

ACADEMIC CAREERS IN EUROPE

Renáta Hall, June 2026, in cooperation with Czexpats in Science and Higher Education Development Institute.

Prepared for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT).

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Rethinking Academic Careers in Czechia

The current model of academic careers in the Czech Republic has deep historical roots, in which the remnants of medieval estates, the Humboldtian 19th-century, First Republic tradition, communist bureaucratization, and the turbulent transformation of the "wild 1990s" remain intertwined to this day. Although the system has undoubtedly evolved over time – as evidenced by the pressure to publish, the growing precarity of junior positions, and efforts to gradually align habilitation criteria across institutions and disciplines – the way university staff are recruited, rewarded, and promoted has not undergone deep conceptual reflection or systemic reform in the last three decades. Therefore, we believe it is time to look at the Czech model from a distance, and that a comparison with selected international models can offer a valuable perspective.

The key challenge of the reform is to find a balance between two somewhat contradictory principles. On the one hand, there is an urgent need to provide academic staff with predictability, stability, and dignified career conditions. On the other hand, it is necessary to establish a fair and multidimensional evaluation system which will reflect and reward real performance, while allowing flexibility for diverse career profiles.

This analysis comes at a pivotal moment. At the beginning of this year (2026), the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT) initiated preparations for a new Higher Education Act. This upcoming legislation is set to bring fundamental reform to academic careers, as well as related areas such as internal university governance, quality assurance, funding, and study conditions. The primary objective of this text is to elaborate on the principles agreed upon during previous negotiations between MŠMT and higher education representatives, drawing on international best practices. The ministry has asked us for this analysis to provide inspiration for the new legislative framework.

The report was prepared for Czexpats in Science and the Higher Education Development Institute of by Renata Hall, a leading Slovak expert and former advisor to the Slovak Prime Minister on higher education. We believe that this analysis will provide a valuable expert foundation for the modernization of the Czech higher education environment, which stands in need of an open, transparent, and internationally compatible career framework.

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Executive Summary

This analysis was initiated at the invitation of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT) to elaborate on the principles discussed between the Ministry and higher education representatives in the context of the new Higher Education Act currently under development (2026).

Methodology and Selected Countries

The analysis draws on cross-cutting European data (primarily the Eurydice network) and a detailed examination of six selected countries, chosen based on their institutional and demographic size proximity to the Czech Republic, as well as the author's practical experience. The sample includes highly successful systems from Western and Northern Europe, alongside geographically and historically close nations from Central Europe:

- **Western and Northern Europe:** Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Finland, the Netherlands
- **Central Europe:** Poland, Slovakia

International comparison demonstrates that **there is no single universal European model** for academic careers. Individual countries opt for different solutions (e.g., varying levels of state regulation versus institutional autonomy), yet they share common modern trends, such as shifting away from rigid national titles toward more flexible evaluation systems.

Key Structural Challenges of the Current Czech System

The international comparison identifies several critical areas where the Czech model lags behind international standards:

- **Precarity and Instability:** A high dependence on one-year or short-term contracts for junior academics.
- **Academic Inbreeding:** A closed system where the majority of positions are filled by internal graduates without truly open, international recruitment processes.
- **Rigidity of Promotion:** A system of habilitations and professorships tied to formal and often rigid national proceedings rather than to the actual functional post held.
- **One-Dimensional Evaluation:** The dominance of quantitative publication and project metrics at the expense of teaching, the "third role," or leadership.

1. Structure of Academic Positions and Career Paths (Predictability vs. Flexibility)

- **Focus and Trends:** This chapter addresses the typification of positions (from Ph.D. to professor) and the introduction of transparent advancement mechanisms. The major global trend is the implementation of *Tenure-Track* systems (a clear, predictable path from assistant professor to permanent position based on fulfilling predefined criteria).
- **International Approaches:** Approaches differ significantly. In Finland and the Netherlands, these tracks are fully within the competence of individual universities and highly individualized. Conversely, in Austria, the Tenure-Track (known as *Qualifikationsvereinbarung*)

is firmly anchored directly in collective agreements and national legislation, which increases administrative oversight but guarantees maximum legal certainty.

2. Recruitment and Selection Processes (Openness to the World)

- **Focus and Trends:** This section analyses the statutory obligations and real-world practices in filling academic posts. The prevailing trend is toward absolute openness, internationalization, and the mandatory transparent advertising of vacancies (e.g., via the EURAXESS portal).
- **International Approaches:** While international recruitment is an absolute standard supported by flexible labour laws in Belgium (Flanders) and Finland, openness in Poland and Slovakia frequently encounters formal barriers related to the complex recognition of foreign degrees and habilitations.

3. Academic Evaluation (Multidimensional Excellence)

- **Focus and Trends:** This chapter explores the transition from purely scientometric evaluation (number of papers, Impact Factor) to a comprehensive assessment of academic work. The driving trend is the global *Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment* (CoARA) movement.
- **International Approaches:** The Netherlands is a European frontrunner thanks to its national initiative *"Room for Everyone's Talent"*, which places equal weight on excellence in teaching, research, leadership, and knowledge transfer. Austria combines evaluation with formal developmental reviews, whereas Slovakia still relies heavily on centralized, quantitative indicators.

4. Linking Academic Titles to Functional Positions

- **Focus and Trends:** This theme addresses whether the status of "docent" (associate professor) or "professor" should be granted centrally by the state/external committees (as a lifelong title), or if it should be a functional position tied to a specific workplace at a university.
- **International Approaches:** There is a sharp dividing line here. In Poland and Slovakia, rigid systems of national habilitation and appointment proceedings (*jmenovací řízení*) persist. On the contrary, in the Netherlands and Finland, a professor is strictly a functional post – if a candidate passes a rigorous selection process for a specific chair, they automatically hold the status of professor for the duration of their tenure in that role.

Key Recommendations for the Czech Reform

1. **Legally Anchor a Tenure-Track Framework:** Define a clear, transparent mechanism within the legislation that provides early-career researchers with a predictable path to a stable position after their Ph.D. and postdoc phases, bypassing the need for external habilitations.
2. **Separate Titles from Functional Posts:** Gradually transform docentures and professorships from lifelong academic titles into functional positions managed and guaranteed by individual universities based on their internal standards and institutional capacity.

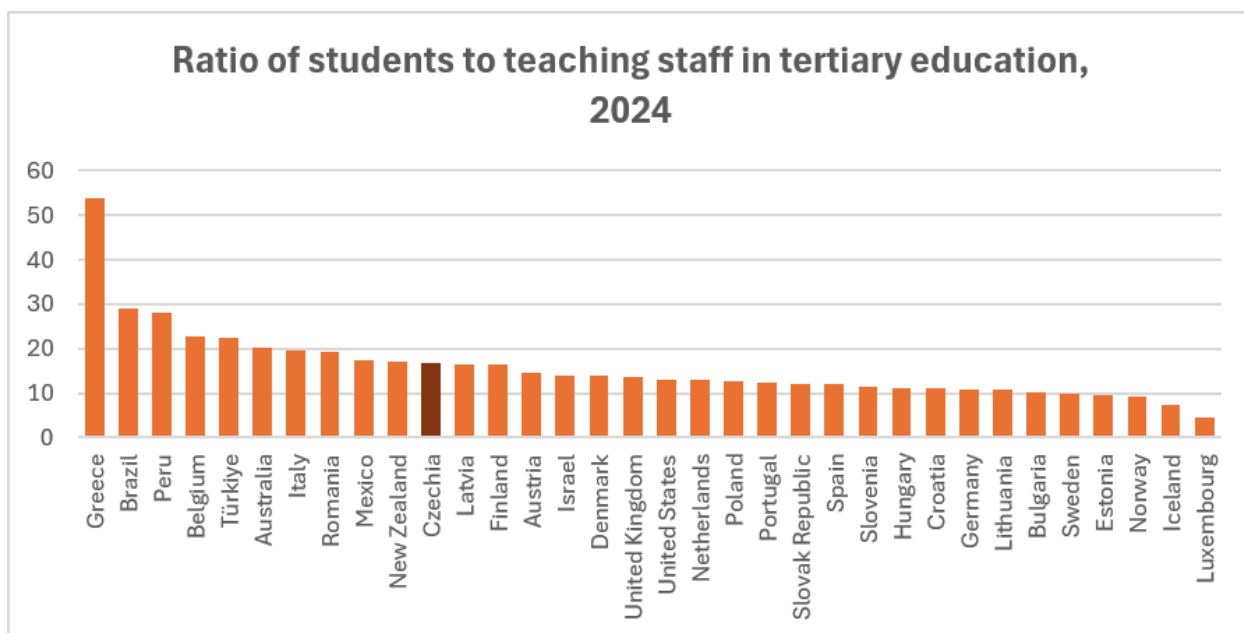
3. **Implement Multidimensional Evaluation:** Embed CoARA principles into both national frameworks and internal university regulations, systematically recognizing and rewarding quality teaching, educational innovation, and institutional leadership.
4. **Mitigate Inbreeding and Foster Internationalization:** Mandate open, internationally advertised selection processes for key academic positions and streamline administrative procedures for hiring experts from abroad.
5. **Enhance the Stability of Institutional Funding:** Adjust funding mechanisms to ensure that universities have sufficient stable, non-project-based core funding to support long-term, predictable academic positions.

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Trends and developments in Czechia

In 2025/26, Czech higher education institutions enrolled about 330.5 thousand students in 26 public, 27 private and 2 state universities. About 18% of students are foreign-nationals.¹ In 2025, there were 38 535 academic staff (headcount) with a total of 26 177 full-time equivalents (FTE).² Compared to other OECD countries, Czechia has a slightly higher ratio of students per academic staff (16.8).³ Based on national data of headcount of enrolled students and FTE number of academic staff (excluding research staff), the ratio in 2025 was 16.4 and it has grown from 15.5 in 2020.^{1,2}



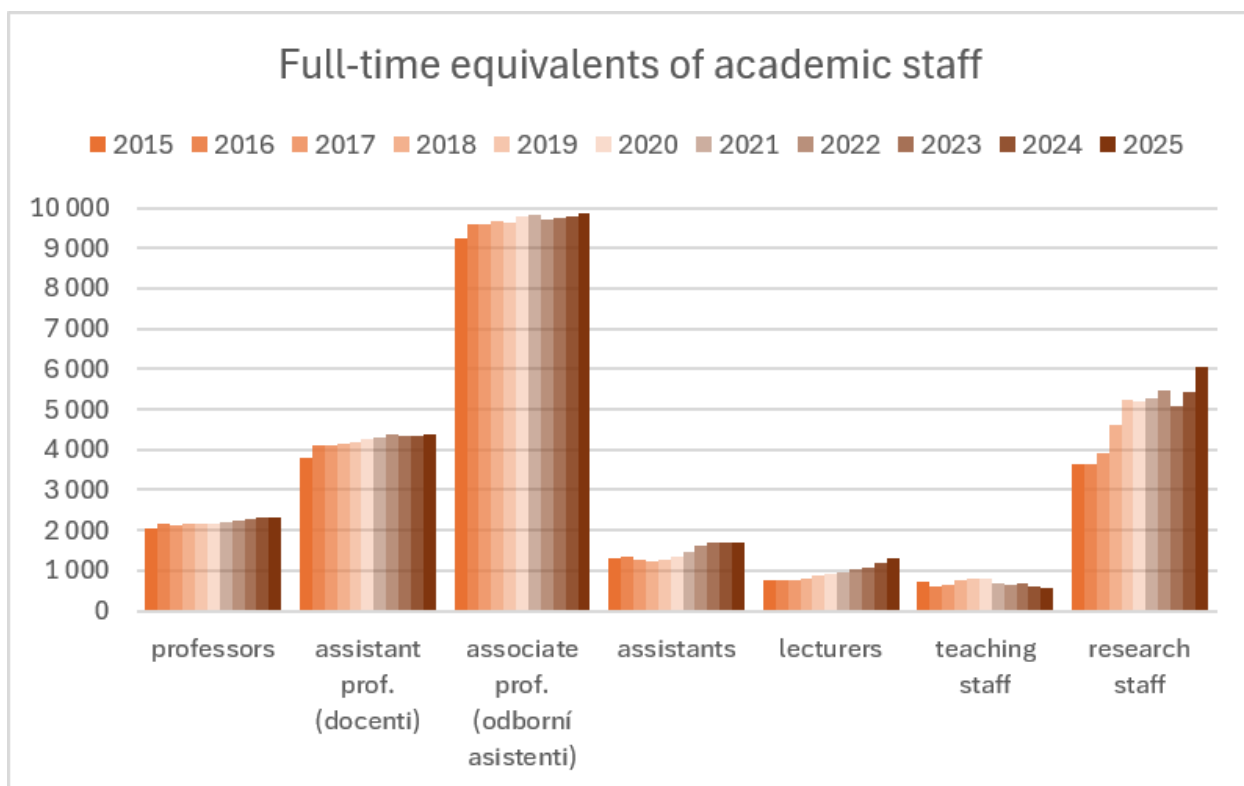
The number of academic staff (FTE) has steadily grown by 22% since 21 487 FTE in 2015. The growth between 2015 and 2025 was greatest among specialised staff, lecturers (74%) and research staff (67%). Overview in the graph below.⁴

¹ <https://csu.gov.cz/vysoke-a-vyssi-odborne-skoly>

² [Statistická ročenka školství – Zaměstnanci a mzdové prostředky, MŠMT ČR](#) (2015 - 2025 editions)

³ <https://data-viewer.oecd.org/?chartId=76b1ad4f-d08a-43d3-9925-d6f16f9a749b>

⁴ [Statistická ročenka školství – Zaměstnanci a mzdové prostředky, MŠMT ČR](#) (2015 - 2025 editions)



In 2025, there were also 17 440 enrolled doctoral students, but that is down from 23 861 in 2015 (-27%).⁵

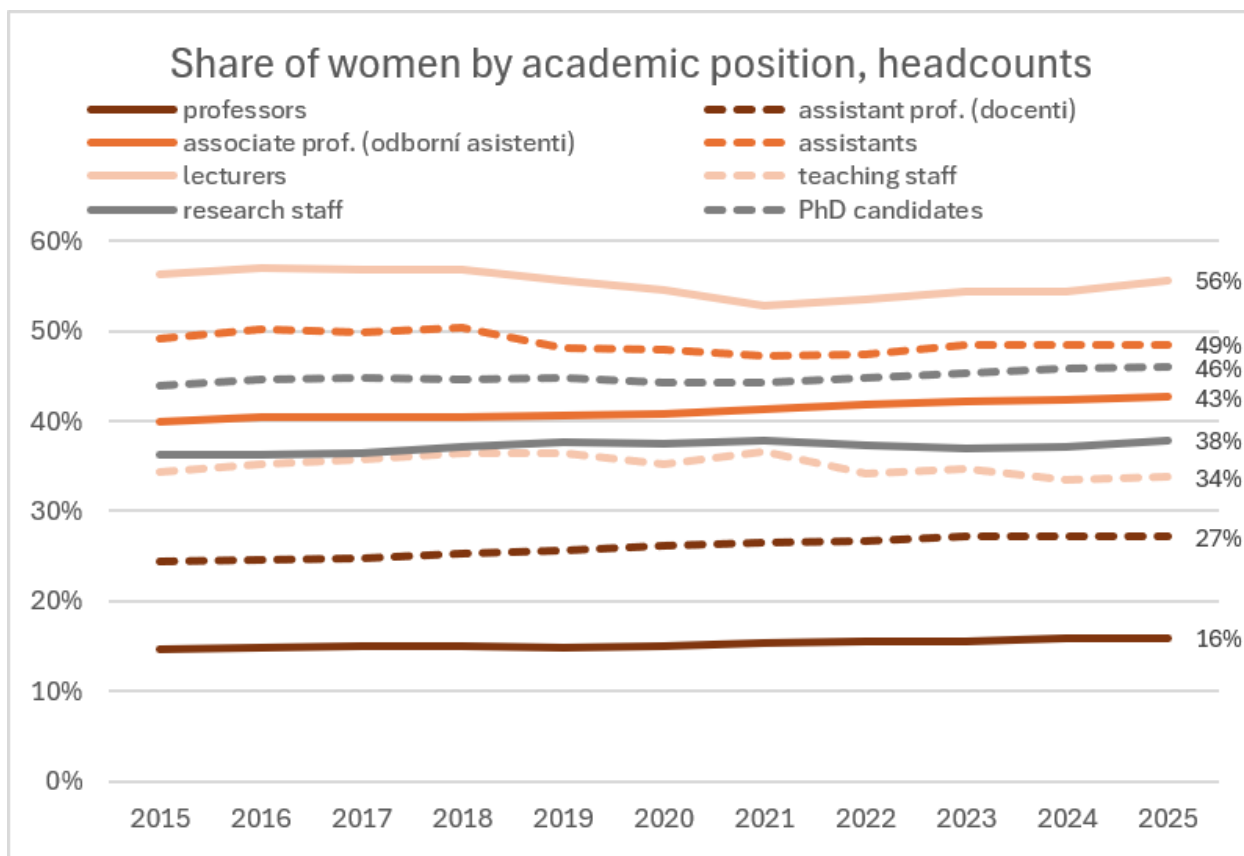
Czechia has the lowest representation of women among academic staff in the EU.⁶ As shown in the graph below, women make up the majority of employees only among lecturers (56%) and close to half among assistants (49%).⁷ About 46% of doctoral students were women in 2025.⁸ There has been some growth in representation of women among assistant professor (odborné asistentky), from 40% in 2015 to 43% in 2025. Other categories of academic staff are outside the gender balance spectrum (40-60%). The under-representation is especially visible among most senior academics, professors, women make up only 16% of professors, figure that stayed almost unchanged since 2015.

⁵ [Studenti a absolventi vysokých škol v Česku - za období 2001–2025 | Produkty](#)

⁶ [Postavení žen v české vědě](#)

⁷ [Statistická ročenka školství – Zaměstnanci a mzdové prostředky, MŠMT ČR](#) (2015 - 2025 editions)

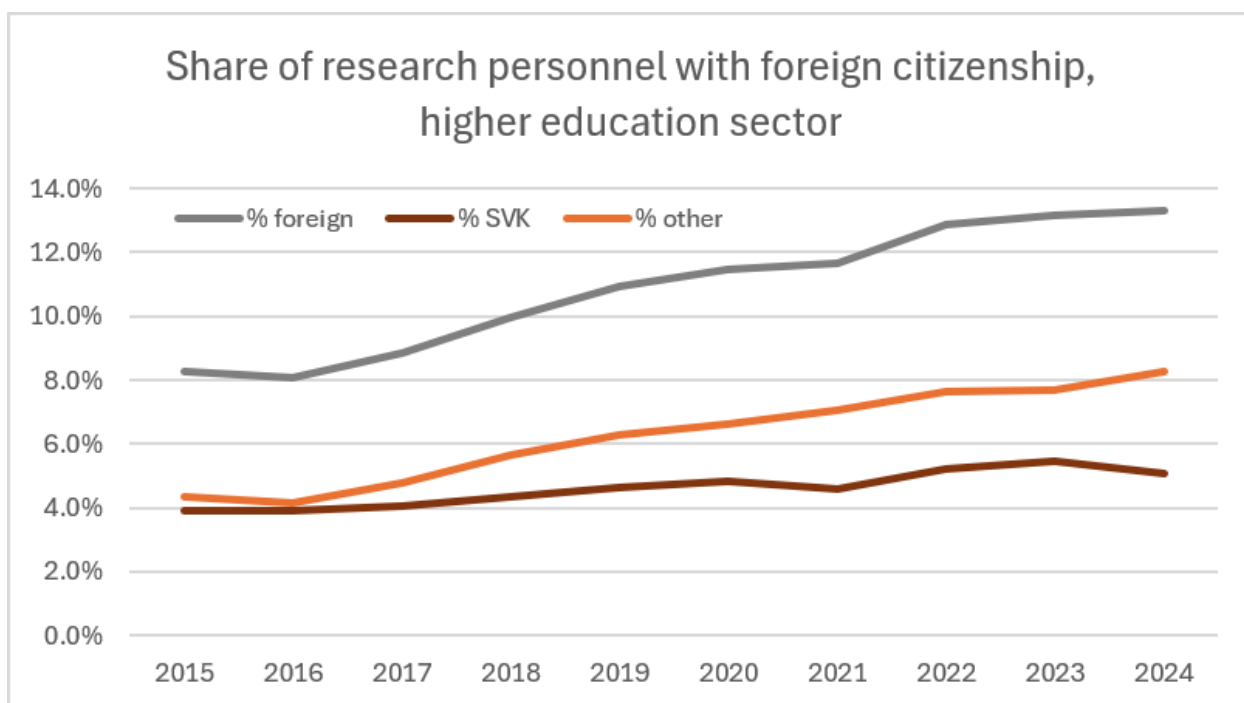
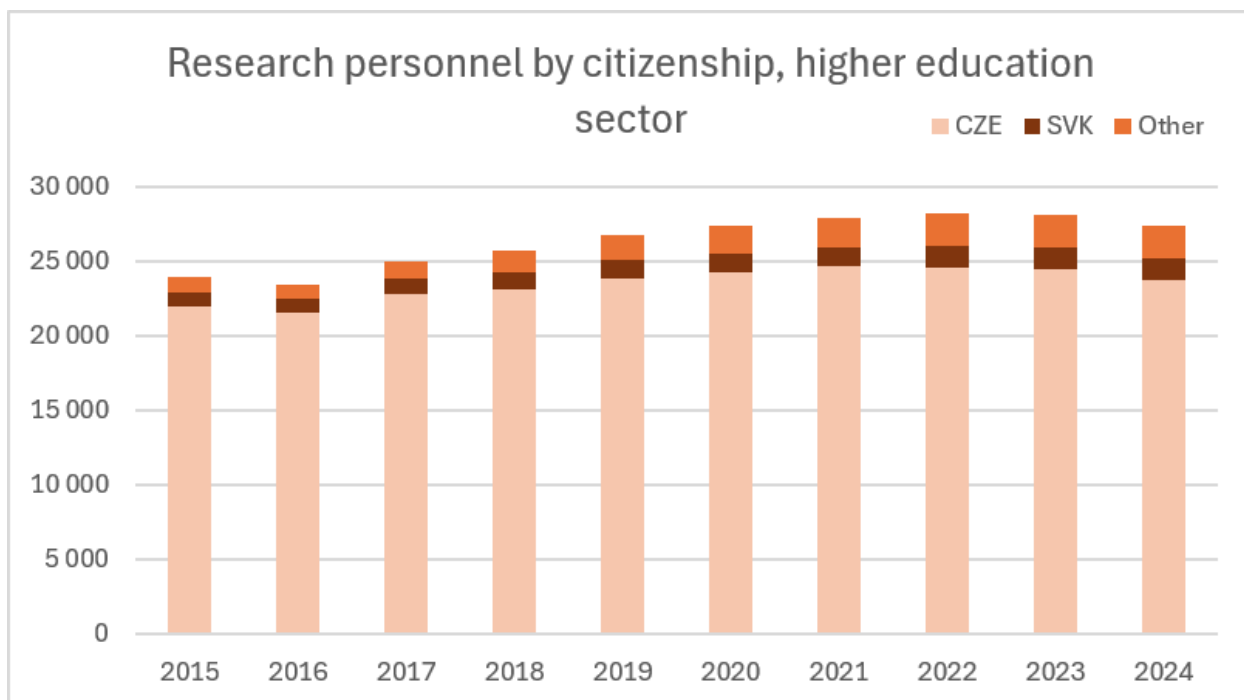
⁸ [Studenti a absolventi vysokých škol v Česku - za období 2001–2025 | Produkty](#)



Foreign academics

Czech higher education institutions are hosting an increasing number of foreign academic staff, growing from 1 978 in 2015 (about 8.3%) to 3646 in 2025 (about 13.3%). More than a third of the foreign nationals working as academic staff are Slovak, but their share has been growing less quickly than the number of other foreign nationals, see graphs below.⁹

⁹ [Ukazatele výzkumu a vývoje - data za rok 2024 | Produkty](#) (2015 - 2024 editions)



In 2015, 15.9% of PhD candidates were foreigners, by 2025, their share more than doubled to 29.3%.¹⁰

¹⁰ [Studenti a absolventi vysokých škol v Česku - za období 2001-2025 | Produkty](#)

Key reform principles

The proposed reform of academic careers in Czechia builds on six principles which were discussed during the early meetings between the Ministry of Education and the higher education representatives:

1. Openness and international compatibility

Academic recruitment should be more open to international competition, positions filled through open selection procedures that admit the strongest candidates. The academic career model should be clear and transferable across borders, connected with the European framework.

2. Transparent and predictable career path

Academic career structure should be clearly defined, including positions and rules for career progression. Every academic should know the conditions of their recruitment, career progression and evaluation.

3. Meritocratic and multidimensional assessment

Decisions on selection, career progression and appraisal should rest on the quality of a person's work across various domains of academic work and their potential. Academic staff should be evaluated against performance across several domains including research, teaching, leadership and wider societal impact, respecting the specifics of each discipline and of the institution. The quality of the work should be assessed in the context of individual candidates to avoid discrimination.

4. Functional and flexible career structure

Lifelong academic titles should be replaced with job positions. Academic career structure should allow staff to focus on various areas, whether research, teaching, administration and alike or a combination. Academia should be open to people entering and leaving.

5. Accountability and stability

Higher education institutions should retain their autonomy on recruitment and career progression, while being accountable for the quality and fairness of their decisions. There should be a nationally defined framework to guide institutions. Stability should be offered to those who consistently demonstrate high quality, with tenure resulting from a demanding, non-discriminatory and transparent selection process.

6. Institutional cohesion - decreasing internal fragmentation

The academic career framework should be aligned with the governance reform. Working conditions and rules governing academic careers should be coherent and consistent within institutions, however not among institutions. Appointments and career progression, at the senior level, should be institutional, rather than departmental, decisions.

International comparison

When analyzing general European trends and identifying key insights for the upcoming reform, this report relies on cross-cutting resources and comprehensive comparative studies across Europe, most notably from the Eurydice network. However, to illustrate how these trends operate in practice, we have selected six specific countries as core case studies across this report: **Austria, Flanders (Belgium), Finland, the Netherlands, Poland, and Slovakia.**

This sample was carefully balanced to include countries of a similar institutional and demographic size to the Czech Republic. It encompasses both Western and Northern European systems, as well as post-communist Central European nations that share a close historical and structural proximity to our own. The Western European countries represent highly successful higher education systems with strong track records in international comparisons. Concurrently, the selection was guided by practical considerations, building heavily on the personal field experience and professional network of the author.

To ensure a deep understanding of each system, the selected countries were analysed through a thorough review of policy papers, research reports, and legislative documents, as well as through personal interviews with higher education experts from each respective nation. This approach provided invaluable firsthand insight into how these systems function in reality, beyond mere statutory frameworks.

We do not claim that this selection is exhaustively representative of the entire European higher education landscape, nor do we suggest that the Czech reform should uncritically replicate any single model. As the analysis demonstrates, these countries have developed notably diverse approaches to academic careers. Instead, they are presented to illustrate concrete legislative and practical solutions – including both successful implementations and lessons learned – upon which the Czech higher education reform can effectively build.

A. Career progress

A1. Vertical hierarchy

Context

The European Framework for Research Careers defines four levels that are meant to be comparable across countries and sectors (R1-R4 model).¹¹ R1 is the first stage researcher up to the point of the PhD (omitted from the comparison), R2 the recognised researcher who holds a PhD but is not yet fully independent, R3 the established researcher who has developed a level of independence, and R4 the leading researcher who leads their research area or field. The framework is voluntary and the four profiles do not replace national job titles; they simply provide a bridge across them. Because of this, the mappings below are approximate, and a single national title can sit across two levels, particularly the positions at R2 level.

Currently, in Czechia the vertical hierarchy is nearly identical as in Slovakia.

	Recognised (R2)	Established (R3)	Leading (R4)
Universities in Czechia ¹²	Assistant professor (odborný asistent), Assistant (asistent)	Associate professor (docent)	Professor (profesor) Extraordinary professor (mimořádný profesor)
	Lecturer (lektor), Research staff (Vědečtí, výzkumní a vývojoví pracovníci)		

International comparison¹³

All six countries discussed below have professors at the leading level (R4), In Belgium (Flanders and Finland) some institutions also have two levels of professors. There is significant variation in the R2-R3 level, generally, there are two (NLD, SVK) or three (AUT, BEL-FL, FIN, POL) positions between someone finishing their PhD and reaching professorship.

¹¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1640/oj/eng>

¹² [Universitäten / Rahmen | Kollektivvertrag](#)

¹³ See more <https://www.informatics-europe.org/data-portal/?page=academic-positions%2Fprofessors.html>

	Recognised (R2)	Established (R3)		Leading (R4)	
Universities in Austria ¹⁴	Universitätsassistent post doc (Assistant Postdoc)	Assistenzprofessor (Assistant professor)	Assoziierter Professor (Associate professor)	Universitätsprofessor (University professor)	
	Lektor (Lecturer), ProjektmitarbeiterInnen (Project staff), Senior Lecturer, Senior Scientist/Artist				
Universities in Belgium (Flemish comm.) ^{15,16}	Doctor-assistent (Postdoctoral Assistant) Assistant, Practice assistant	Docent (Assistant Professor)	Hoofddocent (Associate Professor)	Hoogleraar (Professor)	Gewoon Hoogleraar (Full professor)
Universities in Finland ^{17,18}	Post-doctoral researcher	Assistant professor	Associate professor	Professor	Distinguished professor
	Lecturer	Senior lecturer	Senior university lecturer		
	Researcher	Senior researcher	Senior university researcher	Research director	
Universities in the Netherlands ¹⁹	Lecturer (Assistant professor)	Senior lecturer (Associate professor)		Professor	
	Teacher 3, 4	Teacher 1, 2		Education institute director	
	Researcher 3, 4 (postdoc)	Research 1, 2		Research institute director	
Poland ²⁰	Asystent (Assistant)	Adiunkt (Assistant Professor)	Profesor uczelni (University)	Profesor (Professor)	

¹⁴ [Universitäten / Rahmen | Kollektivvertrag](#)

¹⁵ [wet: Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering tot codificatie van de decretale bepalingen betreffende het hoger onderwijs \(citeeropschrift: "Codex Hoger Onderwijs"\)](#)

¹⁶ [Conditions of service for academic staff working in higher education](#)

¹⁷ [Yliopistojen professorin urapolut vuonna 2025 | Professoriliitto](#)

¹⁸ <https://www.leru.org/files/Finland.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.universiteitenvannederland.nl/en/job-classification-system-ufo>

²⁰ [Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce](#)

			Professor)	
Slovakia ²¹	Odborný asistent (Assistant professor) Lektor (Lecturer)	Docent (Associate professor)	Profesor (Professor)	

In Austria and the Netherlands, the role of each position is defined more in the collective agreement, with some specification given to the senior role, professor, in the law. In Belgium (Flemish community), Poland and Slovakia, the roles of academic staff are detailed in the legislation.

Doctoral candidates are treated purely as staff members in the Netherlands. In Slovakia and Poland, they are students. Elsewhere, the model is more complicated. In Austria most are hired as assistants and researchers, with proper employment contracts, while only some are self-funded with the status of students.²² In the Flemish Community, some doctoral candidates are hired as assistants, while others receive grants that can be tax exempt, but they have full social security rights (healthcare, pension accrual, unemployment benefits) identical to an employment contract.²³ In Finland, doctoral candidates are enrolled as students, but many are hired also as staff with proper employment contracts.²⁴

Postdoc positions are in some shape or form present in all countries, however they are often formally known as something else, and they have been translated to English as a postdoc. Usually, these positions have a large research component and the contract duration is relatively short, in some cases even only a few months but more commonly a couple of years (1-4 years). In Belgium (Flemish community) the postdocs work only on research while assistants can also work on business projects.

It is common across these six countries for academic units to be led by R3 level staff (associate professor). Positions of full professor (R4) are scarcer.

Recommendations

A1.1. Create four tiers of positions connected to the [European Framework for Research Careers](#). Education responsibilities relate to the responsibility (guarantee) over study programmes. The terminology used in job titles can vary between higher education institutions; however all should indicate the tier to which they correspond.

²¹ [300/2025 Z. z. Zákon o vysokých školách a o změně a doplnění některých zákonů \(vysokoškolský zákon\) | Slov-Lex](#)

²² <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/euryperia/austria/third-cycle-phd-programmes>

²³ [Third-cycle \(PhD\) programmes](#)

²⁴ [Third-cycle \(PhD\) programmes](#)

Level	Research aspect	Education aspect	Positions
PhD	Researchers under supervision (R1)	Teachers under supervision	Doctoral researcher
AP1	Shows independence in developing own research and attracting funding (R2a)	Develops and delivers independently courses	Assistant (Asistent) or Postdoc
AP2	Establishes a significant level of independence in developing own research, attracting funding or leading a research group (R2b)	Guarantees bachelor-level programmes	Assistant professor (Odborný asistent / Asistující profesor)
AP3	Develops own research, attracts funding and leads a research group (R3)	Guarantees up to master-level programme	Associate professor (Docent / Asociovaný profesor)
AP4	Leads their research field (R4)	Guarantees up to PhD	Professor (Profesor)

AP = akademický*á pracovník*ice (academic staff)

The position of professor would only be needed in departments that want to award PhD programmes. Otherwise, more professionally oriented and applied study fields with only I. and II. cycle programmes need only staff up to AP3 level.

A1.2. Keep specialised positions of lecturer and research staff. These positions could also have their career progression, equivalent to levels AP1-AP3. A part of them could be given permanent contracts, while some could be hired on fixed-term contracts linked to specific projects/third party financing.

A1.3. Consider whether to recognise doctoral candidates as students, employees or both. A possible way forward would be a mixed model where they are recognised as students for the purposes of registration, but where possible, they should be offered employment contracts. This would have an impact on their tax, social and health insurance.

A2. Competition and promotion models

Context

There are two main models of career progression in academia. First, competition model (e.g. vacancy-based recruitment), where a staff member advances once a higher post becomes vacant or is newly created. They need to apply for it and win an open competition, potentially with multiple candidates. Strong career performance is necessary but not sufficient, because a post has to become vacant or be created. Second, promotion model (e.g. tenure track), advancement comes from meeting defined criteria assessed through evaluation, with no post needing to fall vacant and no competition against other applicants. Selection happens once, on entry to the track, after which progression is measured against a threshold. The broad European trend over the last two decades has been a shift from competition towards tenure track promotion, usually producing hybrids in which the lower and middle steps are promotion-based while the top chair is still filled by competition.

In Czechia, all new positions are filled by competition, however competition does not need to be carried out in the case of a new contract with existing staff members. Career progression requires undergoing habilitation (for position of docent, i.e. associate professor) and professor appointment procedures.

Competition models also tend to contribute a high number of fixed-term, **temporary contracts**, especially in early career. Promotion models can create a more predictable career path for those who are selected.

In Czechia, temporary contracts can be up to 3 years and extended twice (3x3). They are often given to assistants and assistant professors, then they are expected to be ready for habilitation. A survey from 2017 shows a switch in academic career. Among professors and docents, more than 70% of staff have permanent categories, in other groups, more than 70% have temporary contracts.²⁵ Across all categories, about 55% of academic staff had temporary, fixed-term, contracts.

2017 survey	Permanent	Temporary
Professors [Profesoři]	71.4%	27.5%
Associate prof. [Docenti]	71.8%	28.2%
Assistant prof. [Odborní asistenti]	26.6%	72.5%
Assistant, lecturer [Asistenti, lektori]	20.3%	73.0%
Research staff, postdoc [Vědeckí pracovníci]	24.1%	75.9%

The latest mapping across Europe, suggests that in most countries with available data (no data for Czechia) the permanent contracts are more common (19 out of 29 countries).²⁶ However there is a significant variation in contract stability across countries. Among professors, most countries have indefinite contracts as a rule (23 out of 34 countries).

International examples

Austria traditionally relied on competition for chair professorships, but the 2002 University Act and later amendments introduced a tenure track. Open competition is conducted for Assistant professors; they sign a qualification agreement and contract for six years. They progress by promotion if they are evaluated at the end of the contract to meet the criteria in the agreement. The tenure system leads to an associate professor, a permanent contract. This however does not guarantee promotion to Universitätsprofessor, which is still in most cases filled competitively.

Flemish Community (Belgium) also moved from a competition-based chair tradition towards an internal promotion track, starting at docent (assistant professor) posts. They are initially appointed for five years, after a positive evaluation leading to a permanent associate professorship. The internal progression continues up to the full professor, following evaluation processes.

With 2010 reform, Finland has started to move from a four-stage competition-based system, in which each career step meant applying for an advertised post. Currently, career progression has

²⁵ [Akademici a akademičky 2018: zpráva z dotazníkového šetření akademických a vědeckých pracovníků a pracovníků ve ve](#)

²⁶ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/95442853-ba05-11f0-b37f-01aa75ed71a1/>

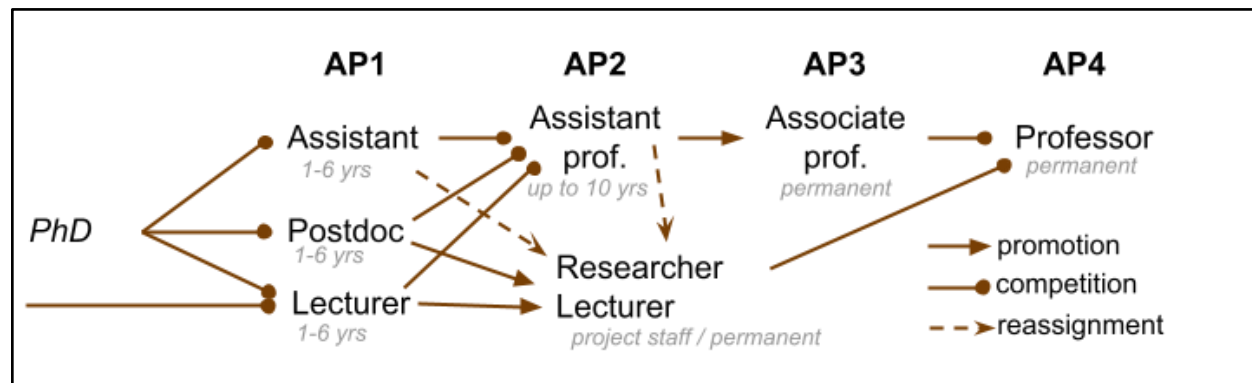
transitioned towards tenure track, four stages remain, but the route to professor is now mainly promotion through evaluation.²⁷

The Netherlands shifted from a tradition of chair system to the promotion to the associate professor based on performance evaluation. Becoming a full professor still requires applying and making it through a competition.²⁸

Poland and Slovakia have competition models, however both tried to detach the academic positions from academic titles and the process of habilitation.

Recommendations

A2.1. Develop a hybrid promotion and competition model. Competition should be used to fill positions on AP1, AP2 and AP4 level. The first stage (AP1) would be an assistant role - either with combined profile as an assistant, with research profile as a postdoc (assistant researcher) or as a lecturer (assistant). This should allow for a person to establish themselves and apply for a vacancy for an AP2-level position. They could either opt for a “tenure track” position of an assistant professor, or specialised positions of either lecturer or researcher. In case of need, higher education institutions could also open vacancies for the position of AP3. Postdocs and lecturers could be promoted to a position of lecturer or researcher, while assistants could be reassigned towards these positions.



Access to tenure track (AP2 → AP3) is through open and internationally advertised competition. Selected staff will be offered a permanent contract (on AP2 level) with specified conditions for their career promotion to AP3 level. They will undergo a regular evaluation process, at least every five active years (i.e. number of years working, excluding parental and other long-term leaves). First evaluation will take place at least four active years after the start of the contract. The evaluation may result in promotion to AP3 level (Associate professor / Docent), continuing in tenure track with further development needed or the end of tenure track. If a staff member is not promoted within ten active years or their evaluation is negative, they can be either reassigned to a non-tenured position, or their contract may be terminated.

A2.2. A prerequisite for an AP1 position is a PhD degree with the exception of lecturers, who can be hired for specific teaching purposes even without a PhD degree, for example, to teach foreign languages or to bring expertise and experience from professional life. For AP2 positions, a requirement is some working experience after PhD in academia or in similar sectors. It is strongly

²⁷ [from closed vacancy-based recruitment to more diverse tenure track recruitment in Finnish universities in](#)

²⁸ [PhD, Postdoc, and Professor Salaries in the Netherlands in 2024 - Academic Positions](#)

recommended that people selected for tenure track would need to have some PhD mobility or working experience for at least 6 months in another institution or organisation, preferably abroad, than one they are being appointed in.

A2.3. Temporary contracts among all academic staff (AP1-AP4) should remain under 30% overall. On AP1 level, temporary contracts should be cumulatively limited to six years.

A2.4. Maintain the principle of maximum 3 contracts of 3 years for temporary contracts. The exception for temporary contracts should be for retired, emeritus, staff, that could be repeated without limit. Staff employed for specific projects (e.g. researchers or lecturers) might be employed on temporary contracts for the duration of the given project.

A2.5. Introduce a position of postdoc (research assistant) at AP1 level. Similar to other positions on AP1 level, the contracts should be capped to six years. The position should be primarily research-oriented, with some educational responsibilities. For all AP1 positions, institutions are expected to provide support for further career development, inside and outside academia.

A3. Retirement and automatic expiration of permanent contracts

Context

Academic staff are often able to work beyond the statutory age of retirement. This can create some tensions, as senior positions might not become vacated and it is difficult to terminate a permanent contract. At the same time, older academic staff have a lot of relevant experience and can be very valuable for their higher education institution. As they are under less pressure, they can devote more time to supervising students and supporting younger colleagues.

The retirement of academic staff in Czechia is currently governed by general rules for all employed individuals. However, reaching the statutory retirement age does not lead to the automatic expiration of the permanent contract.

European overview

Most EU countries have set age for the automatic expiration of permanent contracts, this age is typically between 65 and 70. In some countries it is linked to general retirement regulation, while other countries have specific regulations for academic staff that usually allows the contract to extend beyond the statutory age of retirement. At the same time, even after reaching retirement age, academic staff are in some contexts allowed single extension. Employment contracts beyond that limit can be offered to an individual, but often only on a temporary basis and requiring regular evaluation.

In Austria, reaching statutory retirement age (65 for men, 60 for women but progressively increasing to 65 by 2033) is the standard threshold where regular permanent employment concludes.²⁹ If a university wishes to retain a professor beyond this age, they typically must transition the academic to a new, fixed-term contract.

In Belgium (the whole country), the statutory retirement age directly triggers the end of a permanent academic appointment. Currently, the legal retirement age is 66 (for retirements after February 2025)

²⁹ [Conditions of service for academic staff working in higher education](#)

and will rise to 67 by 2030. Working beyond this age is possible only if the university board explicitly approves a continuation, and this approval can only be granted on a strict, year-by-year basis.³⁰

In Finland, an academic's permanent employment contract automatically ends at the end of the calendar month in which they reach their statutory retirement age. This ranges from 68 to 70 based on the year of birth. Employer and the employee can agree to continue the contract beyond the threshold on a fixed-term basis.³¹

In the Netherlands, collective agreement sets that employment contract ends automatically on the exact day an employee reaches the state pension age, currently set at 67 years. Academic staff up to 10 years before their retirement can reduce their annual working hours by up to 20%.³²

Poland abolished as part of the 2018 the contract limit set for the year an academic reaches 70 years. Currently, academic staff in Poland follow general retirement rules, 60 for women and 65 for men. However, staff can continue working after reaching this age and reaching statutory retirement age cannot be sole justification for contract termination.³³

In Slovakia, academic staff can retire upon reaching the retirement age. However, the permanent contract expires at the end of the academic year in which they reach the age of 70. Subject to approval by the Academic Senate, the employment contract can be extended for a maximum of one year and this extension may be repeated. Subject to a proposal by the Scientific Council, professors over the age of 70 who have ended their employment can be given the honorary title "Professor Emeritus".³⁴

Recommendations

Academic staff should have the right to retire upon reaching statutory age. However, in many cases, academics can work beyond that age. The regulation should provide some flexibility on when a permanent contract expires. These limits should be clear and transparent. Considering practices in other countries and the current statutory age in Czechia, the permanent contract should expire no later than in an academic year in which a person reaches the age of 70. At the same time, regulations should allow academics to continue working, if they and the institution see value in it. However, this would be with temporary, fixed-term contracts and the focus of their work might change, including no longer having a leading role in education and research.

A3.1. Any permanent contract expires at the end of the academic year in which an individual reaches the age of 70. Academic staff can opt to retire earlier, when they reach their statutory retirement age, as set in the law on pension insurance (60-67 years old).

A3.2. Upon expiration of a permanent contract, an academic can continue working through temporary, fixed-term, contracts linked to specific tasks, subject to positive evaluation and institutional needs. The evaluation shall take place bi/annually (for details see C.3). An academic with a temporary contract and older than 70 years should have "emeritus" status.

³⁰ [Rustpensioen](#)

³¹ <https://www.professoriliitto.fi/en/work/employment-relationships-and-their-termination/pension/>

³² [Conditions of service for academic staff working in higher education](#)

³³ [Conditions of service for academic staff working in higher education](#)

³⁴ [Conditions of service for academic staff working in higher education](#)

A3.3. The academic with the “emeritus” status cannot be study programme guarantor or occupy a position in university bodies (e.g. selection/evaluation committees).

B. Horizontal differentiation

B.1 Flexible profiles vs. separate career tracks

Academic career encompasses many different activities and roles. In general, academic staff engage in some way with some teaching and research activities, while many have additional responsibilities in other areas, namely administration and institutional service, engagement with various external stakeholders, management responsibilities and sometimes professional activities within their field, like clinical work or artistic activities. Higher education systems sit on a spectrum between two organising principles. The combined ("balanced") model treats teaching and research as a single role held by one person, descended from the Humboldtian ideal of unity between the two. The differentiated model splits academics into separate tracks, typically teaching-focused, research-focused and balanced.

Horizontal differentiation is highly on the European agenda. The Council stresses in its 2024 Recommendations the need to promote *"approaches that **value, acknowledge and reward diverse academic career paths**, so as to **facilitate the permeability of careers across the different roles of academic staff**..."* and to enhance focus on **teaching and learning excellence** *"... and **knowledge transfer**, by paying as much attention to these activities as to research..."*.³⁵

Czechia has a balanced model in which academics are expected to have a role in both teaching and research. Yet, there are also specialised roles of research staff and lecturers that have their respective responsibilities in research and in teaching. However, there are prestige differences and opportunities for career progression between positions of balanced positions (e.g. assistant professor, docent and professor) and specialised positions (e.g. research staff, lecturer). Secondly, while docent and professor are nominally balanced roles, habilitation and proceedings for professorship are skewed towards assessing research outputs, with much less attention given to teaching performance and even less to performance in other areas, such as institutional service, external engagement and management.

Other countries have also faced similar challenges in equal recognition, prestige differences and career progression opportunities. Reviewed countries have either fully developed separate career tracks (balanced, research-oriented and teaching-oriented) or combined models.

International examples

Austria³⁶ and Slovakia³⁷ have mostly combined models with most academic staff having both education and research responsibilities. With specialised research staff and to lesser extent lecturer posts existing alongside this, but the professorial track bundles both research and education. Flanders (Belgium) has also primarily combined model for R3-R4 academic staff, but assistant positions (R2 and outside tenure track) are more specialised roles, either on teaching or research,³⁸

³⁵ [32024H07282 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

³⁶ [Universitäten / Rahmen | Kollektivvertrag](#)

³⁷ [300/2025 Z. z. Zákon o vysokých školách a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov \(vysokoškolský zákon\) | Slov-Lex](#)

³⁸ [Conditions of service for academic staff working in higher education](#)

Institutional example: KU Leuven in Belgium (Flanders) approach to diversification of quality academic work. They have defined three core responsibilities of academics: research, education and engagement (i.e. providing internal and external services). Each of these responsibilities has 4 dimensions: development and innovation, academic leadership, sharing knowledge (open science, open educational resources) and teamwork.³⁹ This framework is used for evaluation of academics as discussed below in part C.2.

Finland operates a tenure track model, where positions generally combine both education and research, but a distinct teaching and research career strand exists. Some institutions have more developed parallel career tracks than others.

The Netherlands is moving from a combined model towards differentiated profiles, driven by the Recognition & Rewards programme, launched in 2019 with the position paper Room for Everyone's Talent.⁴⁰ The paper identified five main focuses: education, research, impact, leadership and patient care (in medical centres). Although a combination of some education and research is seen as default.

Poland is the clearest case of statutory separation. The 2018 Law on Higher Education and Science divides academic staff into distinct profiles although in the same positions, research staff, teaching staff and research-and-teaching staff. There are some distinct qualification requirements for each as well as requirements on the share of annual workload dedicated to teaching and research.⁴¹ The combined "research-and-teaching" category remains the mainstream route, but research-only and teaching-only are formally recognised parallel tracks.

There is also a growing emphasis internationally to not only develop specialised career tracks or flexible profiles, but even more importantly to also develop approaches and performance measurements beyond research publications and simplistic counts. There are ongoing efforts within the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (COaRA)⁴² and San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)⁴³ to diversify approaches to assessment in academic careers. Also, the European Commission is currently working with the OECD to develop the competence framework for academic staff, which should facilitate recognition of various roles of academic staff.

Recommendation

B1.1. Adopt flexible profiles across all academic positions and levels (AP1-AP4). Appointment on AP3 level would be possible for associate professor with teaching portfolio, combined portfolio, research portfolio. Alternatively, people can be also appointed as research staff and lecturers at AP3 level.

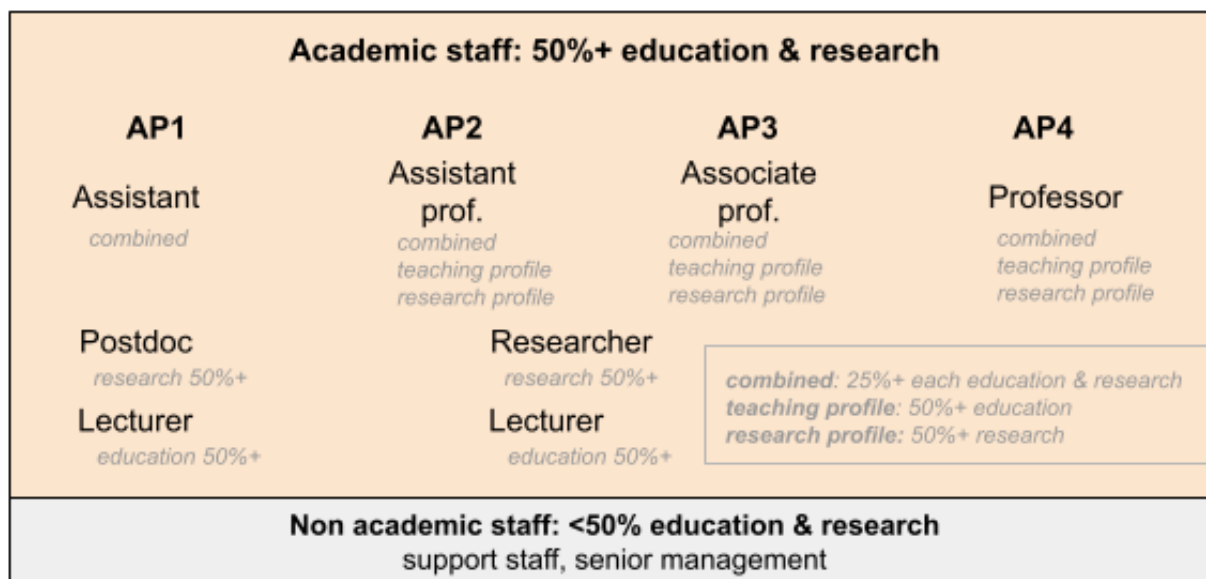
³⁹ [KU Leuven Framework for Recognising and Valuing High-Quality Academic Work](#)

⁴⁰ [Position paper 'Room for everyone's talent' | NWO](#)

⁴¹ [Conditions of service for academic staff working in higher education](#)

⁴² [WG Reforming Academic Career Assessment – CoARA](#)

⁴³ [Read the Declaration | DORA](#)



Specific work responsibilities and time allocation between them should be defined for each academic, based on agreement, linked to individual preferences, abilities and institutional needs. Regulation should define core academic activities, education and research, while institutions can define further roles (i.e. third mission, innovation, management, service). Academic staff should allocate at least half of their workload (i.e. 50% of their annual working time) to education and/or research. For combined profile, at least 20% should be each education and research, for specialised profile, at least 50% should be either research or education.

Senior management and support staff that may contribute in limited amounts to research or education might not be considered academic staff.

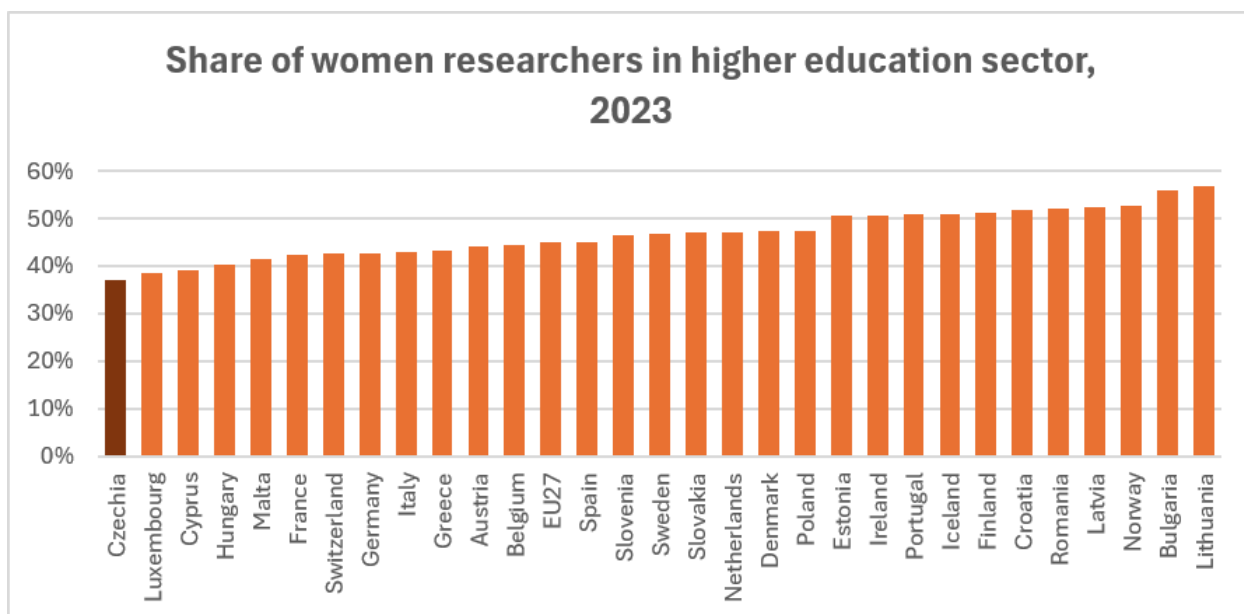
B1.2. Support efforts to diversify academic career assessment metrics, criteria and approaches, especially developing approaches for multi-dimensional and comprehensive assessment of performance across various domains, i.e. research, teaching, institutional service, external engagement, innovation.

B1.3. In line with recommendation A1.1., the study programme guarantor should be linked to position rather than academic title. Bachelor-level programmes by person in AP2 position, master-level programmes by AP3 and PhD programmes by AP4. Study programme guarantors should allocate at least 50% of their working time to activities related to education. This does not mean that the guarantors should teach 50 % of their time. They should rather be managers of the program responsible for designing and implementing a strategy for the program development so that it is in line with state-of-the-art in relevant research area and in higher education pedagogy. This also includes enhancement of teaching quality among the teachers within the relevant program.

B1.4. Academic staff appointed to a senior leadership role (it requires more than 50% of their workload to be focused on management and administration, e.g. rector, dean, vice-rector) in their institution will upon completion of their appointment be able to return to their position or they may take different managerial role in their institution or in different one. It should depend on personal preferences.

B.2 Increase of women in senior academic roles

In the EU, about 45% of all researchers in the higher education sector (most academic staff) are women (see graph below).⁴⁴ Across the EU countries, there is a clear pattern of the proportion of women being much higher among bachelor and master-level students, the proportions are about equal among doctoral students, but then with each level of seniority in academic career, the share of women falls down. Women were heads of 26% of higher education institutions in the EU in 2022 (18% in Czechia).⁴⁵



In Czechia, women are chronically under-represented in academic professions, only 37%, the lowest share of women among researchers working in the higher education sector and research sector in general.⁴⁶ The gap is quite stark among the most senior academics. In the EU, about 33% of Grade A positions (professors/full professors) were women in 2022⁴⁷, compared to only 16% in Czechia.⁴⁸ This means that Czechia loses the potential of a large pool of talent who decides to leave academia.

Increasing number of women in senior academic positions and creating more inclusive environment is stressed in the European Council recommendations on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education⁴⁹, focusing on ensuring “*remuneration free from gender pay gaps, and a **work-life balance** and flexible working conditions [...] that help bring together personal and family life and caring responsibilities*”, “**supporting gender equality**, gender balance, equal opportunities and inclusiveness” and creating “*inclusive and safe working environment by i) **encouraging initiatives helping female academic staff achieve a high level of academic seniority and senior management/leadership roles**; ii)*

⁴⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/bookmark/07049249-1ec2-41ea-8fdd-8aaf86b6c2f3>

⁴⁵ [SheFigures 2024 | Research and Innovation](#)

⁴⁶ [Ženy ve vědě: data | NKC - gender a věda](#)

⁴⁷ [SheFigures 2024 | Research and Innovation](#)

⁴⁸ [Statistická ročenka školství – Zaměstnanci a mzdové prostředky, MŠMT ČR](#)

⁴⁹ [32024H07282 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

*promoting the introduction of **gender equality plans** and **broader diversity and inclusion plans** at higher education institutions”.*

Inclusiveness, diversity and gender equity is the second most frequently targeted policy area that European countries want to reform.⁵⁰ However, according to the OECD, policies are more often defined than implemented.⁵¹

Women academics often face dual caring responsibilities. First in their personal life, due to uneven distribution of family care (children, elderly) and household work. This is also connected with career breaks due to caring responsibilities that disrupt some academic performance, namely cycle of grant applications, researching and publishing. However, women also tend to have higher caring responsibilities in professional life, they tend to be expected and asked to support students more, do more of the institutional service and administration, activities that are crucial for academia, but tend to have a low value in academic hiring and promotion.⁵²

International examples

In Austria, women representation is supported by quotas in governing and collegial bodies (50 %), measures in performance agreements to increase the number of women in leadership positions and support young female academics. There are also dedicated funding schemes for women postdocs.⁵³ In addition, during the selection process for the professor the rector has to consult their decision with the working group on equal opportunities, which can object to the decision and then an arbitration process has to take place.⁵⁴ According to the collective agreement, when the head of the department distributes tasks and sets working hours they have to take into account any childcare responsibilities of the employees.⁵⁵

In Flanders (Belgium), women's academic proportion is one of the parameters in the university funding formula. Selection committees and governing bodies must be gender balanced (60/40 ratio). Underrepresented gender should be also given priority in case of equal quality.⁵⁶

Institutional examples

At KU Leuven there is quite a complex approach to promoting gender equality. As a traditional Catholic university KU Leuven had low representation of women. In 2014 KU Leuven adopted the Gender action plan and managed to increase the proportion of female professors from 12,7% in 2012 to more than 20% in 2020.⁵⁷ Several tools are in place that help to enhance the position of women at KU Leuven. Some are related to assessment of their work while others tackle representation of women interests via processes/institutional settings. An important tool to enhance the presence of women in the highest academic positions are the evaluation criteria that

⁵⁰ <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/4097557>

⁵¹ [The state of academic careers in OECD countries](#)

⁵² [The state of academic careers in OECD countries](#)

⁵³ [Austria | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁵⁴ [Bundesgesetz über die Organisation der Universitäten und ihre Studien \(Universitätsgesetz 2002 – UG\)](#)

⁵⁵ § 9, point 2, [Universitäten / Rahmen | Kollektivvertrag](#)

⁵⁶ [Belgium | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁵⁷ [Key figures: the proportion of women in academia The Gender Action Plan \(2014\) was prompted by the observation that there were t](#)

prevent box ticking and require a holistic approach.⁵⁸ Among the key dimensions of this framework are academic leadership, sharing knowledge and teamwork. It is thus not possible to be promoted/hired without also doing “caring” academic work, teamwork, collegial support and various internal and external services⁵⁹. These are activities more typical for women.⁶⁰ Hence the evaluation that is prerequisite for promotion (see part C2) takes into account activities where women excel and this can make the highest ranks more accessible for them. Further during the evaluation, the career breaks due to pregnancy or parental leave are taken into account. This is in line with the recommendations from the European Commission.⁶¹ Finally, in each evaluation/selection committee one of the members is appointed to be so called “gender and diversity spits”, responsible to secure the gender and diversity balance aspect during the selection and evaluation procedure. In the selection and evaluation process, if two profiles are equally good, the one from an underrepresented gender should be given priority.

Another special example is from Sydney University⁶², which organised women-only recruitment for roles in a faculty of engineering. This was done as a trial in 2025 in the context of a policy initiative to increase representation of women in fields with significant under-representation. The institution has reported significant interest for the position, also from abroad and the quality of candidates was very high.

Germany has two interesting policies. One is the cascaded model, where universities are committed (and now increasingly obliged) to ensure that the proportion of women at each academic career level should be at least as high as that of the qualification level directly below. Second longstanding policy (since 2007) a joint federal and state funding initiative federal Programme for Women Professors that asks institutions to develop gender equality strategies and they then received funding for up to three women professorships for five years.⁶³

In the Netherlands, the Ministry of Education provided in 2017 as part of Talent Impuls project universities compensation for the extra salary, if they promote women to full professors, with over €5 million in funding, leading to 100 women professors appointed in 2018. Some universities also have women-focused tenure-track fellowships.⁶⁴

In Ireland there is an opposite approach to motivate gender equality than in Germany and the Netherlands. In Ireland the engagement with the Athena Swan charter is compulsory so that the institutions can be eligible for funding from Ireland’s major research agencies. Currently, all of Ireland’s universities and institutes of technology participate in Athena Swan Ireland.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ [KU Leuven Framework for Recognising and Valuing High-Quality Academic Work](#)

⁵⁹ [KU Leuven Framework for Recognising and Valuing High-Quality Academic Work](#)

⁶⁰ [Faculty Service Loads and Gender: Are Women Taking Care of the Academic Family? | Research in Higher Education | Springer Nature Link](#)

⁶¹ [She figures 2024 - Publications Office of the EU](#)

⁶² [Female-Only Faculty Recruitment “Drew Better Applications”](#)

⁶³ [Germany | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁶⁴ [Netherlands | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

⁶⁵ [Athena Swan Ireland | Advance HE](#)

Recommendations:

B2.1. At least third of all selection and evaluation committees should be female and male. Similar principles are recommended for all governing and collegial bodies in higher education institutions.

B2.2. Selection and evaluation processes should take into consideration individual, professional and personal context. Rather than treating output as an absolute measure, performance should be assessed in relation to professional context, such as field popularity, interdisciplinarity and institutional resources, and their personal context, such as caring duties, background or career breaks.^{66,67} The selection and evaluation should not only focus on performance but also potential, if they could work in more favorable conditions.⁶⁸

To the extent possible, criteria used in selections and evaluations should be multi-dimensional recognising various contributions, including institutional service, student support, administrative work and others.

B2.3. Tenure track as well as other procedures should reflect only active working years, taking into consideration career breaks for various reasons.

B2.4. Develop funding and support programmes for women junior academics, funding for tenure track and professorship positions for women in fields with low share of women.

B.2.5 Consider introducing requirements for Athena Swan accreditation/Gender equality plans as pre-requisite for applying for research and other grants. The advantage of this step is that the state does not directly prescribe what exactly universities should do but it tells them that they have to implement principles enhancing gender equality.^{69,70,71} Such a flexible approach is important because of relative conservatism in Czechia and Czech academia.

⁶⁶ [The state of academic careers in OECD countries](#)

⁶⁷ [A Pathway towards Multidimensional Academic Careers](#)

⁶⁸ [Measuring Disadvantage | The Sutton Trust](#)

⁶⁹ [Transformed UK Athena Swan Charter: Information pack for departments](#)

⁷⁰ <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/human-resources/media/hr/edi/Athena-Swan-FAQs---June-2023.pdf>

⁷¹ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear/horizon-europe-gep-criterion>

C. Recruitment and evaluation

C.1 Recruitment and selection

Context

Recruitment is the most frequently targeted policy area in the strategies of European countries⁷². The European Council suggests in its recommendations to the member states that they should improve *“the recruitment practices and working conditions for academic and professional services staff, as well as related funding mechanisms, in order to make those conditions more **transparent, predictable, accessible and stable**, especially for staff who are at an early stage in their career”*.⁷³

The Eurydice report (2017)⁷⁴ recognizes five aspects of recruitment:

- Scope and coverage of legislation,
- Recruitment methods, need to make the call public,
- Top level regulation of the recruitment process,
- Equal opportunities (discussed above),
- Role of top-level authorities in the recruitment process.

According to Eurydice, 13 out of 29 studied European countries, mostly Eastern European, usually did not regulate the specific aspects of recruitment methods (e.g. composition of selection committees), only how vacancies should be filled (e.g. by public call). In 20 countries legislation targeted all staff categories while in 9 only some. More top-level regulation is usually connected to more applied institutions.⁷⁵

There are four types of recruitment methods: selection of the best candidate, response to the public vacancy, negotiations with a restricted list of candidates and direct call. In Europe, the most common approach is response to the public vacancy, which means that the recruitment is mainly managed by the HEI in terms of both publishing the call and defining the criteria.⁷⁶

Eurydice recognized four areas that are regulated in terms of the recruitment process: composition of selection committees, accessibility of selection and evaluation documentation, appeal procedures and conflict of interest.⁷⁷

The Czech law defines the recruitment only in a very limited way. It states that the positions should be filled by competition, i.e. as response to the public vacancy as is the case in most of the European countries. The call has to be published on the public part of the university website for at least 30 days. It provides options to fill the positions without competition such as repeated occupation of the

⁷² <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/4097557>

⁷³ [32024H07282 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

⁷⁴ <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/670566>

⁷⁵ <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/670566>

⁷⁶ <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/670566>

⁷⁷ <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/670566>

position by the same person or other cases specified in the internal regulations. There is no regulation of other areas mentioned by the Eurydice.

International examples

Summary: From the selected countries Austria and Slovakia have relatively detailed regulation of recruitment for top level academic positions (AUT R4, Slovakia R3 and R4). Austria and KU Leuven (case study of Belgian university in Flemish community) involve R4 level academics into selection of R3 (BEL-FL) and R4 (KU Leuven, AUT). The recruitment of post-docs is not much regulated, as these positions are for a very limited time. In AUT and KU Leuven, people involved in the selection process are from across the university, to make the process more transparent and limit the conflict of interest. In Slovakia such a provision was in place for a very short time (2022 - 2024), however now lower rank people from the same faculty have a dominant position. The Irish case shows that also in highly decentralized systems there can be agreement on rules of recruitment. It also provides an example of making calls more open by publishing them on designated national platform (similar situation is in Netherlands⁷⁸) and on Euroxess job portal. All analyzed systems leave the space for exceptions.

In Austria, the University Act (UG 2002) closely regulates the recruitment of professors. It states that the position must be advertised internationally and declares that the Senate appoints the committee that prepares the list of three candidates based on the proposal of 3 assessors. One assessor is proposed by the rector, and two assessors are proposed by the professors chamber in the senate based on recommendations from professors from the relevant unit, additionally one of these two has to be from outside of university. The appointment committee also has one student member. The Senate is dominated by the professors hence also the composition of the appointment committee is professor driven. The rector can decide not to choose any of the proposed candidates. The rector can include in the selection also candidates who did not apply based on the call.

In some cases, the rector can appoint a professor without competition (§99a UG 2002). This position is for a limited time and based on the recommendation or consultation with the professors from the relevant department. There is a possibility for extension of these contracts based on qualification assessment. The selection of new professors is overall mainly influenced by people of the same rank and the rector.

For other research and artistic staff (including the associate professors) the UG 2002 indicates that the positions should be advertised internationally (at least EU level) for at least 3 weeks. This is not the case for the professors - the outstanding personalities actively hired according to § 99a. Further there is no need for advertising for lecturers or project staff financed by third parties. A similar approach of no need for advertising of externally/project funded positions is used in Ireland⁷⁹ and for post-docs in Belgium (Flemish community).

Institutional example

⁷⁸ <https://www.academictransfer.com/>

⁷⁹ <https://www.iua.ie/for-researchers/researcher-career-framework/>

At KU Leuven (case study from Flemish community)⁸⁰ open competition is used for academic's equivalent to the R2 and R3 (assistant and associate professor) positions. R2 could be either post-doc hired for specific project/tasks or senior research fellow. According to our interviewee, a postdoc can be financed from their own postdoctoral budget (FWO, MSCA-postdoc) obtained through national or European competition or from resources of a professor (e.g. project money). If a professor has a budget that can be freely used, no publicly open competition is necessary, and the professor may choose someone whom they know will do the tasks well. However, these contracts are strictly tied to the money available for the respective post-doc period.

Positions of so-called ZAP (independent academic personnel, i.e. assistant professor, associate professor, professor or full professor) are opened once there is a budget available (e.g. someone retires, etc.). A profile vacancy of a new position is carefully discussed at several levels (research unit, department, campus, faculty, university) and it is a long process.

At KU Leuven, it is not allowed to replicate a retired person's profile or to recruit a 'clone' of a retired professor. An independent research profile is expected, which must respond to "research gap at KU Leuven" and must be up-to-date, state-of-the-art topics, with potential for innovations. At the same time, the profile must fit in the faculty (education) where the person is recruited. Also, it is not allowed to duplicate the expertise over the university, to avoid the same research expertise at two different faculties or institutes.

Vacancies for assistant and associate professors are published as international calls.⁸¹ The selection process typically consists of four phases: (1) preparation of the shortlist by the selection committee, (2) interviews (with chosen 3-6 candidates, placing them in order and suggesting whether the successful candidates should take assistant or associate professor position), (3) final selection from the short list by the Special Executive Committee (*Bijzonder Groepsbestuur*)⁸², which can confirm suggested candidate order or change it. Final, rather formal, approval is by the Special Academic Council (*Bijzondere Academische Raad*).⁸³ The Special Executive Committee has due to its membership coming from across the university a very important role in ensuring that there is no repetition of the same research in different places of the university.

More junior candidates are typically taken on to fill the tenured positions (assistant professor) and over the years can apply for promotion to associate professor, professor, and full professor. Although not everyone will reach the position of professor or full professor. More senior academics can be appointed directly on a work contract as associate professor (with an evaluation period). The evaluation is described in the next part C.2).

⁸⁰ All following text describes the situation at KU Leuven - information was provided by a chair of the evaluation committee. KU Leuven is one of the best universities in the world and has a very well developed recruitment and evaluation system cited also by international organizations working on HE policies such as the OECD.

⁸¹ Only very rarely positions of professor and full professor are filled from outside of the university and if so, it is more common for a *part-time* visiting professor with a strong CV (such as a Nobel prize laureate...).

⁸² Composition of the Special Executive Committee: chair is the vice-rector for the respective part of university (e.g. sciences and engineering/humanities), deans from respective part of the university (these first two check if the research is not already covered by someone else), vice-rectors for research and for education from the relevant part, 2 professors, one coordinator for research, vice-rector for infrastructure (assesses whether university has adequate infrastructure for the candidate's needs)

⁸³ Composition of the Special Academic Council: rector as a chair, all vice-rectors from whole university, all deans from whole university, registrar, ombudsman - psychology professor dealing with work related problems, chair of university HR department, 4 full professors, 2 members without vote (1 government representative, 1 from another university)

The number of members in the selection/evaluation committee which decides about the result of the recruitment depends on the faculty. Large faculties with many departments have larger committees than smaller and more homogenous faculties. For example, a smaller faculty of architecture at KU Leuven has 12 members. 6 are permanent - four are elected (professors) and there is also the campus chair (as this faculty has more than one campus) and the relevant department chair. The other half is ad hoc only for the specific selection process (2 from outside of the university, at least one of those from abroad, headhunter chair and the rest are relevant experts from the faculty). There can be more than 4 experts from the relevant faculty so that during the interview phase a person who has conflict of interest will not participate. The whole recruitment process is very complex and very long. It takes about 4 years from the moment of defining the vacancy till the moment of signing of the contract.

In Ireland there is no state-level regulation of the recruitment process at universities, and it is up to individual institutions how they organise it.⁸⁴ There are only broad regulations in terms of antidiscrimination principles and alike. However, there is common approach developed within the Irish University Association with a common framework defining principles for recruitment and evaluation for Irish universities (Researcher Career Development and Employment Framework)⁸⁵ for R2 and R3 positions. The guidelines address areas of position approval, definition of job description, advertising of vacancy and in very broad terms recruitment itself (methods, committee composition, complaint procedures).

Also, in Norway the universities teamed up to define a toolbox for universities that they can use during the recruitment process. It makes the process more transparent and predictable for both applicants and institutions. It helps to define necessary skills for the position in question. The applicant can then better understand to what extent they fit the position. The toolbox is flexible while it also offers a systematic and structured framework for assessment.⁸⁶

In Slovakia all positions must be filled by competition. The exceptions are part-time positions lasting for less than one year. Otherwise, the calls must be published on the website of the university or faculty if the position is at the faculty. It also must be published in the place indicated by the Ministry of Education. The 2025 Higher Education Law defines quite a lot of details for the recruitment for R3 and R4 positions. For R3 and R4 positions the law defines that there is a selection committee with five members. There are some small differences for committees that are selecting people for positions at faculty vs. at university. For selecting someone for a professor position at the faculty the committee must have at least two members working on the professor position. If the position to be filled is docent, then at least two members must hold a docent position. Two members of the committee are nominated by the rector and three by the dean from the respective faculty. One of those nominated by the dean is proposed by the employees' representation (labour unions). At least one of the rector's members is from outside of the university. A student without the voting right takes part in the selection procedure.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1997/act/24/section/25/enacted/en/index.html>

⁸⁵ <https://www.iua.ie/for-researchers/researcher-career-framework/>

⁸⁶ NOR-CAM – A toolbox for recognition and rewards in academic careers - Universities Norway

⁸⁷ 300/2025 Z. z. Zákon o vysokých školách a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov (vysokoškolský zákon) | Slov-Lex

The law further states that within five days after the selection minutes must be published for next 90 days on university's website. The minutes include the list of selection criteria and qualitative assessment of the candidates against these criteria, final order of the candidates and reasoning for the result regarding each candidate, list of candidates, information about the candidates, name of the program in which the candidate will fill the position.

Although there is a need for open call for all the positions, this is only formal and most of the positions are filled with people from inside the university. The average number of candidates for professor position is around 1, for docent 1,5 and for all positions 1,7. The vast majority of the candidates are coming from the institution where they are applying for a job.⁸⁸ The reason is that many of these calls are more about renewing a contract hence evaluation instead of the recruitment would be more beneficial.

Recommendations

C1.1 Regulation defines basic expectations in regard to selection for each position in terms of transparency (publishing information about vacancy and selection process), prescribed selection process and type of selection.

Position	Transparency criteria	Selection process	Competition
AP4 (Professor) AP3 (Direct appointment) AP2 (Tenure track)	Transparency criteria Internationally advertised vacancy	Selection committee	External competition
AP1 (Assistant, Lecturer, Postdoc)	Transparency criteria	Up to institution	External competition
AP2-AP3 (Researcher, Lecturer)	Transparency criteria	Up to institution	a) direct offer b) internal competition c) external competition
Third-party funded	Up to institution	Up to institution	Up to institution
Part-time (<0.7 FTE)			
Short-term (<1 yr)			

Define general guidelines for selection and evaluation processes, including minimal transparency requirements. These guidelines should be developed with the relevant stakeholders and widely recognised. The Irish example is a good base for this.

⁸⁸ [Výročné správy o stave vysokého školstva | Ministerstvo školstva, výskumu, vývoja a mládeže Slovenskej republiky](#)

C1.2. Appointment to all academic positions funded from the public budget (unless part-time or short-term) should maintain transparency criteria. These should be set in system-level regulation (e.g. law, accreditation, government decree) that could be evaluated during the institutional accreditation process or relevant similar process. The accreditation should mainly consider whether processes in place at the respective HEI secure transparency, i.e. making information about the positions publicly available, making selection and evaluation documentation available, including outcomes of the selection, and having functional appeal procedures and mechanisms eliminating conflict of interest. The transparency as a key tool to open the recruitment procedures was pointed out by several interviewees in Slovakia who reflected on why relatively strict and detailed regulation of the recruitment procedures introduced in 2022 did not work.

Tenure track positions (AP2), direct appointment for AP3 and AP4 should be also internationally advertised. Other full-time academic positions (funded from the public budget) should be advertised at least nationally. Czechia could also consider creating a portal for publishing open positions as is the case in Netherlands: [AcademicTransfer](#) or Ireland: [University Vacancies Ireland](#). The guidelines for institutions could also include the suggestion from the Irish framework to publish all the calls on the Euraxess jobs portal.⁸⁹

C1.3 External competition should be required for all AP4, AP3 (direct appointment) and AP2 (tenure track) positions following rules on transparency of recruitment and selection process.

AP1 positions should initially be appointed by an open competition following transparency criteria, with a selection process defined by the institution. A new contract can be offered to the same person up to a total duration of six years. However, evaluation should be required (for details see recommendation in C2.2).

Positions of lecturers and researchers (AP2-AP3) can be either, a) offered to an academic already working in the institution (as promotion or re-assignment) after an evaluation, b) offered in competition only for internal candidates, or c) offered in open competition that is transparently shared.

Competition rules and selection process described here do not apply to third-party funded, part-time (i.e. less than 0.7 FTE) and short-term (less than 12 months) positions.

C1.4 Selection committees as set in regulation should be used in all appointments for AP4, AP3 (direct appointment) and AP2 (tenure track). For other positions, the selection process is to be defined by each institution. Selection committee should:

- have uneven number of and at least five members,
- be semi-permanent, with more than half members being permanent members of selection (and evaluation) committee, appointed by the Scientific Council,
- remaining committee members are ad-hoc appointed for each selection from relevant department and field/practice,
- more than half of members should be from another institution, faculty or department, at least one-fifth of members should be from another institution
- all committee members should be at least at the level for which selection is made

⁸⁹ [Researcher Career Development Framework | Irish Universities Association](#)

- student representative(s) should be included as non-voting members in case of selection for position with teaching responsibilities

The selection for the position of professor (AP4) or in case of direct competition for AP3, committee should include an external member who is working at an institution outside Czechia and is internationally recognized academic in the given field.

Selection committees are responsible for developing vacancy notice, recruitment and outreach to potential candidates, developing selection-specific criteria and conducting selection, namely evaluating candidates. The selection committee will provide ranking of the candidates and their evaluations to the Scientific Council.

The Scientific Council appoints selection committee members, approves vacancy notice and selection-specific criteria. The Council can change the ranking order of candidates and then provide the (new) order to the rector with explanation for not keeping the order. Significant changes in the ranking order need to be discussed with the selection committee.

Semi-permanent members of the selection committees should ensure that similar standards are maintained across different selections and that people from different departments and faculties are involved in each selection. These permanent members from all the committees at the HEI should have regular meetings (every 6 months) to discuss how the recruitment processes and criteria work and what and how needs to be improved. There should be a report from the meetings to the Scientific Council including evaluation of the recruitments and proposals for changes.

Regarding the selection the Scientific Council should have decision making power and the rector would have final approval voice, however if they would not agree with the Council's recommendation then they would have to provide a public explanation. Under no condition they cannot choose a candidate not included on the list prepared by the selection committee. In case the Council or the rector does not agree with the proposed candidates the selection has to repeat.

C1.5 Develop a guiding national competence framework for each level (AP1-AP4) that defines general expectations in terms of research, education and third mission. Each institution should develop their own classification of positions and institutional criteria. Specific criteria should be set for each selection, following national guidelines and institutional criteria, considering specific expectations of the position.

Selection for the position of professor (AP4) should aim to recruit people bringing innovation in the given research and education area rather than just replacing staff.

C1.6 Composition of selection committees and institutional criteria should be defined by the body with leading academics (Scientific Council). In Austria this is done by the Senate which is dominated by the professors. Similarly, in Belgium (Flanders) the selection committee and criteria are set by the body composed of the most senior academics. They also bring together people from different parts of the institution, so the recruitment process is not inward looking organised by a specific unit where the person is being recruited.

C1.7 Inspired by a recent Polish initiative⁹⁰, consider introducing a national position of academic ombudsperson that would monitor selection and evaluation processes at universities, would respond

⁹⁰ <http://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/eurypedia/poland/national-reforms-higher-education>

to complaints by academic staff and would provide recommendations to the sector on improving recruitment and evaluation practice.

C.2 Evaluation as form of personal growth, appraisal and selection

Context

The higher education institutions usually enjoy a lot of autonomy in defining staff performance appraisal procedures and criteria. In some countries, top-level authorities set the general framework providing overarching principles and approaches, while institutions define evaluation procedures and set criteria. In the UK the whole process of staff evaluation and appraisal is defined by the HEIs although they may follow the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Quality Code.⁹¹ In Finland the criteria and the process of the academic staff evaluation form part of the collective labour agreement.⁹²

According to the OECD (2024) most of the studied countries have regulations on appraisal based on quality assurance and accreditation rules (13). Slightly less countries regulate appraisal via legal rules and government regulations (9 in teaching and 11 in research) and in 7 countries the sector agreements influence the areas of performance included in the appraisal.⁹³

In 2017, half of European countries had top level guidance linking staff evaluation with career advancement and/or reward. The outcomes include financial benefits, career advancement, revision of work content, extension of contract or in case of negative outcome contract termination⁹⁴. In other words, national guidelines are mainly focusing on outcomes stimulating external motivation. In contrast with the cited data, the European Council in its recent recommendation stresses that the evaluation processes should contribute *“to more **supportive** and trust-based appraisal practices, **prioritising intrinsic motivation**, open feedback and collaboration”*.⁹⁵

Another consideration is what should be evaluated. The European Council stresses the need to *“...recognise and reward similarly diverse roles of academic staff, such as teaching, research, entrepreneurship and innovation, knowledge valorisation and transfer, national and transnational cooperation, business and community engagement, regional and local development, mentoring, administration and management, and participation in institutional governance...”*.⁹⁶

While academic careers often involve many of these activities, the evidence shows that recognition and rewards are often skewed towards research outputs. This is especially the case for research-oriented institutions. Teaching performance is considered in career appraisal among most European universities, however, only less than half is fully applying it.⁹⁷ For evaluating both research and teaching outcomes it is important to avoid box-ticking criteria and simplified metrics. In the assessment of research outputs, the evidence shows that too much stress on research productivity

⁹¹ <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/408169>

⁹² [Yliopistojen yleinen työehtosopimus 1.4.2023–31.3.2025 teksti ajalle 1.2.2025–31.3.2025 | Sivista](#)

⁹³ [The state of academic careers in OECD countries](#)

⁹⁴ <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/408169>

⁹⁵ [32024H07282 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

⁹⁶ [32024H07282 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

⁹⁷ [Trends 2018: Learning and teaching in the European Higher Education Area](#)

shifts focus of academics from quality to quantity. For the assessment of teaching, it should be avoided to use only results of student surveys as student satisfaction is not strongly correlated with learning outcomes. Therefore, it is advised to rather use more diverse inputs for the appraisal and besides student feedback, also use peer observations and self-reflections, balancing evidence-based and context-relevant inputs.⁹⁸

Finally, service, engagement and third mission activities are usually even less recognised in career appraisal than the teaching. One reason for this is that outcomes of these activities are very diverse hence hard to compare. They are also hard to measure and most importantly these activities are not perceived as so valuable to the academic career as much as research and teaching are.⁹⁹

When we consider the complexity of the problems mentioned above then it is not surprising that even though introduction of a solid evaluation process is very important, implementing such reforms is extremely difficult. Another reason adding to these problems is that the incentive structures and the legislative environment are very complex.

Existing systems of academic appraisal strive for being impartial hence they often rely on standardised performance indicators. Yet this has several negative consequences. The academics are trying to meet the indicators rather than concentrating on the quality work. It leads the academics to rather compete than to cooperate. This is currently even more pronounced as there is scarcity of senior and/or permanent academic jobs. Finally impartial and metrics-based criteria damage chances of different under-represented groups (e.g. women) where contextual appraisal would be much more relevant and beneficial and would allow the full potential of those in question.¹⁰⁰

However, there are already examples of systems or initiatives where the appraisal is targeting all different aspects of academia - teaching, research and third mission and where cooperation and leadership is stimulated and rewarded. The examples include the Dutch Room for everyone's talent strategy, Norway's career appraisal framework or workload management tools introduced in Ireland or the association of top European research universities LERU (League of European Research Universities).¹⁰¹

From the point of view of who should set the regulation or define how the appraisal processes take place at individual universities this is usually decentralized to the HE institutions themselves. What is frequently regulated on the system level is types of senior academics and basic models of remuneration.¹⁰² Yet there are also systems with central regulation of evaluation processes in the form of habilitation (e.g. AUT, SVK, CZE) and promotion to professorship (SVK, CZE, AUT, POL) or central level guidance for evaluation process of post-docs (IRL).^{103,104,105}

⁹⁸ [The state of academic careers in OECD countries](#)

⁹⁹ [The state of academic careers in OECD countries](#)

¹⁰⁰ Contextual appraisal is adaptation of the contextual admission concept as defined for example in [The use of contextual information by leading universities](#).

¹⁰¹ [The state of academic careers in OECD countries](#)

¹⁰² [The state of academic careers in OECD countries](#)

¹⁰³ [300/2025 Z. z. Zákon o vysokých školách a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov \(vysokoškolský zákon\) | Slov-Lex](#)
<https://www.slov-lex.sk/elegislativa/legislativne-procesy/SK/LP/2026/190>
[Štandardy pre habilitačné konanie a inauguračné konanie](#)

¹⁰⁴ <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231177974>

¹⁰⁵ [Researcher Career Development Framework | Irish Universities Association](#)

In Czechia the evaluation processes, criteria, and outcomes are not defined in the law or in any other state level binding or non-binding documents. One could consider habilitation and inauguration as an evaluation process with implications for remuneration and work content (to be guarantor). However, these processes happen only once/twice during the career. All universities have internal quality assurance procedures, but they do not explicitly require regular staff evaluations. Based on interviews, regular evaluation processes are defined and implemented in the largest universities in Czechia.

International examples

The countries deal differently with the evaluation process in terms of on which level they define processes and criteria and how they use the outcomes of the appraisal process.

In Austria there are three types of evaluation processes, each for a different purpose. Two of them are just one-off exercises (habilitation and assessment of fulfillment of qualification agreement) and then there is a regular yearly evaluation of academics. Outcomes are defined relatively in detail for all three of them: processes in two of them (yearly evaluation and habilitation), but national level definition of the evaluation criteria is in all three cases relatively general. This is probably due to the overall principle within the Austrian regulation that relies a lot on senior academics securing expert and senior view.

The law UG 2002 (§ 100) states that the university is responsible for the professional development of the scientific and artistic staff in research, art and teaching. According to the Collective agreement (§ 9) the head of the department acts as supervisor for the department's employees. They assign tasks and evaluate work of academic staff on a yearly basis. The evaluation should lead to documented employee reviews including, at least, assessment of how the employee fulfilled assigned tasks, what the tasks will be for the next year, what measures have to be taken so that the employee maintains or improves their performance and enhances their chances for longer-term professional development opportunities.¹⁰⁶

Negative evaluation can lead to preliminary contract termination. In regard to performance, the reasons for contract termination can be if the employee is unable to perform agreed tasks or fails to achieve attainable work results. The employee, however, first gets two reasoned written warnings and each time has six months to improve their performance.¹⁰⁷

The supervisor is responsible for promoting employees' professional advancement and further training. The employee is obliged to participate in regular professional development and must attend continuing education events mandated by the university. Not participating in assigned training can lead to contract termination.¹⁰⁸

The next two types of evaluations are one off occasions. First, the habilitation process, which university can award to non-tenured associated professors only in the fields it is active in. The evaluation areas and process is defined in a relatively detailed way in paragraph 103 of the 2002 University law (UG). To be awarded a habilitation degree, one must demonstrate outstanding scientific or artistic qualification as well as extensive teaching experience within higher education, showing

¹⁰⁶ [Universitäten / Rahmen | Kollektivvertrag](#)

¹⁰⁷ [Universitäten / Rahmen | Kollektivvertrag](#)

¹⁰⁸ [Universitäten / Rahmen | Kollektivvertrag](#)

didactic abilities of the applicant. The applicant must also submit a habilitation thesis of high methodological quality, containing new scientific insights and demonstrating the candidate's command of their habilitation subject and ability for its advancement.

The professors from the department concerned nominate at least two assessors from the field of the habilitation (at least one of them from outside of the university) and the professors in the senate appoint these assessors to evaluate academic papers/artwork. Professors in the senate can also directly delegate the appointment to the professors from the respective department or from the department from the related field. Once the assessors deliver a report, the professors from the relevant and related field department provide an opinion on it. The decision about awarding habilitation is taken by a habilitation committee appointed by the senate. The committee has more than half of the members professors and at least one student. It decides based on the assessor's report and opinions provided. If the candidate is successful, they gain the right to use faculty's facilities and to supervise doctoral and master thesis. On the other hand, it has no implication on salary, right to employment or on modification of the existing employment contract of non-tenured associate professors.¹⁰⁹

The third type of evaluation assesses the achievement of the performance stipulated in the qualification agreement (tenure track). The offer for qualification agreement must take place maximum two years into the fixed term 6-year contract. The agreement has to be designed in a way that the defined targets can be met in four years, i.e. within the 6 years of the contract.¹¹⁰ Possibility to change the contract into permanent one has to be indicated in the university's development plan and the evaluation of the individual's performance in all areas of responsibility must yield a positive result.¹¹¹ The evaluation focuses on the quality of the scientific and/or artistic and teaching performance as well as on the other activities. *"The qualification assessment shall conform to international standards. Detailed arrangements shall be established by the statute. The application for unlimited extension may be submitted after completion of the fourth year. The working group on equal opportunities shall be included in the procedure"* (§99a, 3, UG 2002).

According to the Collective agreement Professors and Associate professors undergo regular evaluation which influences the raise of their salary. For Professors this is every six years, and positive evaluation brings higher salary as stipulated in the Collective agreement. In the case of the associate professors the first salary increase is after the fulfillment of the qualification agreement, then after a first positive evaluation in the respective period and then every six years.¹¹²

It is important to point out that in Austria even the permanent contract of the professors can be terminated if they have two negative evaluations in line with § 22, 2d of the Collective agreement, i.e. they fail to achieve agreed work despite two warnings followed by two six-month periods devoted to improvement.¹¹³

Iceland is a good example of evaluation of diverse areas of work. The evaluation of individual academics is connected to the national Evaluation System for Public Higher Education Institutions used for performance-based funding. Because of the direct connection between funding and

¹⁰⁹ § 103, UG 2002

¹¹⁰ § 27, [Universitäten / Rahmen | Kollektivvertrag](#)

¹¹¹ §25, point 4, [Universitäten / Rahmen | Kollektivvertrag](#)

¹¹² § 49 [Universitäten / Rahmen | Kollektivvertrag](#)

¹¹³ [Universitäten / Rahmen | Kollektivvertrag](#)

evaluation, the criteria are defined in detail on the national level.¹¹⁴ On the other hand the process of evaluation and how the evaluation outcomes translate into different areas (salary, promotion, etc.) is not defined on the national level.

What is interesting is that on the national level teaching (60 %) and social role/impact (25 %) have bigger weight than research (15 %).¹¹⁵ The evaluation takes place annually.¹¹⁶ Although after 5 years academics can ask for reevaluation of some research outputs that gained exceptional acclaim or had a particularly significant impact. While research is still evaluated mainly based on publications, in teaching the evaluation is more complex. Innovation in teaching, contributions to pedagogical development, teaching portfolios, and participation in pedagogical courses are mainly assessed. Administration positions serving the university as a whole or its faculties/schools is also recognized. The last evaluated area is service and education for the public where evaluation considers government, organizations, stakeholder groups, charities and other parties performed by academics based on their specialist knowledge.¹¹⁷

As the case of the biggest and most important university in Iceland shows, on institutional level the evaluation has very direct impact on salary raise¹¹⁸, bonus payments¹¹⁹, mandatory prerequisite for promotion and career advancement¹²⁰, sabbatical eligibility and workload (if low points then more teaching and administrative work).¹²¹ In all the listed areas there are exact values of points needed hence this is an example of a very quantitative system.

There is a very insightful policy applied in Iceland. The government is financially stimulating universities to share among themselves infrastructure to strengthen teaching, research or administration. This could be relevant practice especially for small HEIs in the Czechia to be able to develop professional HR staff and process in recruitment and evaluation.¹²²

Similarly to Iceland, 2019 reform in Estonia introduced on the level of higher education act mandatory evaluation. In this case it however does not happen every year but at least every 5 years. The result has mainly an impact on the contract itself which can be terminated if the person in question does not pass the evaluation.¹²³

Institutional example

¹¹⁴ [Evaluation System for Public Higher Education Institutions](#)

¹¹⁵ [Evaluation System for Public Higher Education Institutions](#)

¹¹⁶ <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/4097557>

¹¹⁷ [Evaluation System for Public Higher Education Institutions](#)

¹¹⁸ https://fh.hi.is/files/2023-06/fh-hi_stofnanasamningur_lokautg_undirritud_05032021_enska_0.pdf

¹¹⁹ [Regulation on the Productivity Evaluation Fund of the Union of University Teachers for research](#)

¹²⁰ [Regulation on promotion of academic staff at the University of Iceland, no. 1300/2020](#)

¹²¹ [Regulation on the employment duties of academic staff at the University of Iceland, no. 605/2006](#)

¹²² <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/4097557>

¹²³ <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/akt/529082019022?leiaKehtiv#:~:text=%C2%A7%2035.%20Evaluation>

The evaluation at KU Leuven¹²⁴ is extremely interesting as it really investigates different aspects of the academic's career - research, teaching and engagement. It evaluates these three main activities via lenses of 4 dimensions: development and innovation, academic leadership, sharing knowledge and teamwork.¹²⁵ The evaluation at KU Leuven is key to avoid stagnation in the system with a relatively long tenure track.¹²⁶ The results of evaluation lead to promotion and higher salary connected to higher academic position.¹²⁷

To obtain the unlimited contract within the lowest tenured position "assistant professor" the evaluation takes place after 3, 5 and 10 years. Then they can be promoted to professor and later to full professor, if they fulfill their duties and deliver exceptional work. In general, the evaluation takes place every five years. At every faculty there is an evaluation committee appointed by the dean. The chair of the committee is full professor/someone who fulfills criteria of full professor¹²⁸. The committee has 6 members. Members can be re-elected. The members of the committee are elected for four years by all the professors from the respective faculty. These semi-permanent members of the evaluation committee are the same ones as in the case of the recruitment committee from the respective faculty. One member is however nominated from another faculty, usually it is a member of the evaluation committee from that faculty. Two times per year the chairs of evaluation committees meet with the rector and discuss the implementation of evaluation processes by each of them and decide on possible changes/adjustments. The evaluation considers four dimensions of teaching, research and engagement hence it brings very individualized results. It is not allowed to evaluate anyone based on box ticking criteria.

The takeaways from KU Leuven system are that the evaluation process is highly standardized across the university, that people from different parts of the faculty and the university are involved which increases the transparency and that academics are assessed against truly diverse criteria.

The Researcher Career Development and Employment Framework in Ireland defines in a very structured way how career and professional development should be conducted at the universities for the post-doctoral researchers. It includes description of the Career Development Planning and process with clearly defined activities and responsibilities of the academic and the principal investigator. It also states that the academic should annually record a certain number of development activities, to achieve a target level of development. It is suggested that pay progression depends on satisfactory performance of the academic in question.¹²⁹ The pay progression is based on appraisal also in later stages of the career. However, there is no common framework for appraisal for more senior academics although generally universities do assess all three basic areas (teaching, research, third mission) with research becoming more important in later career stages.¹³⁰

¹²⁴ All following text describes the situation at KU Leuven - information was provided by a chair of the evaluation committee. KU Leuven is one of the best universities in the world and has a very well developed recruitment and evaluation system cited also by international organizations working on HE policies such as the OECD.

¹²⁵ [KU Leuven Framework for Recognising and Valuing High-Quality Academic Work](#)

¹²⁶ All the information on the evaluation at KU Leuven was provided by a chair of the evaluation committee.

¹²⁷ [Conditions of service for academic staff working in higher education](#)

¹²⁸ There is a limited number of full professor positions hence there can be more people who fulfill the criteria than those who have the position of the full professor.

¹²⁹ [Researcher Career Development Framework | Irish Universities Association](#)

¹³⁰ [The state of academic careers in OECD countries](#)

Finally in Denmark, the regulatory framework (the Accreditation Act, the ministerial order criteria and their detailed elaborations) shapes how the work of academic staff is evaluated and it sets the standards against which institutions must demonstrate the quality and relevance of their programmes.¹³¹ The criteria in institutional accreditation (*Criteria for institutional accreditation for institutions that have not previously achieved positive institutional accreditation*) directly involve characteristics of teachers that have to be secured by the HEI.¹³² This then shapes the evaluation of teaching by institutions.¹³³

Recommendations

C2.1 In line with the emphasis on horizontal differentiation and broad recognition of academic work, appraisal and evaluation of academic staff should not have an overly narrow focus on research measurable outputs. It should make context-based evaluation not to discriminate underrepresented groups (for details refer to the part B.2).

C2.2 The Education Ministry/Accreditation agency could stimulate development of the national level strategic document on evaluation including main transparency principles and principles for evaluation process and for developing holistic evaluation criteria.

C2.3 All academic staff are expected to undergo regular evaluation in front of the evaluation committee every few years (between 3 - 5), with frequency higher among junior staff. Institutions can set more frequent evaluations and only with direct line managers (see the example of Ireland: [Researcher - Career Development and Employment Framework](#)).

Evaluation of AP2-AP4 level staff (tenure track, professors, lecturers or research staff) should take place at least every five years. In case of tenure track (AP2), an earlier evaluation (with decision on their promotion) is possible after at least three years and their evaluation is directly linked to promotion. For staff on fixed-term contracts, evaluation is required before contract renewal.

Evaluation of AP1-level staff should take place at least every three years or before each contract renewal. In their case, the evaluation should have strong emphasis on professional development and career planning. To the extent possible, the evaluation committee should assist them with their next career step, in academia or elsewhere (i.e. off boarding process - see the Irish example).

For the evaluation of AP2 tenure track academics there should be clear goals set in advance that are possible to meet during the evaluation period before concluding an unlimited contract. These goals should be assessed during the evaluation.

Evaluation of project staff, staff with part-time (less than 0.7 FTE) and short-term contracts (less than 12 months) is up to individual institutions.

C2.4 Evaluation committees should have similar structure as selection committees (described in C1.4), with the only difference that they can be smaller, the minimal number of members is three. Part of the members should be semi-permanent (same members as in the case of the recruitment) and the number of members should be uneven.

¹³¹ [Quality assurance in higher education](#)

¹³² Appendix 5, [Bekendtgørelse om statsgaranti og ydelsestilskud ved lån til yngre jordbrugere](#)

¹³³ See the example of the University College Absalone in [Four Types of Course Evaluation Trending in Denmark](#)

Evaluation committees can propose and the Scientific council approves evaluation-specific criteria. The evaluation committee will provide its assessment of an academic in question to the Scientific Council. Regarding the promotion (tenure track) or negative assessment, the Scientific Council should have decision making power and the rector would have final approval voice. If the Scientific Council or rector would not agree with the committees or Council's assessment, then they would have to provide a public explanation.

Semi-permanent members of the evaluation committees should ensure that similar standards are maintained across different evaluations across the respective HEI and that people from different departments and faculties are involved in each evaluation.

C2.5 Positive evaluation can lead to contract renewal (for staff on fixed-terms contracts), promotion (tenure track) and salary increase (permanent staff). For permanent staff and tenure track staff it can lead to changes in workload in different areas - e.g. gain more space for research and less routine administrative work. It should also be part of the condition for sabbatical.

C2.6 Negative evaluation should identify areas for improvement, setting a realistic timeline for improvement and setting the next evaluation process accordingly. In that period, the work responsibilities of an individual can be changed to provide time for improvement (at least six months) and to ensure quality of education and research. In a case of a repeated negative evaluation, the institution can propose re-assignment to a different role or to terminate the contract.

C.2.6 Education ministry could financially support development of common evaluation and career capacities to be shared especially among smaller HEIs for which this type of service is too expensive to develop. Smaller HEIs could also share members of evaluation and selection committees to be able to keep enough openness of the process while not over burdening the senior academics who are in small numbers at such institutions.

Summary recommendation on recruitment and evaluation

Where should selection and evaluation be defined:

Law (or Ministerial regulation)	• Defines when evaluation and selection (competition) is mandatory • Sets minimal transparency criteria on selection and evaluation processes • Outlines responsibilities of rector and Scientific Council • Considers establishing Academic Ombudsperson
Accreditation	• Develops minimal criteria • Develops non-bidding guidelines and competence framework • As part of institutional audits, reviews selection and evaluation processes • Ensures transparency of recruitment, evaluation and promotion processes
Scientific Council	• Advice on HR policy, classification, profiles • Develops institutional criteria • Appoints committees • Reviews and oversees selection and evaluation processes • Approves recruitment, promotion and permanent contract decision
Rector(ate)	• Implements HR policy • Provides support to Scientific Council • Sets HR strategy including the number of opened positions (with Board) • Appoints selected academics and approves promotion and permanent contract decision
Selection/ evaluation committee	• Further develops specific criteria for position • Evaluates candidates and academic staff • Promotes vacancy • Provides ranking of candidates

D. Academic titles and parallel contracts

D1. Academic titles: doc./prof.

Context

Academic titles have historically functioned as more than job grades. In the German and Habsburg tradition, "professor" and "docent" combined three elements: a post-doctoral scholarly qualification, a formal rank often conferred by the head of state and a position. Since 2000 the main trend has been a loosening of this model, driven by the Bologna Process, which only recognises qualifications up to PhD. Several higher education systems have also shifted from state-regulated academic careers, civil service positions and chair-system towards contractual employment and tenure-track structures. Habilitation has been made less central or optional, notably in Austria (2002) and Poland (2011 and 2018), Slovakia (2022), while Finland converted the docent title from a tenured post to an honorary qualification in 2010. The common direction is a decoupling of title from employment and a transfer of detailed appointment criteria to institutions.

Czechia represents the older tradition and has changed the least. The docent title is conferred by the rector following habilitation and the professor title is conferred by the President of the Republic on a proposal from a university scientific board. Both titles remain scholarly qualifications and preconditions for senior positions. Czechia introduced the position of "mimořádný profesor" (extraordinary professor) through the 2016 amendment. This is an institutional job position, a mimořádný profesor is appointed by the university itself. The provision was intended to give universities a way to recognise senior academics at professorial level without going through the national appointment route. Mimořádný profesor must come from a similar level position (R3 or R4) from abroad or from practice. The requirements for mimořádný profesor from practice are very general (10 years of experience in the relevant area in practice). The key importance for the system was that also these people are allowed to be guarantors of the master and doctoral-level programmes and they are vital for providing certain programmes. However, this has a limited uptake.

International examples

Across countries, there seems to be a general trend of phasing out academic titles interconnected with academic positions and moving towards post or rank-based career models. The continued use of academic titles is mostly as an honorific but still carries some prestige.

In Austria, the change was in the 2002 University Act, while habilitation still confers the associated title of Privatdozent/Universitätsdozent, but as already mentioned, it no longer creates or alters an employment relationship. In parallel, a tenure track was introduced, with habilitation becoming less important and disconnected from promotion. The effect is that the docent title and habilitation, whilst still respected, are in slow decline.

In Belgium, there was a post-doctoral qualification Higher Education Faculty Qualification (Aggregaat/Aggregatie voor het Hoger Onderwijs) until 1995, but it was phased out.

In 2010, Finland reform abolished the position of docent (dosentti), replacing it with tenure track. However, higher education institutions can still award the honorific title dosentti to a person with comprehensive knowledge of their field, demonstrated capacity for independent research and good

teaching skills. Similarly, there is a state-level honorific title of professor, that is granted by the President, upon recommendation from the Titles Committee within the Prime Minister's Office.¹³⁴

Netherlands never really adopted habilitation or similar post-doctoral qualifications. However, most academics are required to obtain certificates - university teaching qualification (UTQ) and senior teaching qualification (STQ), linked with professional development.¹³⁵

Poland still has post-doctoral degree doktor habilitowany (dr hab.) and the title profesor conferred by the President of the Republic. Two reforms reshaped it. The Kudrycka reform in 2011 simplified habilitation, shifting it towards assessment of a candidate's cumulative achievements rather than a dissertation and colloquium.¹³⁶ The Law on Higher Education and Science (Law 2.0) in 2018, made habilitation no longer required for professional advancement. However, there is still distinction made between University professor and Professor, the latter requiring to be conferred the title of professor by the President.¹³⁷ The oversight for the academic titles passed to the new Council for Scientific Excellence, which oversees awarding of doctoral and post-doctoral qualifications and it conducts proceedings for award of the professor title.¹³⁸

In Slovakia, the 2022 reform introduced functional posts of professor and docent, however academic titles still exist. A prerequisite for appointment is meeting criteria for habilitation and professorial appointment, but title itself cannot be a requirement.¹³⁹ The criteria are set by the quality assurance agency.¹⁴⁰

Countries link the minimal requirements usually just to the PhD degree, with more details determined by individual institutions. More specific criteria are nationally set in Slovakia and Poland.

Recommendations

D.1.1. Replacing the system of academic titles with a post-based system, based on four tiers. General minimal criteria should be developed by the National accreditation office for levels AP2-AP4, their application to be checked as part of evaluation. Each institution should develop criteria, which are then detailed for each competition or evaluation, taking into consideration study/research field and institutional mission. Legislation might at least define that:

- Requirements for initial tenure track appointment (AP2 level) is a PhD degree, relevant working experience after PhD (teaching or research in academia, or work in similar sectors) and recommended requirement to spend at least 6 months working or studying during PhD outside the institution they are applying to, ideally abroad.
- Requirement for AP3 promotion (tenure track) is relevant working experience at AP2 level and positive evaluation. In case of direct competition for AP3 level position, the requirement is PhD degree and extended relevant working experience at AP2 (R2 in European framework) level.

¹³⁴ https://www.finlex.fi/fi/lainsaadanto/2009/558?language=fin#chp_11, [Tasavallan presidentin asetus arvonimistä | 381/2000 | Lainsäädäntö | Finlex](#)

¹³⁵ [UTQ and STQ - Centre for Academic Teaching and Learning - Utrecht University](#)

¹³⁶ [Poland: Habilitation degree process to be speeded up](#)

¹³⁷ [Conditions of service for academic staff working in higher education](#)

¹³⁸ [O RDN](#)

¹³⁹ [Initial education for academic staff in higher education](#)

¹⁴⁰ [Štandardy pre habilitačné konanie a inauguračné konanie](#)

- Requirement for AP4 competition is PhD degree and relevant working experience at AP3 (R3 in European framework) level.

D1.2. The academic titles should be decoupled from any position, employment contract, salary scale and responsibilities under legislation and other regulation, including accreditation. There are three alternatives regarding academic titles:

- a. Removing habilitation procedure, title of docent, proceedings to award professor title and professor title from all legislation and regulation.
- b. Habilitation procedure becomes the name for tenure track, and the procedure is amended in the law. Academic titles of docent and professor, proceedings to award professor title are removed from all legislation and regulation.
- c. The legislation specifies that academic title of docent can be awarded as an honorific by the rector, upon recommendation of the Scientific Council, further procedures to be developed by the institution. The academic title of professor (alternatively professor of the republic) is to be awarded as an honorific by the President of the Republic as a recognition of academic staff (AP3-AP4 level) for their lifetime contributions to education, science, innovation and arts. The legislation should specify appropriate procedure.

D2. Parallel contracts and professional activities

Context

Parallel contracts and part-time academic appointments are widespread in higher education. They provide flexibility to institutions and to individual academics. Appointments shared across institutions, research institutes, hospitals and industry also strengthen collaboration, joint research and knowledge transfer. At the same time, in some situations, this can lead to accumulation of workload and contracts beyond individual capacity and impair the responsibilities. Legislation, quality assurance and collective agreements set various limits on parallel professional activities.

In Czechia, legislation already places notification requirements for academic staff about any job they have in other higher education institutions or research institutes in Czechia [§ 70 (5)]. The quality assurance standards set that study programme guarantors need to have a permanent contract, and their other professional activity cannot require more than half a weekly workload, so contracts can be up to 20 hours or require presence at work up to 20 hours. The Ministry of Education maintains a register of docents, professors and extraordinary professors that keeps records of all contracts. The interviews noticed that parallel contracts negatively influence the quality of work of academics.

International example

In Austria, per collective agreement, employees must report any intended secondary employment and any significant changes to it, as well as any activity on the board of directors, supervisory board or administrative board of a for-profit legal entity, to the university. Employees must refrain from any secondary employment that would impair their contractual obligations or other significant official interests of the university, if they fail to do so, their contract may be terminated¹⁴¹.

¹⁴¹ [Universitäten / Rahmen | Kollektivvertrag](#)

In Flanders, a full-time academic staff (anybody with more than 70% is considered full-time) member may carry out another paid professional activity only with consent of the university board. Such activity can take up to two half-days a week, if the activity takes more hours, their appointment is automatically reduced to part-time.¹⁴²

Finland has no special provisions on parallel appointments; secondary employment is managed under general Employment Contracts Act.

In the Netherlands, per the collective labour agreement (CAO NU), staff must report and seek approval for all ancillary activities outside their university post. Permission should be granted to perform these activities outside working hours, unless there is an objective justification for refusing it (e.g. undermining confidence in scientific integrity, protecting trade secrets, preventing conflicts of interest, harming the interests of the university, protecting the health and safety of the employee, violating the Working Hours Act).¹⁴³

Poland has the most explicit statutory rule. Under Article 125 of the 2018 Law, an academic may take or continue additional employment with only one other teaching or research employer and only with the rector's consent. There are a few notable exceptions, such as collaborating institutions or institutes, in cultural institutions, public offices and in school education.¹⁴⁴

In Slovakia, academic staff are limited to three contracts with higher education institutions in the country, and only in one institution they can work with specified weekly workload.¹⁴⁵

Recommendation

D2.1. All academic staff should notify their higher education institution(s) of other professional activities (i.e. employment or role in for-profit legal entities) they conduct in Czechia or abroad, before it starts or at the beginning of their contract. Academic staff should refrain from any employment that would impair their contractual obligations and official interests of the university. Academic staff must report any significant changes in their other professional activities.

D2.2. All academic staff need to seek authorisation from their higher education institution(s) before commencing further professional activities if their total average weekly workload would exceed 1.2 FTE. This limit is set based on the EU Directive on the organisation of working time¹⁴⁶ which sets the maximum average weekly working time at 48 hours. While activity above 1.2 FTE is permitted, it is recommended that total professional activities should not average more than 1.5 FTE.

D2.3. Academic staff (with contract amounting to at least 0.5 FTE) need to seek authorisation before entering into a contract with another academic, teaching or research institution in Czechia or abroad.

It is recommended for academic staff to be allowed to take on additional professional activities as long as they do not interfere with their contractual obligations. However, non-compliance with any of the above can be grounds for dismissal.

¹⁴² [Conditions of service for academic staff working in higher education](#)

¹⁴³ [Verplichtingen werkgever en werknemer | Universiteiten van Nederland](#)

¹⁴⁴ [Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce](#)

¹⁴⁵ [300/2025 Z. z. Zákon o vysokých školách a o změně a doplnění některých zákonů \(vysokoškolský zákon\) | Slov-Lex](#)

¹⁴⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32003L0088>

Overall recommendation

When policymakers want to enhance how academic careers work then they should simultaneously tackle different aspects of this policy. This is the practice in a quarter of European countries. The reason is that the issues are interconnected hence to reach a desirable result it is necessary to deal with them in conjunction. Countries most frequently combine reforms of recruitment, inclusiveness, mobility, continuous professional development and employment contracts.¹⁴⁷ All these areas are covered by this report.

¹⁴⁷ [Academic staff in Europe – 2025](#)