

Synthesis from the parallel sessions of the SAFE seminar, 10th June 2026, Paris

During the thematic sessions of the SAFE seminar, researchers as well as host institutions had the opportunity to share their experience as well as good practice. We are happy to share the outcomes of the sessions, as well as the priority issues and recommendations that emerged:

Session A: Career development in Europe (Track 1 researchers*)

Key discussion points

- Amongst the challenges identified by the researchers:
 - At their arrival in the EU they have to manage many issues at the same time: logistics of moving, administrative burden, family, degree recognition, language
 - Fellows need to think about post-fellowship opportunities even at the very beginning of the fellowship while they are still settling in
 - The expectations regarding research and teaching are very different from country to country and according to the academic field

Key conclusions

- Support services exist, but they have to be contacted actively (e.g. career services at the university or the academic mentor, Euraxess)
- To find a job, fellows need to think of different environments: academia, industry, NGOs, think tanks, consultancy or even starting their own business
- With a doctorate there is a large spectrum of opportunities, also beyond R&D such as marketing, HR or any position where analytical skills are required
- Fellows should use their cultural background and native language skills to their advantage, e.g. in large, globally active firms

Recommendations

- Learning the local language is crucial for integration and job search
- SAFE fellows already possess very relevant skills beyond their academic achievements (resilience, adaptability, language) which can be used proactively in their job search. Researchers need to make themselves aware of the skills they have and “translate” them to the relevant jargon of the field/environment they would like to apply to.

Session B: Careers beyond academia: bridging science and industry (Track 2 researchers*)

Key discussion points

- How to connect fellows with the private sector (but not only the industry).
- Similarly to track 1 researchers that applied for the SAFE fellowship outside of the EU, track 2 researchers (that applied within the EU) need to learn the local language at the very start, as English is often not sufficient for a successful integration.
- Considering a job outside academia is difficult. As the fellows have less knowledge of the local context, the local institution should play a role to support them in this path towards their transfer to entrepreneurship.
- Importance of mapping individual skills. The personal network is important too to find a position. Be not only connected to your colleagues.

Key conclusions

The role of host institutions is to create bridges between the private sector and academia. Networks are important, while language barriers should be solved.

The researchers should use different resources, not only at their host institutions. Making an effort to connect with the local environment will help not being alone in their academic environment.

Session C: Hosting measures and services

Key discussion points

- Good practices and challenges faced with regards to hosting measures and support services offered to SAFE fellows
- Recommendations for a possible future EU scheme:
 - At the level of application and evaluation of proposals – hosting plan
 - At the level of implementing the fellowship – funding, monitoring, support to host institutions

Key conclusions

Good practices:

- Different services offered to the target group supported at management level, and a multi-pronged network-approach to supporting researchers at risk, including dedicated staff (in administrative & academic support services, delegated staff member from each faculty/department)
- Very diverse approaches at HEIs at present. Both top down & leadership involvement would be ideal. The minimum should be one entry point – usually a welcome centre – for overall coordination of different services (language training, housing, psychological support...) plus an academic mentor

- It is important that the entire HEI community has awareness of researchers at risk, why their support is important and how it link to the institution's mission etc.
- Support should be adapted as needed to the situation/needs of the fellow and/or in case of changes in the institutional services

Challenges

- Visas were an issue for most host institutions, with SAFE not know by immigration services. Some HEI collaborate with relevant national authorities and offered personalised legal support.
- Post fellowship transition – very difficult for many to offer more than standard career training/support. Given the background of the fellows, this needs to be adapted.
- For some host institutions, hosting plans could not be implemented as foreseen due to changes in national funding, or leadership changes at the institution,
- HEIs inexperienced in hosting previously might be at a disadvantage at application stage, as they cannot outline existing service structures for the target group

Recommendations

- Hosting plans need to be adaptable, as needed.
- Guidelines for host institutions on hosting and training/peer learning between HEIs would be helpful
- Enable networking at national level from the very beginning of the hosting period would be relevant for HEIs to be able to exchange and discuss topics of concern, esp. in the immigration/visa phase
- Better information on visa matters together with a list of the support that may already be available at European (e.g. EURAXESS) and national levels can be found in this document containing useful information for host institutions:
<https://saferesearchers.eu/resource/useful-information-for-safe-host-institutions/>
- Timeframe and timing of calls, offers and start dates need to allow institutional level bureaucracy to work, and enable adequate support to the fellow before arrival/contract finalisation.

Session E: Supporting researchers with administrative matters

Key discussion points

- Administrative services provided by host institutions
- Benefit of European networks

Key conclusions

- Importance of knowledge sharing for host institutions that do not have the infrastructures to support researchers at risk yet
- Funding and career perspectives remain key challenges

- Importance of sharing best practices with institutions with little no infrastructure, yet
- Institutions and researchers should benefit from an exchange at European level to widen opportunities
- Engagement of University leadership needs a bottom-up approach to make its value visible
- Supporting researchers is not solely an act of academic solidarity or humanitarianism but mainly part of the internationalization strategy, the international engagement and an enrichment of the research landscape.

Session F: Empowering researchers with new opportunities and skills (Track 2 researchers*)

Key discussion points

- It is important to build a long-term career in academia, while also considering opportunities outside academia
- How to help fellows to identify possible skills gaps
- How to better support researchers at-risk in preparing for life after their fellowship, including addressing employment uncertainty in academia, language barriers, family support, professional reinvention, and integration into a new academic environment
- The importance of networking

Key conclusions

- Managing expectations in the application process is important; Resilience and encouragement are needed
- Both academic and non-academic, tailored support is needed
- Support is needed to prepare adequate applications for positions inside and outside academia, which are distinct types of applications
- Mentors are useful (mentoring schemes, alumni networks)
- Different kinds of training opportunities are needed, especially when it comes to transferable skills including, for example, workshops & webinars
- Small grants can be useful in enabling conference attendance or even purchasing a new computer
- Importance of availability of language support
- Clear information on available support structures is needed, along with encouragement to make use of them
- Breaking down larger goals into smaller, concrete steps is helpful
- Long-term planning should start early and outcomes are best when built on a solid foundation of support structures
- **Networking is a key factor** e.g. with industry but also within the university so that scholars can be included in research groups, in research funding applications (not only those targeting at-risk scholars, but also flagship or excellence-based projects); networking between universities is also needed to create new connections and career opportunities

- The stronger the academic fit, the better the prospects for building a long-term career.

Recommendations

- Cooperation between different actions/programmes is needed and recommended; unnecessary barriers should be avoided (e.g. the possibility of SAFE fellows to benefit from Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) mentoring)
- Mentoring, networking and peer/alumni engagement are efficient
- As career development and building a sustainable career path take time, extending placements to three years is seen as one solution (example of the newly launched Finnish Scholar Protection Scheme (FSPS). Three-year placements might also make a difference for residence permits
- It is also important to remember that the fellows are highly-skilled researchers who are enriching our academic communities and societies

*Glossary:

Track 1 researchers: At-risk researchers outside the EU at the time of their application for the SAFE fellowship

Track 2 researchers: At-risk researchers already within the EU at the time of their application for the SAFE fellowship

Disclaimer

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