



Project carried out with funding by the European Union in cooperation with the European Commission's DG REFORM

FINAL CONFERENCE SUMMARY

TOWARDS A NEW ACADEMIC CAREER FRAMEWORK FOR LATVIA:

ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE THROUGH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GOOD HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

May 5, 2022

13.00–16.00 EET (Riga)

The conference concludes a project that was carried out to develop proposals for reforming academic careers in Latvia. The project is the result of the World Bank's third engagement with relevant stakeholders in Latvia. It is supported by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM).

The purpose of the conference was to present and discuss the final report by the World Bank team and the proposal for a new academic career framework that was developed by the Working Group established by the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science.

A total of 120 participants were online (and very active in asking questions in the chat) or in the room.

Brigita Kukjalko (Senior Expert in Higher Education of the Latvian Ministry of Education) was a moderator of the conference. The conference was opened by Ágota Kovács (Country Coordinator, Policy Officer of the DG REFORM and Science), Marcus Heinz (Resident Representative of the World Bank for Poland and the Baltic States) and Līga Lejiņa (State Secretary of the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science). All three speakers stressed the excellent cooperation that prevailed between the World Bank Team, the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science, and the Working Group that the Ministry established to support the project and develop proposals for reforming academic careers. The support of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM) was acknowledged as essential.

The event was structured into two sessions, both of which concluded with a stimulating Q&A period.

During the first session, the World Bank Team presented the main findings of the project, which included the principles on which a good academic career framework should be based and possible implementation scenarios. This was followed by a presentation by Dace Jansone (Deputy Director in Higher Education of the Department of Higher Education, Science and Innovation at the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science), who presented the major outcomes of the working group. The audience asked questions of clarification about the Working Group's proposal.

The second session consisted in two presentations followed by a panel discussion. Cláudia S. Sarrico (Professor of Management, School of Economics and Management, University of Minho and CIPES Centre for Research in Higher Education Policies, Portugal) presented the outcomes of a study she led for OECD on precarious academic research careers. Marek Kwiek (Director, Institute for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities (IAS), UNESCO Chair in Institutional Research and Higher Education Policy University of Poznan, Poland) presented a comparative overview of trends in payment and performance in academic careers. Jussi Kivistö (Professor, Faculty of Management and Business, Tampere University in Finland) joined for the Q&A session.

Issues that came up during the discussion included how to ensure that salaries are fair and at the same time reward excellence; what are fair incentives for high performers; are the star researchers the only important academics; does not the Humboldtian model require that research and teaching are equally valued and that incentives are used carefully. How to avoid that only good research is rewarded rather than also good teaching.

Several countries are implementing a tenure track system to provide more transparency to those on fixed-term contracts and to avoid prolonging the postdoc period. Some countries are diversifying careers in academia and providing other career paths than just through tenure track. These alternative paths provide stability to data scientists, teaching innovators, researchers, etc.

More comparative research is needed to understand better the implications of different policies and how they affect the three important factors that motivate academics: salaries, stability, and social esteem.

The conference was closed by Dace Jansone, and Diego Ambasz.