

**Open, transparent and merit-
based recruitment:
contributing to the European
Research Area**

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Introduction

The basis:

- **The Steering Group on HR & Mobility** (since 2003)
- European Charter for Researchers & Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (2005)
- Several Commission Communications (e.g. "*A reinforced ERA partnership for excellence and growth*", 2012)
- Council Conclusions (e.g. December 2012, February 2014)
- The Researchers' Report, the MORE surveys
- The ERA priorities
- The ERAC Mutual Learning Seminar (March 2014)
- The SGHRM Working Group on OTM-R (September 2014)
- **The ERA Roadmap (May 2015)**

Council Conclusions on OTM

11 December 2012: "The Council NOTES that one of the most important remaining challenges across the EU is the realization of transparent, open and merit-based recruitment where this is not available, which would make research careers more attractive and foster mobility and ultimately research quality".

21 February 2014: "The Council CALLS ON Member States to take fully into account the ERA implementation when developing national strategies taking into account the use of open, transparent and merit-based recruitment practices with regard to research positions".

ERAC MLS March 2014: recommended to produce a toolkit/practitioner's guide including good-practice examples on OTM, templates, and other material useful for HR practitioners/employers of researchers

ERA Communication on OTM

Member States were invited to:

- Remove legal and other barriers to the application of open, transparent and merit based recruitment of researchers

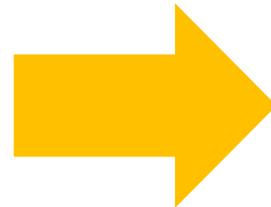
Research stakeholder organisations were invited to:

- Advertise all vacancies on the EURAXESS Jobs portal using the common profiles established in the European Framework for Research Careers;
- Fill research positions according to open, transparent and merit based recruitment procedures proportionate to the level of the position in line with the basic principles of the Charter & Code and including non-EU nationals

Introduction

ERA PRIORITY 3: Open Labor Market for Researchers

The **topic action priority** identified through consultations to Member State and Associated Countries



Using **open, transparent and merit based recruitment practices** with regard to research positions

Rationale

Question - *How does this action [i.e. using OTM-R procedures for research positions] contribute to the objective of full implementing the ERA?*

Answer - **Lack of open recruitment hinders mobility, the matching of talent to opportunities, and gender equality, thereby impeding achievement of the ERA's full potential**

Rationale

OTM-R, the ERA and the HRS4R: actions to promote OTM-R

At ***National level***, governments and relevant stakeholders (in particular **RFOs**)

1. should consider how the rules for **national funding schemes** could better promote the uptake and effective implementation by RPOs of the principles of openness, transparency and merit-based recruitment as articulated in the Charter and Code.
2. Where relevant, governments should remove legal barriers or other hindrances to OTM-R of researchers in public sector RPOs and *define new structures and approaches to researcher career development* [not within the mandate of the OTM-R WG].

Rationale

Actions to promote OTM-R at National level (continued)

3. RPOs in turn should be encouraged to **participate in the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers** and to **review their current recruitment processes** in a reflective and self-critical way, amending them where necessary to improve their openness and transparency as benchmarked against the **Charter and Code**.

Rationale

Actions to promote OTM-R (continued)

- At *European and national* levels, authorities should encourage openness and the circulation of international talent by reinforcing a **welcoming culture** for EU and third-country researchers and **reducing obstacles to mobility**.
- At *European* level, participation in **Horizon 2020** should reinforce uptake of the C&C, in particular through **Article 32 of the Model Grant Agreement**. The role and effectiveness of **EURAXESS** in supporting the open recruitment of researchers should also be reviewed, particularly the impact of the **EURAXESS portal**.

SGHRM initiative

The SGHRM working group on OTM-R

- Starting date: **November 2014**
- Aim: to develop an **OTM-R “Package”** for assisting RPOs to carry out, on a voluntary basis, a review of their current recruitment policy and practices and revise these, where needed
- Members: **15** Member States and Associated Countries, the EU Commission, the VoR, the ERC, the EUA, the LERU, the CESAER
- **4** Plenary Meetings (last on May 5, 2015)
- Final Report to be handed over to the SGHRM by **June 2015** (i.e. 8 months of work)

SGHRM initiative

Working method of the Group

3 subgroups were established and each addressed one of the 'functional blocks' of the recruitment system, i.e.

- **the preparatory block (advertising positions, assembling panels, etc.)**
- **the evaluation/selection block (defining 'merit' and designing the procedure accordingly)**
- **the 'OTM routine' block (training staff, briefing panels, limiting bureaucracy to the minimum...)**

keeping in mind the 3 keywords: **open, transparent, merit-based**

SGHRM initiative

The existing 'tools'

- The Charter & Code (2005)
- The EURAXESS portal (Rights and Jobs current sections)
- The MS and AC legislation
- The examples of good practice from RPOs, RFOs, MS and AC
- The **European Framework for Research Careers**

OTM-R Principals

The objective of the WG: (building on the existing tools) to develop a comprehensive OTM-R 'Package' for RPOs

1. Why is an OTM-R system essential? **The rationale**
2. What should an OTM-R system look like? **The principles**
3. How does your organisation's OTM-R system rate? **The checklist**
4. Does your organisation want help to establish an OTM-R system compliant with the principles? **The toolkit:** a step-by-step guide to improve (if, when and where needed) the organisation's OTM-R practices

OTM-R Principals

1. The **rationale**: why is OTM-R important?

- It ensures that the **best person for the job** is recruited
- It guarantees **equal opportunities** and access for all
- It facilitates developing an **international portfolio** (cooperation, competition, mobility)
- It makes research careers more **attractive**

In sum: **an OTM-R system brings benefits to researchers, institutions and the country's research system, and contributes to the full implementation of the ERA**

OTM-R Principals

2. The **principles**: what should an OTM-R system look like?

It should :

- be based on a **review** of the current OTM-R policy, practices and procedures (i.e. OTM-R system)
- foresee the **publication** of the (revised) OTM-R system
- establish/adapt an 'OTM-R guide', on which to **train** (and raise awareness of) the RPO personnel
- be embedded into the RPO's **Quality Control** System
- consider to develop and incorporate an **e-recruitment** tool

OTM-R Principals

3. The **checklist** for RPOs: How does your organization's OTM-R system rate?
- Institutions are encouraged to use the checklist as a **self-assessment tool** to determine the degree to which their current practices are really OTM-compliant and to identify where improvements should be made.
 - The checklist includes about 20 questions to support a review on:
 - **The OTM-R system in general**
 - **The Advertising and Application phase**
 - **The Evaluation and Selection phase**
 - **The Appointment phase**

OTM-R Principals

3. The **checklist**: a few sample questions

- About the OTM-R System (in general):
- 8. Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to attract underrepresented groups?
- About the Advertising and Application Phase:
- 15. Do we keep the administrative burden to a minimum for the candidate?
- About the Evaluation and Selection Phase:
- 17. Do we have clear rules concerning the composition of selection committees?
- About the Appointment Phase:
- 21. Do we provide adequate feedback to interviewees?

OTM-R Principals

4. The **toolkit**: a step-by-step guide to help RPOs establishing an OTM-R system compliant with the principles
 - The toolkit sets out, in chronological order (i.e. from job advertisement to appointment), the various steps of the recruitment process.
 - It aims to build on the principles of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, providing more detailed information, **practical solutions** and includes examples of good practice.

OTM-R Toolkit

When is a recruitment process **OPEN**?

(NB: **openness and transparency** are frequently interconnected)

A recruitment process can be considered OPEN when it **encourages external candidates to apply and also attracts researchers from abroad.**

An EXAMPLE from the TOOLKIT:

- *Applicants should be able to easily find information on:*
 - *organisation and recruiting unit*
 - *job title, specifications and starting date*
 - *researcher career profiles (R1-R4) with the respective 'required' and 'desirable' competencies*
 - *selection criteria including knowledge and professional experience (distinguishing 'required' and 'desirable')*
 - *number of available positions*
 - *working conditions, workplace, entitlements (salary, other benefits, etc.), type of contract*
 - *professional development opportunities*
 - *career development prospects*

OTM-R Toolkit

- When is a recruitment process **OPEN and TRANSPARENT?**
- The **INSTITUTIONAL PROCESS** can be considered **OPEN and TRANSPARENT** when it includes:
 - ✓ a publicly accessible **institutional recruitment policy**;
 - ✓ **institutional recruitment regulations** which are clear to applicants & reviewers;
 - ✓ a system to regularly **check, review and revise** recruitment regulations (including to monitor their effectiveness);
 - ✓ a serious mechanism to deal with **complaints**.

EXAMPLES from the TOOLKIT:

- Differentiation between internal promotions and new recruitment
- No fake vacancies for internal promotions as open positions
- No reservations of open positions for internal candidates
- Exceptions, if transparent, are possible

OTM-R Toolkit

- When is a recruitment process **OPEN and TRANSPARENT?**
- The **APPLICATION PHASE** can be considered OPEN and TRANSPARENT when:
 - ✓ advertisement uses the **R1-R2-R3-R4 framework 'vocabulary'**;
 - ✓ interested candidates and applicants receive all **the relevant information**;
 - ✓ the **issue of (foreign) languages** is taken into account;
 - ✓ **administrative burden** is minimal for the candidates but also for the selection committees.

An EXAMPLE from the TOOLKIT:

Candidates unfamiliar with the 'local system' must be able to assess the attractiveness of a position and to fully understand the application procedure

OTM-R Toolkit

- When is a recruitment process **TRANSPARENT?**
- The **SELECTION PHASE** can be considered **TRANSPARENT** when:
 - ✓ the **selection panel composition** is objective & made public;
 - ✓ the **communication with candidates/applicants** (acknowledgement, feedback) is timely and appropriate.

EXAMPLES from the TOOLKIT:

- The process of nominating and appointing the selection committee guarantees a diversity of members, balancing internal and external experts, bringing in competency and objectivity
- A “one-member-panel” does not exist!

OTM-R Toolkit

When is a recruitment process **BASED on MERIT?**

- While an absolute and universally acceptable definition of ‘merit’ is virtually impossible to achieve, the WG agrees that **a recruitment system can be considered merit-based when it is able to ensure that the institution recruits the best person for the job**
- The application of the **European Framework for Research Career**, which identifies both required and desirable competences for each profile (R1 to R4), may substantially help RPOs willing to adopt a genuine OTM-R system

AN EXAMPLE from the TOOLKIT:

- To adapt the procedures according to the level, nature and type of position

OTM-R Toolkit

When is a recruitment process **BASED ON MERIT?**

When the selection committee:

- ✓ is established for all profiles (R1-R4)
- ✓ is adequate for the profile, in terms of size and composition
- ✓ is independent, objective, and takes evidence-based decisions

EXAMPLES from the TOOLKIT:

- inclusion of
 - *external experts (outside the institution),*
 - *international experts,*
 - *experts from different sectors*
- relevant experience, qualifications and competencies of members to assess each candidate

OTM-R Toolkit

When is a recruitment process **BASED on MERIT?**

When the criteria for selecting researchers

- foresee appropriate assessment and evaluation of a wide spectrum of qualifications (encompassing non-formal qualifications, skills and competences, international portfolio)
- are focused on **past performance and future potential**, with a different respective weight according to the profile (R1-R4)
- are consistent with the requirements of the position
- combine **qualitative and quantitative** judgment, focusing on results within a diversified career path

EXAMPLES from the TOOLKIT: see next slide

OTM-R Toolkit

When is a recruitment process **BASED on MERIT?**

EXAMPLES from the TOOLKIT

A wide range of evaluation criteria should be used and balanced, according to the position and the specific profile of the post; these criteria may include (in alphabetical and NOT hierarchical order):

- acquisition of funding;
- generation of societal impact;
- international portfolio (including mobility);
- knowledge transfer and exchange;
- management of research and innovation;
- organizational skills/experience;
- outreach/public awareness activities;
- research performance;
- supervision and mentoring;
- teaching;
- teamwork

OTM-R Toolkit

To assess whether an OTM-R system genuinely works as such, it should be consistently monitored by an efficient and effective **Quality Control** mechanism

EXAMPLES from the TOOLKIT:

- periodical, external review by independent observers
- forms for internal reporting on all phases of the recruitment process
- means to assess whether the OTM-R system delivers on its objectives

OTM-R Toolkit

OVERALL: A step-by-step guide

- **Advertising and application phase**
 - Advertising a post
 - Keeping the administrative burden to a minimum
 - Acknowledging receipt and providing additional information
- **Evaluation and selection phase**
 - Setting up selection committees
 - Screening and interviewing
 - Assessing merit
- **Appointment phase**
 - Feedback and complaints mechanism
- **Templates and Good practices**

Why is OTM recruitment important?

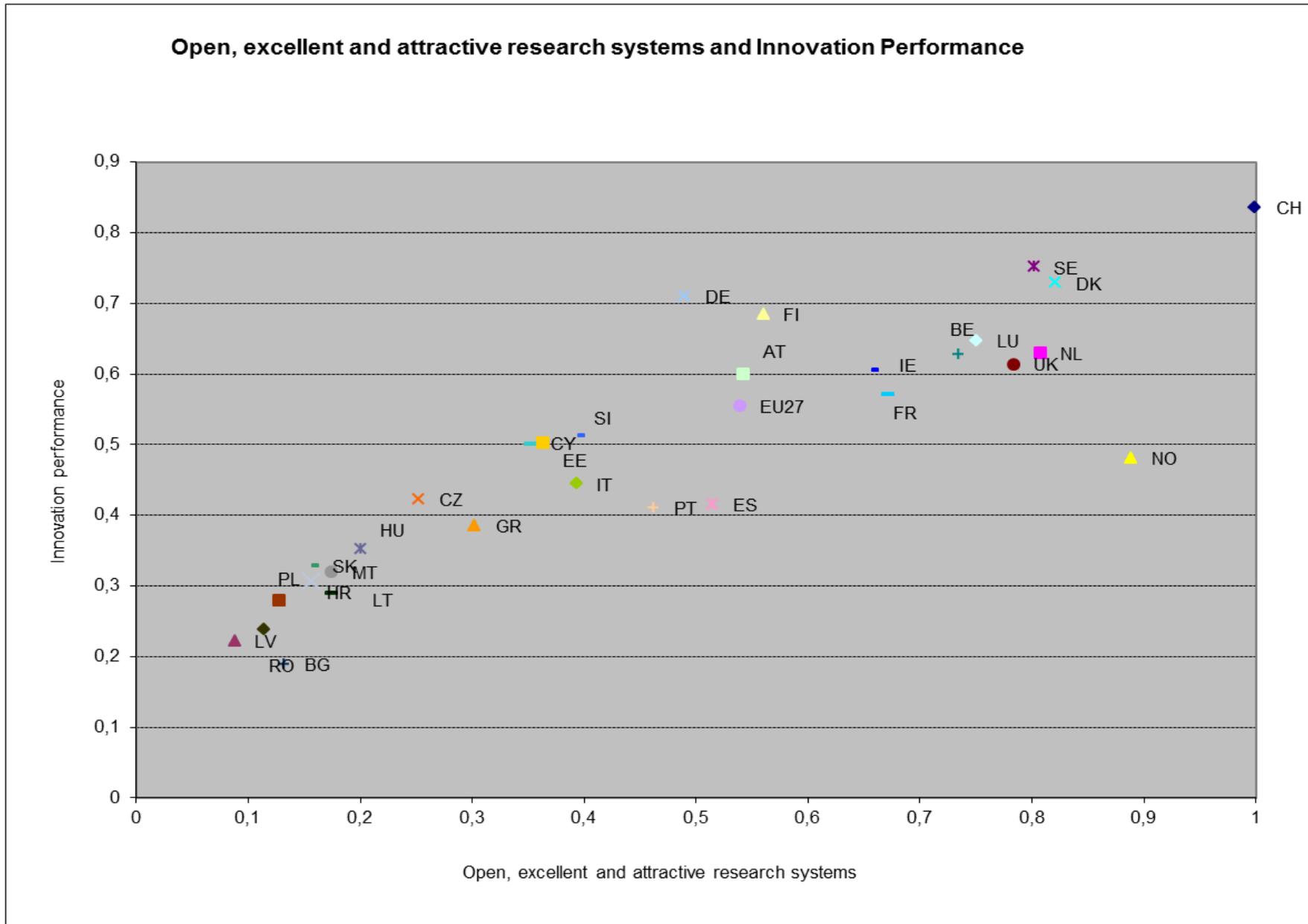
It is a fairer system and has a positive impact on:

- International mobility
- Attractiveness of a research career in EU
- Equal access to job opportunities for men and women

In short, openness and excellence go hand in hand (even if not causal relationship)

The focus is on ensuring that all recruitment procedures are based on OTM principles and that institutions always try to recruit the best person for the job.

Why is OTM recruitment important?



Final remarks

Progress to date?

- Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers positive but limited impact as voluntary
- Most institutions with HR Logo reviewed recruitment processes
- Number of research vacancies on EURAXESS Jobs increased from 7 500 in 2010 to over 40 000 in 2014
- Legislation in some MS, mainly re publication of vacancies internationally (HR, PL IT, AT, etc.)
- Examples of good practice, e.g. HEI with a publicly available OTM recruitment policy.
- New H2020 obligation on beneficiaries to take all necessary measures to implement Code of Conduct (Article 32 of G.A.)

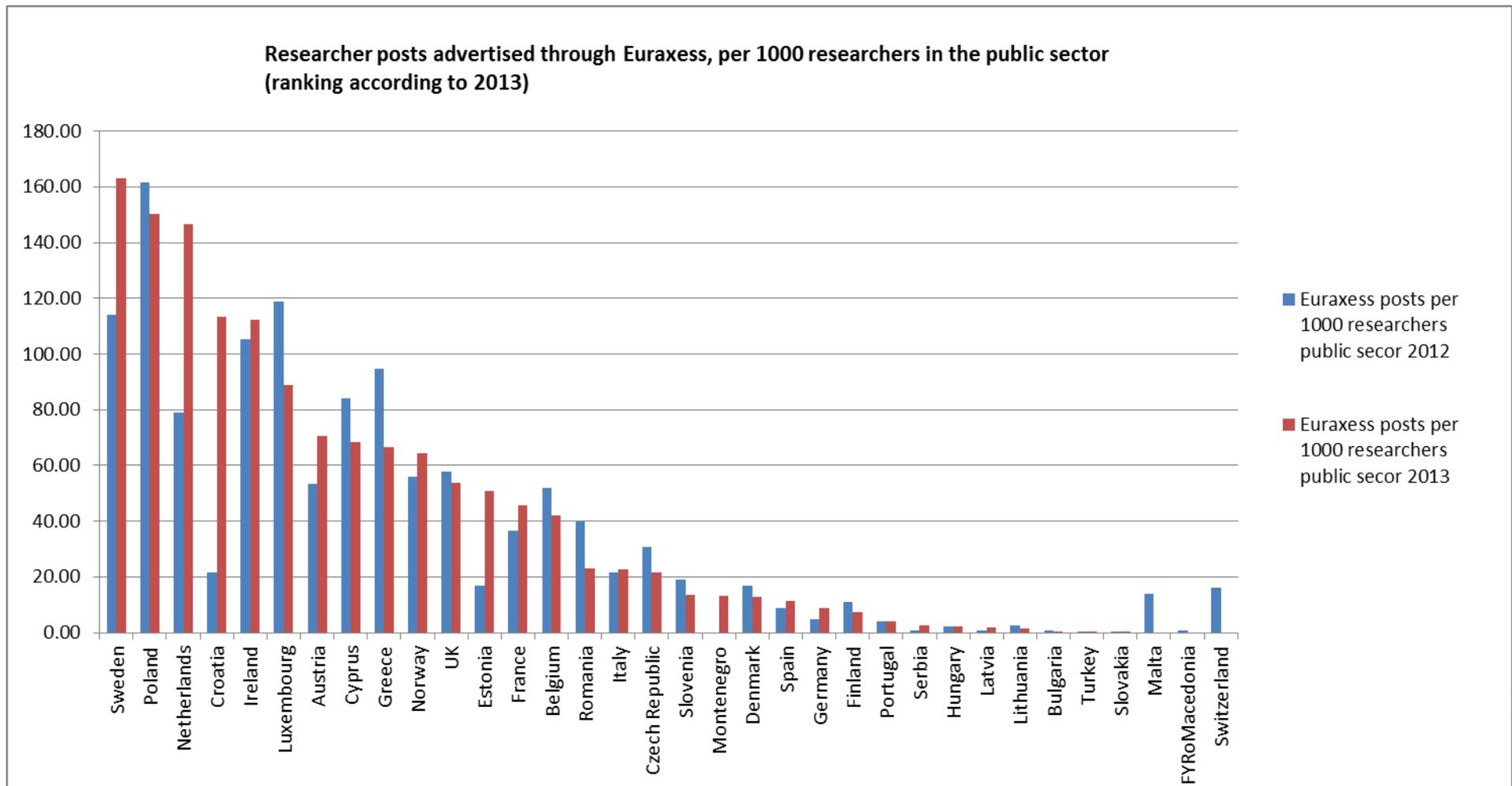
Final remarks

Observations

- Legal requirements for the recruitment of permanent positions. for ex, German 'Habilitation', Italian 'National scientific qualification'
- Procedures for short-term contracts tend not to be regulated but rather dealt with at institution level
- Perception of OTM recruitment is different:
- National authorities argue recruitment system is OTM whereas a substantial share of researchers are not satisfied. MORE2 study and Voice of the Researchers confirmed this.
 - Females less satisfied than males
 - Early-stage researchers least satisfied, particularly R2
 - Large country differences

Final remarks

Monitoring OTM – R



Final remarks

Legislative or soft approach

- Legislation not appropriate
- **A soft law approach** more effective in order to narrow the gap between countries in their use of OTM recruitment
- Need to build on existing Code of conduct, HRS4R, etc
- EC in cooperation with MS and SHOs could develop a **modular OTM toolkit** including
 - good-practice examples for each of the principles
 - draft OTM policies and operational guidelines
 - templates for application forms, job descriptions, appointment panels

Final remarks

Barriers?

- Not legal barriers as such but rather hidden, opaque, protectionist practices within institutions; nepotistic practices in some countries
- Obstacles/delays linked to degree accreditation and lengthy administrative processes. Affects both non-EU and EU nationals
- Language, particularly re attracting international researchers
- Selection panels not 'independent' nor sufficiently transparent
- Job requirements tailored for incumbent candidates or discourage applicants.
- Greater levels of autonomy could work for or against OTM
- Although some low-cost solutions, some elements of OTM may be costly, e.g. (international) panels, training, managing lots of applicants
- Due to lack of competitive funding, there can be little or no incentive to hire the best person.