

Horizon 2020 is welcome but researchers require greater backing in Ireland, says IFUT

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The Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) has said that the new Horizon 2020 Programme announced today is welcome and offers an extraordinary opportunity for the Irish research system, but significant policy change is required if this opportunity is not to be missed.

Mike Jennings, General Secretary of IFUT, said that while the programme highlights the need to be inclusive and offers opportunities to a wide range of participants, including new entrants, the Irish research system has traditionally offered very limited opportunities to contract researchers in higher education institutions.

"The lack of a recognised career structure is a frustrating reality for many younger researchers. Highly qualified graduates face endemic insecurity, unemployment and emigration.

"A national career structure which respects the European Charter and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers would do a great deal to fulfil the lofty objectives of Horizon 2020. Horizon 2020 is a flagship EU programme. Researchers, therefore, have a legitimate expectation that it will be informed by the European Charter produced by the Commission itself. The full implementation of the Charter is vital if policy-makers are serious about developing a more stable and attractive researcher career."

Julie Naughton, Chairperson of the Irish Research Staff Association commented that a key challenge for the Irish research system in gearing up for Horizon 2020 is to facilitate young researchers currently struggling on short-term contracts to secure EU funding in their own right.

"Ireland has been successful in previous funding applications but is heavily dependent on a small number of established Principal Investigators. It is crucial to widen participation in funding applications to include talented younger researchers at different grades and levels of experience. This is particularly important for Ireland, as a small, open economy dependent above all on the human potential of its people."

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