at the international level that may affect academic staff. It also provided a comparative analysis of current structures regarding the employment of academic staff and their careers. This part now examines developments in recent years at the national level that also affect the current situation.

It begins by examining strategies currently being implemented that have an impact on academic staff. These may be strategies focusing directly on academic staff, or strategies with a broader focus but still affecting academic staff. The section considers the different types of strategies that are to be found and then examines the most frequently occurring thematic issues addressed within them.

The section then considers reforms that have been adopted in the last five years. Reforms are understood as a policy change introduced at the administrative level. They may have a narrower scope than a top-level strategy but could have a significant impact on some or all academic staff.

Finally there is a section on other top-level policy initiatives that are not considered by participating countries to be strategies or reforms, but that still have a significant impact on academic staff.

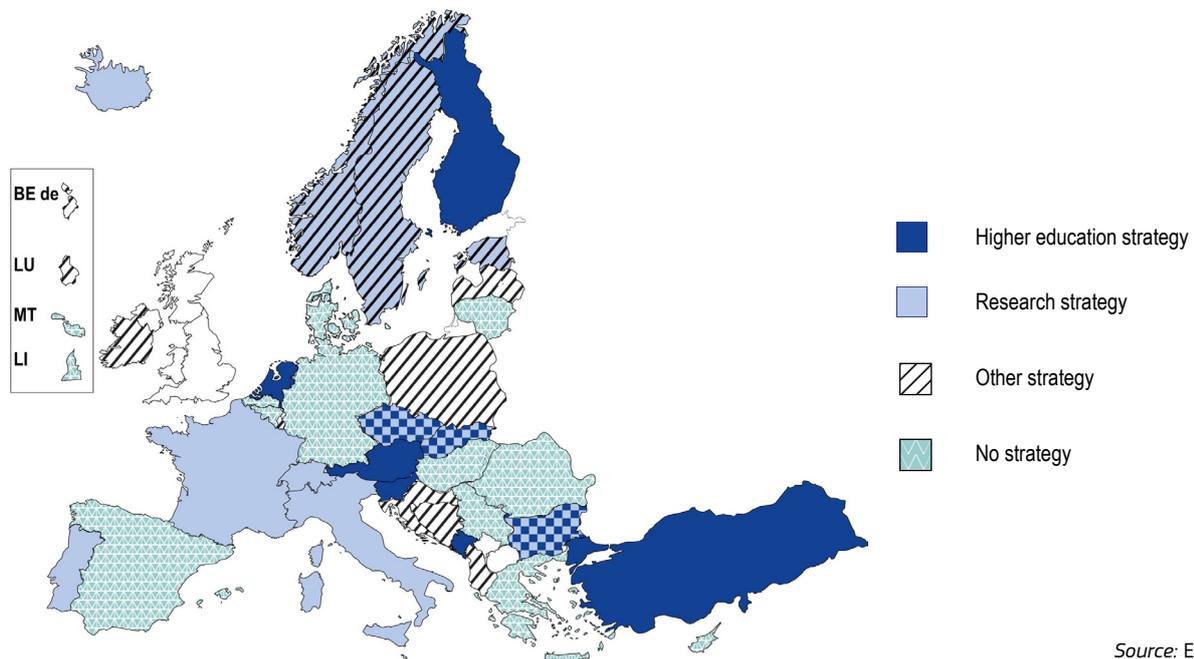
2.1. Strategies

This report gathered information on whether any strategies have been put in place in recent years that have an impact on academic staff.

Countries were invited to submit a maximum of three strategies for consideration. The concept of 'strategy' refers to an official policy document developed by top-level authorities to achieve an overall policy goal. It comprises various elements such as a vision, objectives and goals (qualitative and quantitative), and outlines measures and processes that will be undertaken to reach its objectives, including funding sources. The notion of strategy is therefore rather broad and potentially covers many inter-related areas. Although a strategy may refer to a specific document bearing the term 'strategy' in its title, it may also refer to other policy documents that describe a major policy plan but do not use the term 'strategy'.

Figure 5 shows the countries that have one or more top-level strategies that meet the criteria mentioned above. Only ongoing top-level strategies that are in operation during the 2024/2025 academic year have been considered, and the analysis therefore excludes strategies that may be under development or awaiting adoption. The strategies have been categorised as 'higher education strategies' when they primarily focus on higher education system development (which may also include other missions of higher education such as research and community engagement), 'research strategies' when they focus on the development of research capacity, and 'other' when they are primarily developed to address another societal challenge. These other strategies therefore comprise a range of key issues. References to the strategies are provided in Annex 1.

Figure 5: Existence and focus of top-level strategies affecting academic staff, 2024/2025



Source: Eurydice.

There are twice as many systems that have an ongoing top-level strategy in place compared to those where there is no current top-level strategy affecting academic staff. Among the countries that have adopted at least one strategy, there are both commonalities and differences, and several types of strategies can be distinguished.

2.1.1. Higher education strategies

A first group of nine countries, comprising Austria, Bulgaria, Czechia, Finland, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia and Türkiye, have higher education strategies in place. Their aim is to guide the development of the higher education sector in response to evolving societal challenges. For most of these countries (Bulgaria, Czechia, Austria, Slovenia and Finland), the strategy has a time frame for implementation that lasts through the decade until 2030, while in the Netherlands the strategy is considered structural or indefinite.

Montenegro, Slovakia and Türkiye aim to implement their strategies by 2028.

These strategies may address some academic staff issues directly and others more indirectly when they relate to other objectives in the higher education sector. Among the examples where academic staff issues are addressed directly, Austria's strategy aims at making higher education institutions more attractive to top academics by improving working conditions, including staff–student ratios and opportunities for mobility. Slovenia's strategy also mentions improving working conditions for academic staff, but this time as a part of the wider objective to improve the overall quality of teaching and research in the higher education sector.

A more indirect approach can be found in Montenegro's strategy, which also has a strong concern for quality, but focuses more on aligning the system with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* ⁽¹⁶⁾. In

⁽¹⁶⁾ European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, European Students' Union, European University Association and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education, *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*, 2015, Brussels, https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf.

Türkiye, the outlook towards academic staff is more instrumental, as academic staff are considered the central driver for increasing the status and reputation of Turkish higher education institutions in international rankings.

Czechia's plan for higher education emphasises management, research and system development, but also focuses on academic staff well-being, and the reduction of the administrative burden on academic staff.

2.1.2. Research strategies

Eleven countries – Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, France, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden and Switzerland – have strategies on research and researchers. Through these strategies, these countries address research careers, with some focusing particularly on postdoctoral recruitment. In Portugal, the strategy focuses particularly on the working conditions of researchers and aims at fostering a fixed and fair time frame for researcher employment. It was recently (14 March 2025) complemented by the adoption of a revision of the Scientific Research Career Statute.

These strategies also focus on excellence, international collaboration and integration into European education and research networks and, in the case of Iceland, on the conduct of research in accordance with good scientific practices, thereby enhancing the credibility of scientific work and research in society. Iceland has also adopted a resolution on strategic measures to support the development of a knowledge society that emphasises the role of universities as centres of research.

France, Italy, Portugal and Switzerland all have a specific part of their strategy focused on junior academic staff. France is opening up around 300 junior researcher positions per year with additional national funding. Italy is introducing a new category of fixed-term two-year research contracts, renewable once. Portugal is also introducing research contracts for early-career academic staff to provide more

stable employment and replace scholarships, and Switzerland is expanding permanent contract positions for postdoctoral academic staff.

While these strategies have wide-ranging objectives in relation to the research landscape, they do not include all roles performed by academic staff. In particular they lack attention to academic staff who are primarily engaged in teaching.

2.1.3. Other strategies

Education system development

Several systems (Belgium – German-speaking Community, Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, Poland and Albania) have adopted strategies for education system development as a whole, which include higher education and therefore contain measures that have an impact on academic staff.

In 2020, Poland adopted an integrated skills strategy that covers the entire education and training system, and is designed to guide developments in the system for a decade. A key aspect of this strategy for academic staff is the enhancement of essential competencies, particularly through the expansion of in-service training for teaching and learning personnel in several areas, including academic didactics, non-formal education and the development of teaching and methodological skills tailored to audiences beyond traditional students.

The German speaking Community of Belgium, a system with only one higher education institution, reports a general education development strategy setting out a vision for its education system, designed to guide policy development until 2040. This strategy has a focus on recruitment policies that also concerns academic staff. Estonia also cites a general education strategy that covers broad educational objectives extending to higher education. Latvia also has a broad education strategy aiming to provide education and skills

for the labour market, and hence considering academic staff needs to meet this challenge. Albania also has a broad strategy on education, which includes objectives for higher education related to internationalisation, gender equity, academic freedom, quality and the labour market relevance of qualifications.

Serbia also has a general education strategy lasting until 2030 with objectives for both the school and higher education sectors. The main common objective is to prevent the brain drain of its more educated citizens and to encourage the return of professionals living abroad. It is hoped that initiatives to improve the management of human resources and create more links at the international level, including through encouraging teaching in English, will further these objectives.

Higher education funding

Two countries, Ireland and Luxembourg, cite funding as the main motor of their strategy. Ireland focuses on sustainable funding models, reducing student-to-academic staff ratios and improving workforce planning. The Irish strategy makes explicit reference to reducing the precarious employment of academic staff, along with employing more academic staff.

Luxembourg, a small country with one university, cites the multiannual framework agreement between the government and the university as the embodiment of its strategy. Here, the main focus is on recruiting female professors to promote gender equity, with a target set that at least 30 % of academic staff should be female by 2025.

Digital transformation

Norway reports a strategy that aims at digital transformation in the higher education sector. This strategy has implications for the training and skills development of academic staff, although it does not directly affect working conditions or academic staff careers.

Social policy

Czechia, Latvia, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Sweden and Albania have strategies developed to address broad social policy objectives. Czechia and Sweden have strategies on gender equity. Sweden also has strategies that concern science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and global competitiveness, while in Slovakia the focus is on internationalisation. The Netherlands, in addition to having a strategy on diversity and inclusion, reports a strategy on social safety in higher education institutions.

Societal development

Bosnia and Herzegovina reports two strategies. The first covers the Republic of Srpska and aims to develop science and technology, higher education and an information society. The second is a national development strategy for the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina which includes some aspects relevant for higher education academic staff.

2.1.4. Quantitative targets

Very few countries identify quantitative targets in relation to their strategic policy objectives for academic staff. Latvia is an exception, with a target of ensuring that the proportion of academic staff working full time in higher education institutions increases from under 20 % (17.8 % in 2018) to 50 % in 2027, with wages also planned to increase significantly during this period. Czechia, Luxembourg and Austria also set quantitative targets for gender-equity objectives. In Austria, the main aim is to increase the share of women in leading positions in higher education institutions such as rectors, heads of departments and professors, while in Czechia there are targets for women in research and in all academic positions.

Within its strategy Serbia sets out annual year on year targets related to continuous

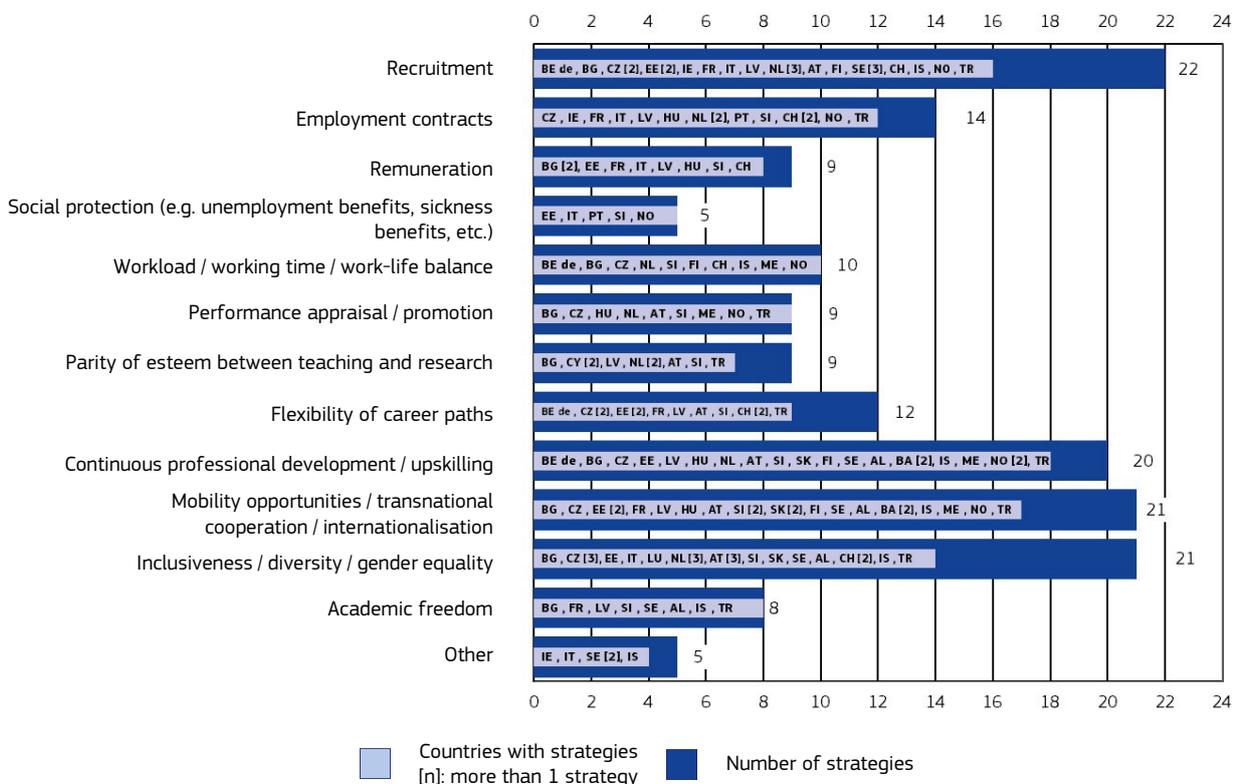
professional development, innovation and technology transfer and mobility funding.

2.2. Main issues addressed by strategies

While the strategies reported by the various countries can be categorised in relation to their main thematic focus, several recurrent issues can be found in different strategies. Figure 6

presents a list of issues derived from the objectives set out in the 2024 Council Recommendation on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education (European Commission, 2024). Countries reported whether or not these topics featured in each strategy, and the frequency can be observed in the figure. Annex 2 also provides the distribution of these issues by system, ie the frequency of a specific issue appearing in at least one strategy in a system.

Figure 6: Issues addressed in top-level strategies, 2024/2025



Source: Eurydice.

An analysis of the issues cited by the countries reveals an interesting pattern of key topics. Among the various topics identified as features of the European and international debate, five stand out as the most pressing issues addressed in top-level strategies.

1. Recruitment

Recruitment is a major concern in 22 strategies adopted in 16 countries. This reflects the countries' wish to attract and retain talent in their academic system. Several strategies point to the aim of increasing international recruitment.

Czechia has a concrete measure related to this. It will change selection procedures at higher education institutions that claim a label of research-oriented universities to ensure that employment opportunities are advertised internationally and that selection is held in English or another widely spoken language.

2. Inclusiveness, diversity and gender equity.

These three linked issues feature as frequently as recruitment in national

strategies. Many systems embed equity objectives – promoting equal opportunities and diversity – in the broader context of academic staff well-being and the improvement of professional development opportunities. This finding suggests that there is a broad trend for higher education institutions to focus on creating a more diverse and welcoming environment not only for students but also for staff.

3. **Mobility and internationalisation.**

Mobility and internationalisation also appear frequently in strategies. Most systems encourage participation in European projects and networks while also underscoring the growing importance of global collaboration and exchange in academia. Where countries mention financial measures to support mobility, it is usually in the form of supporting existing schemes. For example, Czechia mentions support for outgoing staff mobility through scholarships, and Slovakia focuses on supporting academic staff wishing to take a sabbatical period abroad.

4. **Continuous professional development.**

This is another critical area, featuring in 20 national strategies. This responds to the reality of a fast-evolving academic landscape, with a need to support staff in upskilling and reskilling.

5. **Employment contracts.**

Many countries and institutions face challenges in creating the best conditions for academia to flourish, and with the increasing development of different forms of contractual engagement in all areas of society, it is not surprising that employment contracts are a common feature of top-level strategies.

It is important to point out that the topics listed above as recurrent areas of attention within top-level strategies are not isolated pillars but inter-sectional issues. For example, when inclusiveness, diversity and gender equity are a strategic concern, they will necessarily be

addressed in recruitment procedures. Similarly mobility and internationalisation may be a feature of continuous professional development opportunities, and all of these issues may have an impact on changes to employment contracts.

Other topics

Beyond these five areas, other topics merit attention. Flexibility of career paths is addressed in strategies in nine systems, and this is matched by the related issues of performance appraisal and promotion as well as parity of esteem between teaching and research. Remuneration, workload, and work/life balance are also tackled in several strategies.

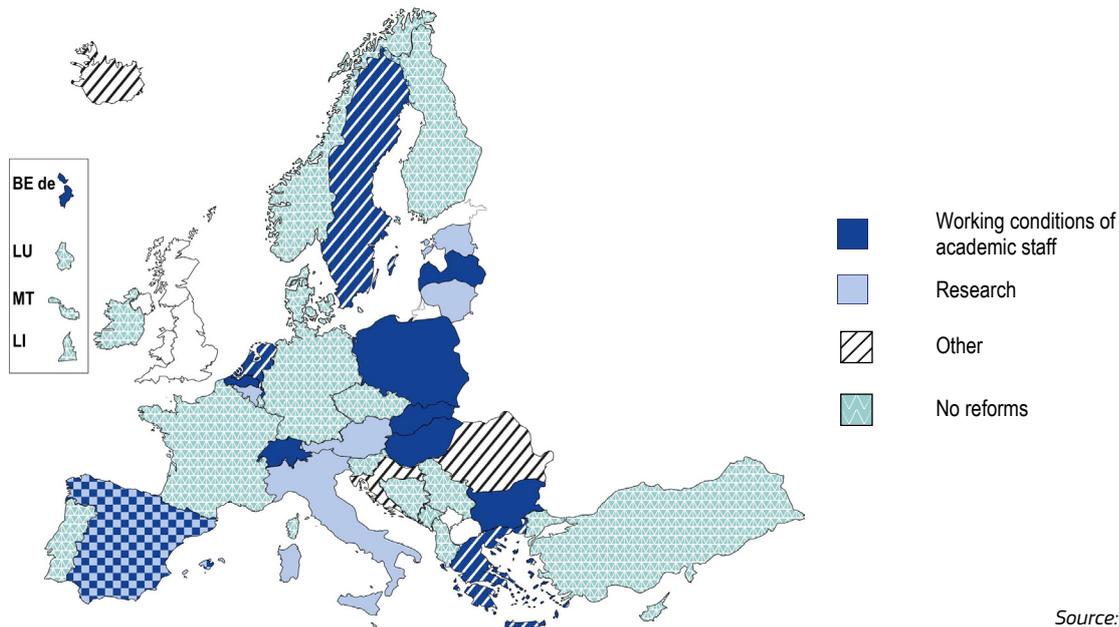
Academic freedom, a topic that has become a frequently discussed policy concern in recent years features in seven national strategies. Finally, social protection, including unemployment and sickness benefits features in five national strategies.

The countries that identified “other” issues of attention in their strategies pointed to disparate elements. For example, Iceland highlights ethical conduct and good scientific practices as issues receiving strategic attention, while Sweden has a particular focus on migration rules for foreign doctoral candidates.

2.3. Reforms

In addition to strategies, this project gathered information on reforms that have been introduced during the past five years that have an impact on academic staff. The notion of ‘reform’ has been defined as an important policy change introduced at the administrative level. It is aimed at a specific issue, and the intention may be to correct or improve existing practices. It may thus introduce significant change in a particular area or concerning a particular category of staff. Countries were able to report a maximum of three reforms. A list of reforms can be found in Annex 1.

Figure 7: Top-level reforms affecting academic staff during the past five years, and main issues addressed 2024/2025



Source: Eurydice.

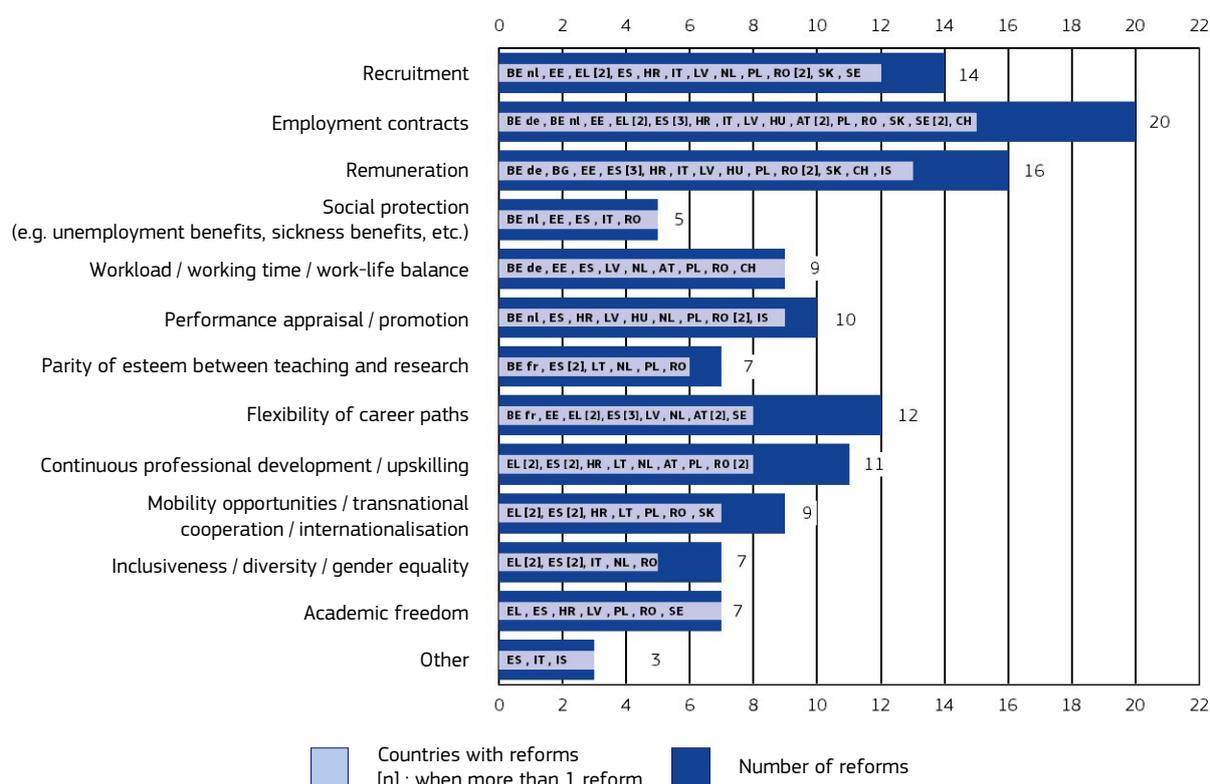
Half of the higher education systems reported that at least one reform has been implemented during the past five years.

In 12 systems, a reform has had a direct impact on the working conditions of academic staff. In some cases (Belgium – Flemish Community, Greece and Slovakia), the reform gives more responsibility to higher education institutions for the recruitment and management of academic staff. In Belgium’s German-speaking Community, Bulgaria, Spain, Hungary, Poland and Switzerland, the employment conditions for all or some categories of academic staff are affected by the reform. In Latvia, the focus is on creating a new academic career framework, including a predictable tenure model for academic careers.

In six systems – Belgium’s French Community, Estonia, Spain, Italy, Lithuania and Austria – reforms have addressed some aspect of research policy.

Five systems have implemented reforms on other topics. Higher education funding was addressed in Croatia and Iceland, with Croatia having reforms related not only to the funding of the higher education system but also to a comprehensive reform of the civil service and public wage system that affected academic staff as well. Romania has introduced a reform of its teacher training system. Greece and Sweden have both introduced legal clarifications on the issue of academic freedom.

The most frequently occurring topics within these reforms are displayed in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8: Issues addressed in top-level reforms, 2024/2025

Source: Eurydice.

Reforms of working conditions

Several systems have introduced reforms that impact employment contracts and careers. Indeed, 20 reforms address employment contracts, with 16 dealing with remuneration and 14 having a focus on recruitment. This pattern is mirrored by the number of systems where a reform has taken place, with 15 systems having at least one reform related to employment contracts, 13 dealing with remuneration and 12 focusing on recruitment (see also Annex 2, Table 2.2).

Latvia is in the process of developing a new academic career framework that aims to strengthen the role of full-time staff and limit precarious employment. It also envisages reforming academic appointments based on election procedures in line with best international practice, and facilitating mobility and internationalisation. While measures have been developed and piloted, the reforms should be embedded in legislation by 2027.

In Hungary, academic staff have been greatly affected by government measures that in 2021 changed the status of higher education institutions from state-owned institutions to private institutions run by trust funds. This reform has had a major impact on the organisation of higher education, and for academic staff it means that new employment contracts have been introduced, governed by labour law. The government has provided funding for increased remuneration, and, within this reform, both academic staff and institutions are now evaluated through a new performance appraisal system. In addition to this, an innovation strategy has been established to link universities, research institutions and regional stakeholders. This includes financial support for researcher recruitment.

Poland has also restructured academic employment contracts through legislation introduced in 2018. This legislation ensures that academic employment is only possible based on an employment contract, and that indefinite employment under a second contract can be

implemented without a competition. The legislation also defines three different categories of academic employees – teaching employees, research employees and teaching and research employees.

Romania has also introduced legislation that clarifies the status of academic staff and covers issues related to duties and functions, along with setting in place evaluation requirements to ensure the quality of staff activities.

More limited reforms were introduced in Italy in 2022, where the focus has been on creating a new profile of tenure-track researcher. Slovakia has also modified the conditions of employment contracts for professors and associate professors, in addition to introducing a legal amendment to encourage mobility.

Austria is addressing its staffing challenges by limiting the number of fixed-term contracts at universities through performance agreements between the government and the universities.

Training and professional development

Flexibility in career paths and continuous professional development are issues tackled in 12 and 11 top-level reforms, respectively. This suggests that, although the number of reforms is significant, less attention is being given to these issues than to the topics of contracts and working conditions.

Romania has introduced a reform related to the training of teaching staff. A didactic master's programme qualification is now required to teach and indeed will be the only recruitment route for teaching staff after graduating with a bachelor's degree in a particular specialisation. This teaching master's is currently in the pilot phase and is being implemented by the eight major universities in Romania.

Austria has also introduced a reform that concerns university colleges of teacher education and focuses on research cooperation with universities. The intention is to make

university colleges of teacher education more academically focused, with closer links to the university sector. Austria has also set a goal to increase the proportion of women in professorships or career positions through a cascade model in performance agreements, aiming to achieve this target between 2025 and 2027.

Academic staff appraisal and quality assurance

Performance appraisal is mentioned as a focus of 11 system-level reforms implemented in 9 higher education systems. Notably, reforms introduced in the Netherlands, Poland and Iceland aim to promote parity of esteem between teaching and research, along with evaluating academic staff performance. For instance, in the Netherlands, a 'recognition and rewards' programme has been introduced, which aims to reform research assessment and promote parity of esteem between teaching, research, impact and leadership. The programme was initiated by higher education and research institutions in 2020 and received government support and funding in 2022.

In Poland, regulations have introduced three distinct employee groups under which academic staff are employed, along with the responsibilities assigned to each group: the first group focuses primarily on teaching, the second primarily on research and the third on both teaching and research. Meanwhile, in Iceland, the evaluation system for public higher education institutions was revised in 2022 and now forms the basis for the annual performance evaluations of academic staff.

Academic freedom and autonomy

Six systems point to reforms that focus on strengthening academic freedom and autonomy. In Sweden, a clarification on academic freedom was introduced in the Higher Education Act in 2020, highlighting the importance of promoting and safeguarding this fundamental principle. Similarly, in Greece, a

change was made to strengthen the protection of academic freedom.

Internationalisation and mobility

Internationalisation and mobility are more frequently cited as priorities of system-level strategies rather than elements addressed by reforms. Nevertheless, some countries have been implementing specific initiatives to promote internationalisation, mobility and diversity in higher education. In Croatia, multi-year funding for public higher education institutions from the state budget, introduced in 2022, enables, among other measures, the planning and support of internationalisation and mobility activities, providing resources for international conferences, exhibitions and mobility opportunities for teachers and associates. Latvia's new academic career framework also prioritises internationalisation and mobility, in addition to addressing obstacles to mobility.

Other topics

Three systems mention new funding models to support higher education institutions. In Croatia, a significant step was taken in 2022 with the introduction of a programme agreement that provides multi-year funding for public higher education institutions and scientific institutes, offering a stable financial foundation for these organisations. Similarly, in Iceland, a new performance-based funding model for universities was introduced in 2022. This allocates funding into three distinct categories – teaching, research and social role/impact – aiming at more nuanced and targeted resource allocation. In the French Community of Belgium, a reform has been adopted that gives staff in university colleges or universities of applied science the opportunity to dedicate part of their working time to research activities for which external funding has been secured. The institutions are able to employ other individuals to take over teaching activities for the duration of the research. Prior to this reform, there was a

budgetary mechanism to enable such research to take place.

2.4. Other policy initiatives

Countries were also asked to report other top-level initiatives that are in place (in addition to strategies and reforms). While only a few countries mentioned such initiatives, in some cases they reveal a significant policy approach.

Germany is an interesting case, as top-level strategies and reforms are more difficult to establish when competence is shared between the federal government and the *Länder* [federal states]. However, the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space ('Bundesministerium für Forschung, Technologie und Raumfahrt') and the *Länder* cooperate on a programme to support early career academics. This programme has been endowed with EUR 1 billion, and aims to enhance transparency and predictability of career paths for up-and-coming academics at German universities. The Tenure Track Programme aims to improve the international appeal of the German scientific system and to help universities attract and retain talented junior scientists from home and abroad. This is done primarily by establishing the tenure-track professorship as an independent career path alongside the conventional appointment procedure for a tenured professorship at German universities.

In parallel, a structurally oriented 'programme for women professors' (*Professorinnenprogramm*) aims to promote gender equality in higher education institutions. The programme was established in 2008 and is now in a fourth phase leading up to 2030. It increases the number of female professors at German higher education institutions towards parity and strengthens institutional gender equality structures through specific measures. The objectives therefore mirror those in other national systems that have gender equity strategies or reforms - increasing the proportion of women professors and women scientists at

all academic levels, promoting the career of (young) female scientists, increasing the predictability of scientific career paths, and changing organisational culture towards gender-equality.

Other countries also report interesting initiatives. Sweden is concerned with attracting and retaining highly qualified international experts, including researchers, and has instructed agencies to collaborate on how best to do this. The government has also launched an investigation into the impact of administrative tasks on higher education institutions, with the goal of streamlining. It has also launched an initiative on improving STEM education.

In Ireland, there is an ongoing consultation on a possible reform to academic staffing structures in technological universities. This project was initiated through an OECD review commissioned by Ireland's Higher Education Authority and Department for Further and Higher Education, Research and Innovation⁽¹⁷⁾. The OECD was asked to identify higher education institutions from other OECD countries that can provide insights for the development of Ireland's technological universities.

Ireland also introduced a positive action initiative, the 'senior academic leadership initiative' in 2019. It aims to help achieve gender equality in the higher education sector through the creation of new and additional senior academic posts. These posts target the senior academic leadership level – professors in universities and senior lecturers in the technological sector.

Spain reports several programmes targeting younger academic staff. The Maria Goyri programme, which runs until 2030 focuses on increasing the number of PhD assistant professors and thus rejuvenating the academic profession. The Beatriz Galindo grant scheme, started in 2017 and still running, aims to attract talented researchers and teachers currently in

foreign research centres or universities, while the José Castillejo grants encourage junior academic staff to be mobile while maintaining their status at their home institution.

Iceland has an initiative that encourages cooperation between Icelandic universities. Funding of EUR 2.5 million supports projects that involve at least two universities and that make use of common infrastructure to strengthen teaching, research or administration. Although the impact on academic staff may be indirect, the initiative may positively affect the culture of collaboration in the system.

Switzerland mentions a report, "For equal opportunities and the promotion of young academics" commissioned by the Parliament to examine issues of precariousness and gender equality facing young academics. Austria and France also have initiatives to address gender equality, with Austria aiming to increase the proportion of women in professorships and tenure track careers.

Final notes

Overall, the findings reveal a high number of measures being undertaken to address academic staff issues: The majority of countries have top-level strategies in place affecting academic staff, with higher education and research strategies being the most widespread. Around a quarter of the countries have a top-level strategy that has its main focus on another issue that also impacts academic staff. Recruitment, inclusiveness, mobility, continuous professional development and employment contracts are the key issues most often addressed by these national strategies. These issues are interconnected and often addressed in conjunction with one another.

More targeted reforms have been introduced in around half of the higher education systems in the past five years, most notably to improve working conditions, employment contracts, and

⁽¹⁷⁾ OECD, 'A review of technological university academic career paths, contracts and organisation in Ireland', *OECD Education Policy Perspectives*, No 64, 2022, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/2b7ee217-en>.

career development opportunities for academic staff. Academic freedom is also being strengthened in some countries.

Where strategies and reforms are absent, other programmes may have been developed to address issues faced by academic staff.

Germany is among these countries and has developed several policy initiatives to support early career academics and to promote gender equity in higher education institutions.

Only four countries (Denmark, Malta, Liechtenstein and Serbia) report that, during the past five years, there have not been any top-level strategies affecting academic staff, nor

any reforms or other top-level initiatives. While this apparent lack of top-level measures may imply a situation of equilibrium, it could also suggest that issues affecting academic staff are not being identified and addressed.

However, in Denmark, the situation may be impacted by the level of autonomy and self governance enjoyed by universities and higher education institutions, with academic staff salaries and conditions regulated by collective agreements, and stable frameworks for institutions set by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science.

Conclusion

This short report has analysed the current state of policies and actions to address issues affecting academic staff in Europe, acknowledging the complexities and differences between national systems. It identifies several interconnected factors that shape academic staff policy, as well as key international developments and trends that also have a significant impact. The report examines the contractual arrangements linked to employment by higher education institutions or public authorities, emphasising the need for a nuanced understanding of the academic profession and its role in shaping European higher education. Furthermore, it focuses on recent developments in national policies affecting academic staff, analysing the main issues addressed by policy actions, including recruitment, working conditions, inclusiveness, diversity, and gender equity, mobility and continuous professional development.

The report highlights some notable differences between European higher education systems regarding the academic profession. The frameworks governing relationships between academic staff and employers vary not only between systems, but also within them. This is often linked to the institutional types or sub-sectors that may exist (e.g. universities and universities of applied sciences; institutions providing short-cycle higher education and institutions providing other higher education programmes). Each of these institutions or sub-sectors may have specific employment and/or career arrangements. Moreover, academics within the same (sub)sector are not a homogeneous group, but commonly belong to different ranks and categories, each characterised by distinct employment conditions.

The report reveals a significant number of measures being undertaken around Europe to address academic staff issues: The majority of countries have top-level strategies in place affecting academic staff, with higher education strategies and research strategies being the most common. Approximately a quarter of the countries have a top-level strategy that focuses on another thematic issue that also impacts academic staff. National strategies frequently address recruitment, inclusiveness, mobility, continuous professional development and employment contracts which are often interconnected and tackled in conjunction with one another.

In addition to these strategies, targeted reforms have been introduced in around half of the higher education systems in the past five years, aiming to improve working conditions, employment contracts, and career development opportunities for academic staff. Academic freedom is also being strengthened in some countries. In the absence of strategies and reforms, some higher education systems have implemented programmes or other initiatives to address issues faced by academic staff. However, a small minority of systems report no strategies, reforms or initiatives. This may indicate a lack of policy inattention to academic staff or reflect the high level of autonomy enjoyed by higher education institutions.

Overall, the report provides an overview of policies aimed at addressing academic staff issues in Europe, highlighting the complexities and differences between national systems. It reinforces the need for a nuanced understanding of the academic profession and its role in shaping European higher education and underscores the importance of monitoring and evaluating policy actions to ensure that they effectively address the needs of academic staff.

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Glossary

Academic staff: refers to personnel employed at the tertiary level of education whose primary assignment is teaching or research in institutions offering programmes at International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels 5 to 8. Beyond their primary assignments, academic staff can take on additional roles in management, support, administration, external engagement, or service (OECD, 2024).

The concept of academic staff excludes:

- professional administrators in positions unrelated to academic tasks, such as legal or communication functions;
- professionals working in areas related to academic tasks but with no direct engagement in them, such as writing research grant proposals or developing curriculum;
- higher education professionals, including those with extensive knowledge of higher education and other relevant policy, working in human resources or student affairs (ibid.).

In addition to the above, the concept also excludes personnel working in ISCED level 5 programmes, when these programmes are not regarded as part of the higher education system (in contrast, personnel working in ISCED 5 programmes that are regarded as part of the higher education system are included).

PhD candidates are included only if their status complies with the above definition of academic staff.

Only academic staff working in 'Public higher education institutions' (see the related term) are considered.

Fixed-term contract: contract that expires at the end of the period specified.

Government (or another system-level authority): in relation to the employment of academic staff, it generally refers to the state, but it can also be a public authority at a lower level (e.g. region/canton, Land, Autonomous Community, etc.).

Indefinite contract: contract for an indefinite period of time. This concept includes permanent contracts as well as contracts without permanent guarantee, but with no predefined term. This type of contract may also be referred to as 'open-ended contract'.

Private higher education institutions: licensed higher education institutions that receive less than 50% of their core funding from public sources. This report does not cover private higher education institutions.

Public higher education institutions: higher education institutions directly or indirectly administered by a public education authority. Public higher education institutions thus include two categories of institution: 'public institution', i.e. an institution directly managed by a government agency/authority or by a governing body, most of whose members are either appointed by a public authority or elected by

public franchise, and 'government-dependent private higher education institution', i.e. an institution controlled/managed by a non-governmental organisation or where the governing board consists of members not selected by a public agency but receiving 50 percent or more of its core funding from government agencies or whose teaching personnel are paid by a government agency – either directly or through government.

Reform (policy reform): important policy change introduced at administrative level. Reforms can be at various stages, including:

- proposed by government and under consultation with stakeholders and/or parliamentary discussion;
- adopted by the parliament or policy making bodies;
- implemented.

Strategy (or other major policy plan): an official policy document developed by the top-level authorities in an effort to achieve an overall goal. A strategy can comprise a vision, identify objectives and goals (qualitative and quantitative), describe processes, authorities, and people in charge, identify funding sources, make recommendations, etc. Depending on the particular education system, a strategy may refer to a specific document bearing the term 'strategy', but it may refer also to a document (or documents) that describe a major policy plan equivalent to a strategy without, however, bearing the title 'strategy'.

Top level or top-level authorities: the highest level of authority with responsibility for education in a given country, usually located at national (state) level. However, for Belgium, Germany and Spain, the Communautés, Länder, and Comunidades Autónomas respectively are either wholly responsible or share responsibilities with the state level for all or most areas relating to education. Therefore, these administrations are considered as the top-level authority for the areas where they hold the responsibility, while for those areas for which they share the responsibility with the national (state) level, both are considered to be top-level authorities.

Annexes

Annex 1: Strategies, reforms and other top-level policy initiatives, 2024/2025

1. Top-level strategies

1.1. Higher education strategies

Austria

Title: Der Österreichische Hochschulplan 2030

Title in English: The Austrian Higher Education Plan 2030

Adopted by: Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, 2023

Time frame: 2023–2030

Reference: https://www.bmfwf.gv.at/dam/jcr:b70124d9-be81-407f-b72b-0fa55c064f36/Final_Brosch%C3%BCre_Hochschulplan_A4_BF.pdf

Bulgaria

Title: Стратегия за развитие на висшето образование в Република България за периода 2021–2030 г.

Title in English: Strategy for the development of higher education in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2021–2030

Adopted by: Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2021

Time frame: 2021–2030

Reference: <https://www.mon.bg/mon/strategii-i-politiki/strategicheski-dokumenti-2/>

Czechia

Title: Strategický záměr ministerstva pro oblast vysokých škol od roku 2021

Title in English: Strategic plan of the Ministry for Higher Education for the period from 2021 to 2030

Adopted by: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2021

Time frame: 2021–2030

Reference: <https://msmt.gov.cz/vzdelavani/vysoke-skolstvi/strategicky-zamer>

Finland

Title: Korkeakoulutus ja tutkimus 2030-luvulle: vision tiekartta

Title in English: Higher education and research until the 2030s: Roadmap for implementing our vision

Adopted by: Ministry of Education and Culture, 2019

Time frame: 2019–2030

Reference: <https://okm.fi/en/vision-2030> (in English); <https://okm.fi/-/korkeakouluvision-tiekartta-ja-kehittamisohjelmat-julkistettiin> (in Finnish)

Montenegro

Title: Strategija razvoja visokog obrazovanja Crne Gore 2024–2027

Title in English: Higher education development strategy of Montenegro 2024–2027

Adopted by: Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation of Montenegro, 2024

Time frame: 2024–2027

Reference: <https://www.gov.me/clanak/strategija-visokog-obrazovanja>

Netherlands

Title: Sectorplannen wetenschappelijk onderwijs en onderzoek

Title in English: Sector plans academic education and research

Adopted by: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2022

Time frame: Indefinite

Reference: <https://www.nlsectorplannen.nl/>

Slovakia

Title: Dlhodobý zámer vo vzdelávacej, výskumnej, vývojovej, umeleckej a ďalšej tvorivej činnosti pre oblasť vysokých škôl na roky 2023–2028

Title in English: Long-term intention in education, research, development, arts and other creative activities for the area of higher education institutions 2023 - 2028

Adopted by: Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth, 2023

Time frame: 2023–2028

Reference: <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/95e/27269.29823a.pdf>

Slovenia

Title: Resolucija o nacionalnem programu visokega šolstva do 2030 (ReNPVŠ30)

Title in English: Resolution on the National Programme of Higher Education to 2030

Adopted by: Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, 2022

Time frame: 2022–2030

Reference: <https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MIZS/Dokumenti/Visoko-solstvo/NPVS2030/MIZS-NPVS-2030-210x260mm-EN-PRESS.pdf>

Türkiye

Title: Yükseköğretim Kurulu 2024–2028 Stratejik Planı

Title in English: Board of Higher Education strategic plan 2024–2028

Adopted by: Turkish Council of Higher Education (YÖK), 2023

Time frame: 2024–2028

Reference: [Kamuda Stratejik Yönetim |](#)

1.2. Research strategies

Bulgaria

Title: Национална стратегия за развитие на научните изследвания в Република България

Title in English: National strategy for the development of scientific research in the Republic of Bulgaria

Adopted by: Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2017

Time frame: 2017–2030

Reference: <https://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=1594>

Czechia

Title: Národní politika výzkumu, vývoje a inovací České republiky 2021

Title in English: National research, development and innovation policy of the Czech Republic 2021

Adopted by: Government of the Czech Republic

Time frame: 2021 onwards

Reference: [Národní politika výzkumu, vývoje a inovací České republiky 2021+ | Výzkum a vývoj v ČR](#)

Estonia

Title: Teadus- ja arendustegevuse, innovatsiooni ning ettevõtlike arengukava

Title in English: Estonian research and development, innovation and entrepreneurship strategy

Adopted by: Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, 2021

Time frame: 2021–2035

Reference: https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2022-10/haridusvaldkonna_arengukava_2035_kinnitaud_vv_eng_0.pdf

France

Title: Loi de programmation de la recherche (LPR)

Title in English: Research Programming Act

Adopted by: Ministry of Higher Education and Research, 2020

Time frame: 2021–2030

Reference: <https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/fr/loi-de-programmation-de-la-recherche-pour-les-annees-2021-2030-49733>; for the junior professor chairs: <https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/fr/des-carrieres-plus-attractives-les-chaieres-de-professeur-junior-46095>

Iceland

1. Title: Lög um vandaða starfshætti í vísindum

Title in English: Act on Good Scientific Practices

Adopted by: Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, 2019

Time frame: Ongoing – end date not specified

Reference: <https://www.althingi.is/altext/149/s/1782.html>

2. Title: Þingsályktun um stefnumótandi aðgerðir til eflingar þekkingarsamfélagsi á Íslandi til ársins 2025

Title in English: Parliamentary resolution on strategic measures to be implemented in support of a knowledge society in Iceland until 2025

Adopted by: Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, 2023

Time frame: 2023–2025

Reference: <https://www.althingi.is/altext/154/s/0812.html>

Italy

Title: Legge 79/2022 di conversione del DL 36/2022 ('Ulteriori misure urgenti per l'attuazione del PNRR in materia di pubblica amministrazione e università')

Title in English: Law decree No 36 of 2022 converted by law No 79 of 2022 (Further urgent measures for the implementation of the national recovery and resilience plan for public administration and universities)

Adopted by: Ministry of Universities and Research, 2022

Time frame: 2022–2025

Reference: https://www.promopa.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/dl_36_legge_79_pnrr2.pdf

Norway

Title: Strategi for forskerrekuttering og karriereutvikling

Title in English: Strategy for the recruitment and career development of young researchers

Adopted by: Ministry of Education and Research, 2021

Time frame: 2021–2030

Reference: <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/f14b4981c2f549489941bc607cf9bc5f/strategy-for-the-recruitment-and-career-development-of-young-researchers.pdf>

Portugal

1. Title: Programa de Estimulo ao Emprego Cientifico

Title in English: Stimulus for scientific employment

Adopted by: Foundation for Science and Technology, 2017

Time frame: Unspecified

Reference: <https://www.fct.pt/en/financiamento/programas-de-financiamento/emprego-cientifico/>

2. Title: Scientific Research Career Statute (Estatuto da Carreira da Investigação Científica) – Revision

Title in English: Scientific Research Career Statute

Adopted by: Parliament, 14 March 2025

Time frame: 2025 onwards

Reference: [Final text](#)

Slovakia

Title: Národná stratégia výskumu, vývoja a inovácií 2030

Title in English: National strategy for research, development and innovation 2030

Adopted by: The Government Office, 2023

Time frame: 2023–2030

Reference:

National strategy: https://vaia.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/01_Narodna-strategia-vyskumu-vyvoja-a-inovacii_vlastny-material_V2.pdf;

Annex 1: Action plan: https://vaia.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Priloha_1_Akcny_plan_final.pdf

Sweden

Title: Forskning och innovation för framtid, nyfikenhet och nytta

Title in English: Research strategy

Adopted by: Swedish government

Time frame: 2025–2028

Reference: <https://www.government.se/reports/2024/02/strategy-for-swedens-trade-investment-and-global-competitiveness/>

Switzerland

Title: Gesamtschweizerische Hochschulpolitische Koordination 2025–2028 (Strategische Planung)

Title in English: National coordination of higher education policy 2025–2028 (Strategic planning)

Adopted by: swissuniversities, 2022

Time frame: 2025–2028

Reference:

[https://www.swissuniversities.ch/fileadmin/swissuniversities/Dokumente/Hochschulpolitik/Strategische_Planung/Koordination_2025-28 -
Planung_swissuniversities.pdf](https://www.swissuniversities.ch/fileadmin/swissuniversities/Dokumente/Hochschulpolitik/Strategische_Planung/Koordination_2025-28_-_Planung_swissuniversities.pdf)

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Title: Strategija razvoja nauke i tehnologije, visokog obrazovanja i informacionog društva u Republici Srpskoj za period 2023.–2029. godine

Title in English: Strategy for the development of science and technology, higher education and the information society in the Republic of Srpska for the period 2023–2029

Adopted by: Ministry of Scientific and Technological Development, Higher Education and Information Society of the Republic of Srpska, 2023

Time frame: 2023–2029

Reference: [https://vladars.rs/sr-SP-](https://vladars.rs/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/Ministarstva/mnk/OM/Resori/ntr/Documents/MNV%2c%20strategija%2023%20-%202029.pdf)

[Cyrl/Vlada/Ministarstva/mnk/OM/Resori/ntr/Documents/MNV %2c %20strategija %2023 %20- %2029.pdf](https://vladars.rs/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/Ministarstva/mnk/OM/Resori/ntr/Documents/MNV%2c%20strategija%2023%20-%202029.pdf)

1.3. Other strategies

Education system development strategies

Belgium: German-speaking Community

Title: Bildungsvision 2040

Title in English: Education vision 2040

Adopted by: Government of the German-speaking Community, 2024

Time frame: 2024–2040

Reference: <https://ostbelgienbildung.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-7717/>

Croatia

Title: Nacionalni plan razvoja sustava obrazovanja za razdoblje do 2027. godine

Title in English: The national plan for the development of the education system until 2027

Adopted by: Government of the Republic of Croatia

Time frame: until 2027

Reference: [https://mzom.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Obrazovanje/AkciskiilNacionalniPlan/Nacionalni-plan-razvoja-sustava-
obrazovanja-za-razdoblje-do-2027.pdf](https://mzom.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Obrazovanje/AkciskiilNacionalniPlan/Nacionalni-plan-razvoja-sustava-obrazovanja-za-razdoblje-do-2027.pdf)

Estonia

Title in English: Education strategy, 2021

Adopted by: Ministry of Education and Research

Time frame: 2021–2035

Reference: [https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2022- Available
at:10/haridusvaldkonna_arendukava_2035_kinnitaud_vv_eng_0.pdf](https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2022- Available at:10/haridusvaldkonna_arendukava_2035_kinnitaud_vv_eng_0.pdf)

Latvia

Title: Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2021.–2027. gadam ‘Nākotnes prasmes nākotnes sabiedrībai’

Title in English: Education Development Guidelines 2021–2027 ‘Future Skills for the Future Society’

Adopted by: Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia, 2021

Time frame: 2021–2027

Reference: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/324332-par-izglitiba-attistibas-pamatnostadnem-2021-2027-gadam>

Poland

Title: Zintegrowana Strategia Umiejętności 2030

Title in English: Integrated Skills Strategy 2030

Adopted by: The Ministry of Education and Science, 2020

Time frame: 2020–2030

Reference: <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja/zintegrowana-strategia-umiejtnosci-2030-czesc-szczegolowa-dokument-przyjety-przez-rade-ministrow>

Reference in English: https://web.archive.org/web/20240802081300/https://zsu2030.mein.gov.pl/app/files/ISS2030_detailed.pdf

Albania

Title: Strategjia per arsimin

Title in English: National Strategy on Education

Adopted by: Ministry of Education and Sports, 2021

Time frame: 2021–2026

Reference: <https://www.sbf.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home/eri-policy/eri-21-24.html>

Republic of Serbia

Title: Strategija razvoja obrazovanja i vaspitanja u Republici Srbiji do 2030. godine

Title in English: Strategy for Development of Education in Republic of Serbia by 2030

Adopted by: Ministry of Education, 2021

Time frame: 2021–2030

Reference: <https://prosveta.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/SROVRS-2030-1.pdf>

Higher Education Funding Strategies

Ireland

Title: Funding the Future

Title in English: Funding the Future

Adopted by: Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

Time frame: 2022

Reference: <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/49e56-future-funding-in-higher-education/>

Luxembourg

Title: Convention pluriannuelle 2022–2025

Title in English: Multiannual Agreement 2022–2025

Adopted by: Ministry of Research and Higher Education / University of Luxembourg

Time frame: 2022–2025

Reference: <https://mesr.gouvernement.lu/en/dossiers/dossiers/conventions-pluriannuelles.html>

Digital transformation strategy

Norway

Title: Strategi for digital omstilling i universitets- og høyskolesektoren

Title in English: Strategy for digital transformation in the higher education sector

Adopted by: Ministry of Education and Research, 2021

Time frame: 2021–2025

Reference: <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/strategy-for-digital-transformation-in-the-higher-education-sector/id2870981/>

Social policy strategies

Czechia

Title: Strategie rovnosti žen a mužů na léta 2021–2030

Title in English: Gender Equality Strategy for 2021–2030

Adopted by: Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2021

Time frame: 2021–2030

Reference: <https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/gcfge/Gender-Equality-Strategy-2021-2030.pdf>

Netherlands

1. Title: Nationaal actieplan voor meer diversiteit en inclusie in het hoger onderwijs en onderzoek

Title in English: National action plan for greater diversity and inclusion in higher education and research

Adopted by: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2025.

Time frame: 2020–2025

Reference: [Nationaal actieplan | Adviescommissie Divers en Inclusief Hoger Onderwijs en Onderzoek](#)

2. Title: Aanpak voor vergroten sociale veiligheid op hogescholen en universiteiten

Title in English: Approach to ensure social safety in higher education institutions

Adopted by: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science 2023

Time frame: 2023–2027

Reference: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2023/06/08/aanpak-voor-vergroten-sociale-veiligheid-op-hogescholen-en-universiteiten>

Slovakia

Title: Dlhodobý zámer vo vzdelávacej, výskumnej, vývojovej, umeleckej a ďalšej tvorivej činnosti pre oblasť vysokých škôl na roky 2023–2028

Title in English: Long-term Intention in Education, Research, Development, Arts, and Other Creative Activities for the Area of Higher Education Institutions

Adopted by: Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth

Time frame: 2023–2028

Reference: <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/95e/27269.29823a.pdf>

Sweden

1. Title: Jämställdhetsintegrering i högskolor och universitet

Title in English: Gender equality integration in higher education and research

Adopted by: Swedish Gender Equality Agency

Time frame: 2016–indefinite

Reference: <https://www.government.se/contentassets/efcc5a15ef154522a872d8e46ad69148/gender-equality-policy-in-sweden-240229.pdf>

2. Title: Strategi för Sveriges utrikeshandel, investeringar och globala konkurrenskraft

Title in English: Strategy for Sweden's trade, investment and global competitiveness

Adopted by: Swedish government

Time frame: 2024 - indefinite

Reference: <https://www.government.se/reports/2024/02/strategy-for-swedens-trade-investment-and-global-competitiveness/>

Societal development strategies

Bosnia and Herzegovina

1. Title: Strategija razvoja nauke i tehnologije, visokog obrazovanja i informacionog društva u Republici Srpskoj za period 2023.–2029. godine

Title in English: Strategy for the development of science and technology, higher education and the information society in the Republic of Srpska for the period 2023–2029

Adopted by: Ministry of Scientific and Technological Development, Higher Education and Information Society of the Republic of Srpska, 2023

Time frame: 2023–2029

Reference: <https://vladars.rs/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/Ministarstva/mnk/OM/Resori/ntr/Documents/MNV%2c%20strategija%202023%20-%202029.pdf>

2. Title: Strategija razvoja Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine 2021–2027

Title in English: Development Strategy of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2021–2027

Adopted by: Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2021

Time frame: 2021–2027

Reference: https://parlamentfbih.gov.ba/v2/userfiles/file/Materijali%20u%20proceduri%202021/Strategija%20razvoja%20FBiH%202021-2027_bos.pdf

2. Top-level reforms

2.1 Working conditions

Belgium: German-speaking Community

Description: Decree on measures in the education sector 2021. Several measures in different educational fields concerning multiple institutions and education levels are adopted in one decree. Academic staff are impacted by a reform enabling permanent employment contracts to be issued from the start of employment, new salary scales and an increase in support staff.

Coordinating body: Ministry of the Government of the German-speaking Community

Year of adoption: 2021

Reference:

https://ostbelgienbildung.be/PortalData/21/Resources/downloads/home/aktuelles_2021/21_748_Erlaeuterungen_zum_Sammeldekret_2021.pdf

Belgium: Flemish Community

Description: Updating the legal status regulations to allow universities and university colleges to pursue an agile and resilient staff policy

Coordinating body: Ministry

Year of adoption: 2024

Reference: Decreet van 22 maart 2024 tot actualisering en opheffing van bepalingen uit de Codex Hoger Onderwijs:

https://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi/article.pl?language=nl&sum_date=2024-04-23&lg_txt=n&caller=sum&s_editie=1&2024003855=12&numac_search=2024003855&view_numac=

Bulgaria

Description: Normatively determined minimum basic salary and average gross salary for academic staff

Coordinating body: The Council of Ministers

Year of adoption: 2024

Reference: <https://www.mon.bg/regulation/zakon-za-vissheto-obrazovanie/>

Greece

Description: Reform to conditions of employment for academic staff, and establishment of equal access unit in all HEIs

Coordinating body: Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sport

Year of adoption: 2022

Reference: Law 4957/2022 and Law 5094/2024: <https://search.et.gr/el/simple-search/?selectYear=2022&selectIssue=1&documentNumber=141>

Spain

Description: Law on the university system. The main objectives concerning academic staff are promoting research, transfer and mobility; ensuring the quality of academic institutions; improving employment conditions; and internationalisation of the Spanish university system.

Coordinating body: Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities

Year of adoption: 2023

Reference: Organic Law 2/2023, of 22 March, on the University System: <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/2023/03/22/2/con>

Latvia

Description: A project aiming to create a new academic career framework in order to make higher education in Latvia more attractive and efficient. A new academic career framework, including a predictable academic career or tenure model, has been introduced into Latvia's higher education and science system from 2022, using funding from higher education and science, including the European Union Foundation.

Coordinating body: Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia

Year of adoption: 2022

Reference: *Towards a New Academic Career Framework for Latvia:* <https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/media/16221/download?attachment>

Hungary

Description: Government measures changed the status of HEIs from state-owned institutions to private institutions run by trust funds (Amended Act CCIV on national higher education and Act IX of 2021 on public interest trusts performing public functions). As a result, the majority of academic staff is now employed under the Labour Code.

Coordinating body: Government

Year of adoption: 2020

Reference: Act CCIV on national higher education: <https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2011-204-00-00>
Act IX of 2021 on public interest trusts performing public functions: <https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2021-9-00-00>

Netherlands

Description: Reform of academic evaluation systems to take both team-based collaboration and the unique talents of individual researchers into account. This is based on the idea that it is unrealistic and unnecessary for all researchers to excel in every core area.

Coordinating bodies: Universities of the Netherlands, the Netherlands Federation of University Medical Centres, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Dutch Research Council and the Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development, with support from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

Year of adoption: 2020

Reference: <https://open.overheid.nl/documenten/dpc-85488381773599a73a7dcb1520d4a6ea05edd368/pdf>

Poland

Description: Reform of legal conditions of employee groups and positions in which university teachers are employed. Universities have gained greater autonomy in shaping their own employment structures, including through the possibility of defining additional positions in their statutes beyond those indicated by the law.

A new model of doctoral education has been introduced. It takes place in doctoral schools, is based on close cooperation between the doctoral student and the supervisor and is subject to mid-term evaluation, which determines further education. Each doctoral student has the status of a young scientist. As a rule, all doctoral students (with minor exceptions) receive a doctoral scholarship. The quality of education in doctoral schools is subject to cyclical evaluation, which is of an expert nature and engages scientists employed abroad and PhD students.

Coordinating body: Ministry of Education and Science

Year of adoption: 2018

Reference: The Act of 20 July 2018 – The Law on Higher Education and Science: <https://www.gov.pl/attachment/d6975935-4b24-4be3-96f1-09c51589958a>

Slovakia

Description: Recruitment of higher education teachers and for the functional positions of professors and associate professors.

Coordinating body: Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic

Year of adoption: 2022

Reference: § 77, Act No 137/2022 Coll., amending and supplementing Act No 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2022/137/20220425.html>

Sweden

Description: The position of associate senior lecturer was introduced in 2018 to create clear career paths for young researchers. The role allows researchers to develop their independence and qualify for a senior lecturer position. Previously, the time limit to hold this position was five years from the date of the doctoral degree. However, since 1 July 2024, a new amendment allows either a five- or seven-year limit, with each university determining which applies.

Coordinating body: Swedish Government, Ministry of Education

Year of adoption: 2018 and 2024

Reference: Higher Education Ordinance: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/hogskoleforordning-1993100_sfs-1993-100/ and <https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/ca013f82fdd644baac99fc9709225365/forslag-till-andringar-for-att-oka-mobiliteten-tidigt-i-den-akademiska-karriaren.pdf>

Switzerland

Description: Reform to the employment conditions of doctoral candidates, postdoctoral employees and other scientific staff working on projects funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation.

Coordinating body: Swiss National Science Foundation

Year of adoption: 2019

Reference: https://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/beschaeftigung_von_mitarbeitenden_was_aendert_d.pdf

2.2 Research

Belgium: French Community

Description: A reform has been adopted to allow teaching staff from the Hautes Écoles (university colleges or university of applied sciences) to be seconded for research assignments.

Coordinating body: Ministry

Year of adoption: 2023

Reference: 20/12/2023 – Décret-programme portant diverses dispositions accompagnant le budget initial 2024 (Chapitre 5): https://www.galilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/51982_000.pdf

Estonia

Description: Reform of doctoral studies. Employment guarantees for PhD students as junior researchers in a higher education or research institution, or with companies (who work in partnership) in a field related to their research.

Coordinating body: Ministry of Education and Research

Year of adoption: 2022

Reference: <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/506082024010/consolide>

Spain

Description: Law on the university system. The main objectives concerning academic staff are promoting research, transfer and mobility; ensuring the quality of academic institutions; improving employment conditions; and internationalisation of the Spanish university system.

Coordinating body: Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities

Year of adoption: 2023

Reference: Organic Law 2/2023, of 22 March, on the University System: <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/2023/03/22/2/con>

Italy

Description: Introduction of research contracts, i.e. fixed-term employment contracts aimed exclusively at carrying out specific research projects, replacing the previous research grants and financed in whole or in part using internal funds or by third parties, both public and private. Research contracts have a duration of two years and can be renewed only once. The decree also updates the scientific-disciplinary sectors within which teaching is grouped.

Coordinating body: Ministry of University and Research

Year of adoption: 2022

Reference: Law decree No 36 of 2022 converted by law No 79 of 2022: https://www.promopa.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/dl_36_legge_79_pnrr2.pdf

Lithuania

Description: The creation of a career path for researchers at science and study institutions.

Coordinating body: Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania

Year of adoption: 2022

Reference: Article 64(1) of the Law on Higher Education and Research: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.C595FF45F869/asr>

Austria

Description: Initiative to promote research cooperation between HEIs, educational research and an internationally orientated research community. Specific funding for a new doctoral programme, and for female doctoral students. Academisation of university colleges of teacher education.

Coordinating body: Ministry

Year of adoption: 2023

Reference: <https://oead.at/en/expertise/bildungsinnovation-braucht-bildungsforschung>

2.3. Other

Greece

Description: Protection of academic freedom and upgrading of the academic environment through measures to maintain order and security within HEIs.

Coordinating body: Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sport

Year of adoption: 2021

Reference: Law 4771/2021: <https://search.et.gr/el/simple-search/?selectYear=2021&selectIssue=1&documentNumber=25>

Spain

Description: Organisation and integration of vocational training.

Coordinating body: Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports

Year of adoption: 2022

Reference: Organic Law 3/2022, of 31 March, on the organisation and integration of vocational training: <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/2022/03/31/3/con>

Description: Reform of Artistic Education (ISCED 5–8)

Coordinating body: Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports

Year of adoption: 2024

Reference: Organic Law 1/2024, of 7 June, regulating higher artistic education and establishing the organisation and equivalence of professional artistic education: <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/2024/06/07/1/con>

Croatia

1. Description: Reform of higher education funding. A new instrument for the multi-year public financing of institutions to cover the full costs of HEIs. This regulation defines the subject and content of the programme agreements between the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth and HEIs (and public scientific institutes).

Coordinating body: Ministry of Science, Education and Youth

Year of adoption: 2023

Reference: Regulation on Programme Funding for Public Higher Education Institutions and Public Scientific Institutes in the Republic of Croatia: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2023_07_78_1245.html

2. Description: Civil service and public services wage reform. The regulation adopted prescribes the job titles in public services, the classification of job positions into corresponding pay grades, the coefficients for salary calculation, and the professional qualifications required for employment in the specified positions.

Coordinating body: Ministry of Science, Education and Youth

Year of adoption: 2024

Reference: Regulation on Job Titles, Assignment Conditions, and Salary Calculation Coefficients in Public Services, OG 22/2024: http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/full/2024_02_22_354.html

Romania

Description: Reform of teacher training, requiring a didactic master's programme qualification as the only training route for teaching staff, after graduating with a bachelor's degree in a particular specialisation. The teaching master's is currently in the pilot project phase.

Coordinating body: Ministry of Education

Year of adoption: 2020

Reference: Order No 4524/2020 of 12 June 2020 regarding the establishment and organisation of university didactic master's degree programmes: [OMEC 4524_2020.pdf](https://www.legislatie.ro/publicatii-legislatie/omec-4524-2020.pdf)

Sweden

Description: A clarification on academic freedom was introduced in the Higher Education Act (1992:1434). It is now stated in Chapter 1, Section 6, that HEIs shall promote and safeguard academic freedom in their activities.

Coordinating body: Swedish Government, Ministry of Education

Year of adoption: 2021

Reference: The Swedish Higher Education Act: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/hogskolelag-19921434_sfs-1992-1434/

Iceland

1. Description: Iceland is implementing a new performance-based funding model for its seven universities, marking a significant shift in how higher education is financed in the country. The model divides funding into three main components: teaching (60 %), research (15 %) and social role/impact (25 %), creating a more transparent and comprehensive framework than its predecessor.

Coordinating body: Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation

Year of adoption: 2024

Reference: <https://www.stjornartidindi.is/Advert.aspx?RecordID=5706b0b8-d065-43da-8236-0a7cbe1be9d2>

2. Description: Revision of the evaluation system for public HEIs. The system forms the basis for an annual performance evaluation for academic staff, i.e. individuals hired in accordance with a qualifications assessment who are members of the State University Professors' Union or another union that is party to the evaluation system (e.g., the Association of Teachers at the University of Iceland or the Association of University Teachers in Akureyri).

Coordinating body: Science Committee of Public Universities

Year of adoption: 2022

Reference: [matskerfi opinberra haskola des 2012](https://www.matskerfi.opinberra.haskola.des.2012)

3. Other policy initiatives

Germany

1. Title: Tenure Track-Programm

Title in English: Tenure Track Programme

Adopted by: Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (Bundesministerium für *Forschung, Technologie und Raumfahrt*) and Joint Science Conference of the Federal Government and the *Länder* (Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz)

Time frame: 2017–2032

Reference: https://www.bmftr.bund.de/DE/Forschung/Wissenschaftssystem/WissenschaftlicheKarriere/TenureTrack-Programm/tenuretrack-programm_node.html

2. Title: Professorinnenprogramm

Title in English: Programme for women professors

Adopted by: *Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space* ("Bundesministerium für *Forschung, Technologie und Raumfahrt*") and Joint Science Conference of the Federal Government and the *Länder* (Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz)

Time frame: 2023–2030 (Professorinnenprogramm 2030)

Reference

https://www.bmftr.bund.de/DE/Forschung/Wissenschaftssystem/GleichstellungUndVielfaltInDerWissenschaft/Professorinnenprogramm/professorinnenprogramm_node.html

Ireland

1. Title: Reform of staffing structure in technological universities

Adopted by: Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

Time frame: Initiated in 2022 – ongoing

Reference: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/a-review-of-technological-university-academic-career-paths-contracts-and-organisation-in-ireland_2b7ee217-en.html

2. Title: Senior academic leadership initiative

Adopted by: Higher Education Authority on behalf of Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

Time frame: Initiated in 2019 – ongoing

Reference: <https://hea.ie/policy/gender/senior-academic-leadership-initiative/>

Greece

Title: Establishment of the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education, by law 4653/2020, as an independent administrative body

Adopted by: Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports 2020

Time frame: From 2020 onwards

Reference: <https://search.et.gr/el/simple-search/?selectYear=2020&selectIssue=1&documentNumber=12>

Spain

1. Title: Maria Goyri programme for the incorporation of teaching and research talent at the Spanish universities, 2024–2030

Adopted by: Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities and the autonomous communities

Time frame: 2024–2030

Reference:

<https://www.ciencia.gob.es/Noticias/2024/Diciembre/programa-maria-goyri-ccaa.html>

Spain (continued)

2. Title: Beatriz Galindo grants

Adopted by: Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities and autonomous communities, 2017

Time frame: Indefinite

Reference: https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-B-2025-453

3. Title: José Castillejo grants

Adopted by: Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, 2007

Time frame: Indefinite

Reference: <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-B-2024-47797>

France

Title: Plan national d'action pour l'égalité professionnelle entre les femmes et les hommes (2021–2023)

Title in English: National action plan for gender equality

Adopted by: Secretary of State responsible for equality between women and men, 2020

Time frame: Renewed every three years

Reference: <https://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/fr/plan-national-action-2021-2023-egalite-professionnelle>

Italy

Title: Provisions on the valorisation and promotion of research

Adopted by: Ministry University and Research, 2024

Time frame: Indefinite

Reference: <https://www.senato.it/leg/19/BGT/Schede/FascicoloSchedeDDL/ebook/58531.pdf>

Hungary

Title: John Neumann Programme

Adopted by: The National Research, Development and Innovation Office, the newly created National Innovation Agency and the newly established Research Excellence Council, 2023

Time frame: Ongoing, through the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund

Reference: <https://cdn.kormany.hu/uploads/document/0/05/05b/05be37b4a85602f3564c86ae446709be7655abdd.pdf>

Austria

Title: Women in professorships or career positions

Adopted by: Public universities

Time frame: 2019 – ongoing

Poland

Title: Budget law, 2024

Adopted by: Ministry of Science and Higher Education, 2024

Time frame: 2024 onwards

Reference: Regulation of the Minister of Science of 15 February 2024, amending the Regulation on the minimum monthly basic salary for a professor in a public university: <https://dziennikustaw.gov.pl/DU/2024/235>

Romania

Title: Teacher training requirements for newly appointed academic staff

Adopted by: HEI, quality assurance agency, Ministry of Education, 2023

Time frame: Ongoing

Reference: <https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/geztqmjwgg4ts/legea-invatamantului-superior-nr-199-2023>

Finland

Title: Pilot projects for doctoral programmes

Adopted by: Ministry of Education and Culture

Time frame: 2024–2027

Reference: <https://okm.fi/en/pilot-projects-for-doctoral-programmes>

Sweden

1. Title: Agency collaboration on international expertise.

Adopted by: Swedish government, the Ministry of Climate and Enterprise, 2024

Time frame: ongoing

Reference: <https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/c9469158836a4c4fa095401bf36b5772/uppdrag-om-starkt-samordning-for-hogkvalificerad-internationell-kompetens-och-utlandsk-arbetskraft-viktig-for-sveriges-konkurrenskraft.pdf>

2. Title: Impact of administrative tasks on universities and higher education institutions

Adopted by: Swedish government, Ministry of Education, 2024

Time frame: 2024 onwards

Reference: <https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/a6e28b278ad1427da8675d9fc6c031fd/uppdrag-att-analysera-konsekvenserna-av-universitets-och-hogskolors-administrativa-uppgifter.pdf>

3. Title: STEM: pedagogical development in engineering programmes and quality of mathematics courses

Adopted by: Swedish government, Ministry of Education, 2024

Time frame: 2024 onwards

Reference: <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2024/06/nya-atgarder-for-att-starka-stem-området/>

Iceland

Title: University Collaboration

Adopted by: Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation

Time frame: 2022–2027

Reference: <https://www.stjornarradid.is/efst-a-baugi/frettir/stok-frett/2022/11/04/Samstarf-haskola-opid-fyrir-umsoknir/>

Switzerland

1. Title: Grundsätze des Hochschulrats der Schweizerischen Hochschulkonferenz (SHK) für die Förderung des wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchses an universitären Hochschulen

Title in English: Principles of the Higher Education Council of the Swiss Higher Education Conference (SHK) for the promotion of young academics at universities

Adopted by: Schweizerische Hochschulkonferenz [Swiss Higher Education Conference], 2023

Time frame: Not defined

Reference: https://shk.ch/images/dokumentation/publikationen/HSR20231123_4.05-7d_Grundsaeetze_Foerderung_wissenschaftlichen_Nachwuchses_UH_195-23.pdf

2. Title: For equal opportunities and the promotion of young academics (2024)

Adopted by: Federal Council / Parliament

Time frame: 2025–2028

Reference: [Federal education, research and innovation policy 2025–2028](#)

Annex 2: Areas addressed in top-level strategies and reforms, 2024/2025

2.1 Areas addressed in top-level strategies, 2024/2025

	Recruitment	Contracts	Remuneration	Social protection	Workload	Promotion	Parity of esteem between teaching and research	Flexibility	Continuing professional development	Mobility	Inclusiveness/diversity/gender equality	Academic freedom	Other
BE fr													
BE de	✓				✓			✓	✓				
BE nl													
BG	✓		✓✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
CZ	✓✓	✓			✓	✓		✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓		
DK													
DE													
EE	✓✓		✓	✓				✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓		
IE	✓	✓											✓
EL													
ES													
FR	✓	✓	✓					✓		✓		✓	
HR													
IT	✓	✓	✓	✓							✓		✓
CY							✓✓						
LV	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
LT													
LU													
HU		✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓		
MT													
NL	✓✓✓	✓✓			✓	✓	✓✓		✓		✓✓✓		
AT	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓		
PL													
PT		✓		✓									
RO		✓✓	✓						✓			✓	
SI		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	
SK									✓	✓✓	✓		
FI	✓				✓				✓	✓			
SE	✓✓✓								✓		✓	✓	✓✓
AL									✓	✓	✓	✓	
BA									✓✓	✓✓			
CH	✓	✓✓	✓		✓			✓✓			✓✓		
IS	✓				✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LI													
ME					✓	✓			✓	✓			
NO	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓✓	✓			
RS													
TR	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
(1)	16	12	8	5	10	9	7	9	18	18	14	8	4
(2)	22	14	9	5	10	9	9	12	20	21	21	8	5

(1) Total countries (2) Total strategies

2.2 Areas addressed in top-level reforms, 2024/2025

	Recruitment	Contracts	Remuneration	Social protection	Workload	Promotion	Parity of esteem between teaching and research	Flexibility	Continuing professional development	Mobility	Diversity	Academic freedom	Other
BE fr							✓	✓					
BE de		✓	✓		✓								
BE nl	✓	✓		✓		✓							
BG			✓										
CZ													
DK													
DE													
EE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓					
IE													
EL	✓✓	✓✓						✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	
ES	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓
FR													
HR	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓	✓		✓	
IT	✓	✓	✓	✓							✓		✓
CY													
LV	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓				✓	
LT							✓		✓	✓			
LU													
HU		✓	✓			✓							
MT													
NL	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
AT		✓✓						✓✓	✓				
PL	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	
PT													
RO	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓		✓✓	✓	✓	✓	
SI													
SK	✓	✓	✓							✓			
FI													
SE	✓	✓✓						✓				✓	
AL													
BA													
CH		✓	✓		✓								
IS			✓			✓							✓
LI													
ME													
NO													
RS													
TR													
(1)	12	15	13	5	9	9	6	8	8	7	5	7	3
(2)	14	20	16	5	9	10	7	12	11	9	7	7	5

(1) Total systems (2) Total reforms

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