

# Science Europe Response to the Call for Evidence on Skills Portability, Action 1: Facilitating Worker Mobility across the EU through Skills Transparency and Digitalisation

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The free movement of people, knowledge, and expertise is a cornerstone of an effective and attractive European Research Area (ERA). A significant barrier to this mobility is the limited portability of qualifications and skills across the EU. It is vital that the mobility of research professionals is facilitated, wherever beneficial, through measures that improve the cross-border recognition of higher education and academic qualifications. These measures must also account for a broader range of valuable skills and competencies, recognising that many contributions to the research endeavour remain hidden or under-recognised. Measures to improve the transparency and portability of skills, applied in an equitable and inclusive manner, can boost the quality and impact of research across the ERA, promote brain circulation, and foster attractive, inclusive, and diverse working conditions for all research professionals.

Science Europe responds to this European Commission Call-for-Evidence on a Skills Portability Initiative from the perspective of the public research sector. The response is in line with positions and priorities developed with the national public research funding and performing organisations belonging to Science Europe.

It is necessary that the proposed [Skills Portability action](#) should be fully aligned with relevant aspects of the eventual ERA Act and any other relevant EU initiatives, such as the [Fair Labour Mobility Package](#): coherence between these related mechanisms will facilitate the achievement of a borderless ERA for research professionals. Alignment must also be established with major research policy developments, including the reform of research assessment (such as the [Coalition for Advancing Reform Assessment](#)) and open science, both of which seek to broaden the recognition of skills and competencies in research, and directly shape the mobility and career pathway opportunities of research professionals.

Science Europe is currently developing a series of principles and recommendations for a common career standard across the ERA. The principles will frame a series of recommendations to improve the conditions for research professionals and facilitate their mobility across within the ERA.

We propose the following guiding principles for the Skills Portability Action as it pertains to the careers of research professionals:

- Modern research in any domain requires a broad array of skills and competencies. Ongoing R&I movements such as research assessment reform and the transition to open science aim to broaden the sets of skills and competencies supported, fostered, and recognised as important to the modern research endeavour. Actions aiming to improve the portability of skills should ensure that any changes in the recognition and/or recognition mechanisms implemented reflect this broad perspective of what is valued. This should extend to skills developed in industry, research infrastructures, research management, software development, and other professional contexts beyond academia, ensuring their appropriate recognition across sectors and career pathways.
- Mobility, in all its forms (inter-sectoral, inter-disciplinary, geographical, virtual, etc.), should be promoted wherever it is beneficial, with a focus on the skills and competencies gained, the research results obtained, and the outcomes achieved through mobility. At the same time, mobility should not be a requirement for career progression, but rather one of multiple paths to obtain the skills and competencies required for a role. A common approach to the recognition of skills and qualifications is vital in this regard.
- All research professionals should be supported and enabled to pursue available career pathways and mobility opportunities based on individual merit, including through the recognition of competencies acquired through non-linear career paths, career breaks, or part-time employment, without any form of bias (conscious, unconscious, or systemic), discrimination, or unfair treatment. Further, research professionals must be guaranteed freedom of scientific inquiry, academic independence, and working conditions conducive to good research practice, including the recognitions of all relevant skills and the right to free movement.

In accordance with our position towards the proposed [ERA Act](#) and the [Fair Labour Mobility Package](#), Science Europe also emphasises the following career-related actions:

- Encouraging countries to offer clear pathways to permanent contracts and residence, establishing common minimum social-security benefits for researchers at all stages and promoting the portability of social rights.
- Creating an EU-wide automatic recognition system for academic qualifications.
- Simplifying visa procedures for non-EU researchers and their families.
- Reducing legal barriers to intra-European mobility for non-EU researchers.

These measures would help to improve the recognition of a broader array of valuable skills and competencies, enhance mobility, and make research careers more attractive across the ERA. They are necessary to foster healthy brain circulation within Europe, thereby improving overall research quality and impact. A coordinated approach to these interventions across the Skills Portability Initiative, the Fair Labour Mobility Package, the ERA Act, and ongoing R&I reform movements would substantially improve the working conditions for talented research professionals across the ERA.

*Science Europe is the organisation representing major public organisations that fund and perform excellent, ground-breaking research in Europe. It brings together the expertise of some of the largest and most respected European research organisations to jointly push the frontiers of how scientific research is produced and delivers benefits to society.*