

Press release

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Bridging education, employment and EU research funding

The European Chemical Society (EuChemS) argued, in its Position Paper published in August 2018, that greater funding is needed for Horizon Europe, together with mechanisms to bolster academia-industry collaboration in order to achieve a level-playing field for European research, and ensure Europe continues to play a leading role in world research and innovation. An ambitious Horizon Europe can ensure ever greater results, and by extension the creation of more employment opportunities and more impactful science. However, the Second Employment Survey of European Chemists, highlights continuing disparities in gender balance in the chemical sciences, differences between employment opportunities across European countries, issues surrounding the collaboration between academia and industry, and inconsistency between needed and acquired skills.

EuChemS' 7 March 2019 European Parliament workshop looks at how the 2018 Survey's issues can be addressed. Speakers from academia and industry, together with policymakers have been invited to provide their perspectives and suggestions for ways forward. Together, these form a web of ultimately solvable interconnected issues that require the participation of academia, industry, but also of European policymakers.

Pilar GOYA LAZA, EuChemS President said: "It is imperative that we in Europe find appropriate ways of encouraging and channelling research and innovation and of helping young scientists find their way in a varied and complex future, whether they wish to work in academia or industry", before adding: "The landscape in Europe is by nature a diverse one, but we need to ensure that scientists everywhere face the same prospects for progression. Moreover, we must create a situation in which women are given equal opportunities to their male counterparts to advance."

Lambert van NISTELROOIJ, Member of the European Parliament for the Netherlands and one of the European People's Party's Horizon Europe spokespersons said: "I call upon the European Commission, Council and the Parliament to ensure a Europe-wide balanced higher education landscape. Ambition, quality science and quality scientists, and research and innovation, will enable Europe's regions to move forward on a path of smart specialisation, in turn increasing local chances for personal and institutional academic development. We in the European Parliament can only support this."

Some results of the Survey:

- Some of the core issues to emerge from the survey include the continued lack of gender balance in the number of scientists and engineers in the EU, with further disparities arising depending on the countries in question.

- The differences in academic staff categories from one country to another is a striking feature of the European higher education landscape. Whilst M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees play similar roles in different countries, there are very divergent numbers of Ph.D. holders: 73% in Switzerland compared to 33% in Belgium, to highlight one example.
- The survey has also found that postdocs rarely find they have been provided with enough information on the various career options open to them following their studies – 75% of those questioned say they wish they could have had more information.
- The discrepancy between hard skills acquired by education and those required in the job continues to be an issue. Tied to this is the matter of certain branches of chemistry providing more graduates than job offers, whilst other subdisciplines create the opposite situation. Difficulties in hiring qualified personnel is also an issue, with 40% of recruiters in Finland reporting difficulties, compared to 91% in the Czech Republic.
- Collaboration between industrial practice and academia curricula needs to be boosted – efforts which have not yet completely convinced chemical scientists.

Key points discussed:

- Industry-academia collaboration
- Collaboration across European countries and beyond
- Encouraging and supporting inclusiveness and equality

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NOTES TO EDITORS

<https://www.euchems.eu/chemical-sciences-for-horizon-europe-education-employability/>

“Chemical Sciences for Horizon Europe, education and employability”. The European Parliament, Brussels, Belgium, March 7, 2019.

The two-hour session features speakers from the chemical sciences as well as representatives from the European Parliament and the European Commission.

EuChemS, the European Chemical Society, coordinates the work of 48 chemical societies and other chemistry related organisations, representing more than 160,000 chemists. Through the promotion of chemistry and by providing expert and scientific advice, EuChemS aims to take part in solving today’s major societal challenges.

CONTACTS

www.euchems.eu | @EuChemS | secretariat@euchems.eu | tel: +32 (0)22892567 | Rue du Trône 62, 1050, Brussels, Belgium | Transparency Register number: 03492856440-03