

## Eurodoc on impact of COVID-19 and budget cuts on the next generation of EU researchers

The European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers, Eurodoc, is a grassroots federation of 28 national associations in 25 countries across Europe. We are one of the main stakeholders for the 1+ million early-career researchers in Europe.

Since 2017, Eurodoc has called on all EU members and institutions for an increase of the budget for Horizon Europe, and, in particular, to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and European Research Council budgets. These are both vital to supporting early career researchers and sustaining the implementation of Open Science.

Unfortunately, we are here today to warn against the grave threat posed by potential cuts to investments in science and research during a pandemic. In our opinion, a cut to the research budget in this situation is devastating for early-career researchers and their ability to foster excellence in Europe.

The two aforementioned programs facing cuts are European investments aimed to promote the career development of researchers, not solely research projects! And they both set the standards for research funding at National levels. This means that budget cuts may heavily impact early-career researchers, hindering contract extensions, increasing the ratio of short-term, part-time and partially-funded research contracts, and even increasing self-funded or unpaid positions.

In the last months, Eurodoc members shared with us disturbing stories of the impact of COVID-19 on their lives and work. These broadly reflect the fact that at this stage of their careers, researchers have little security:

- PhD candidates are still considered students, not employees, meaning they lack access to social security in most of European countries
- Furthermore, postdoctoral researchers are typically employed through short-term project funding, and not proper contracts, and likely face losing their job amidst the crisis
- Those researchers who are employed, are unable to work during the pandemic and consequently publish their research, which is an essential prerequisite to continuing their careers
- Finally, the lack of an adequate working environment or a sustainable strategy to employ early-career researchers, as well as the pressure from employers to publish and be productive during lockdown has led to very poor mental health amongst researchers

Giulia Malaguarnera | [@GMalaguarnera](https://www.linkedin.com/company/gmalaguarnera) | +33698330219 | [giulia.malaguarnera@eurodoc.net](mailto:giulia.malaguarnera@eurodoc.net)

President of [European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers \(Eurodoc\)](#)

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JUST IN THE NETHERLANDS, roughly half of PhD candidates have an increased risk of a psychiatric disorder, with many considering quitting their doctorate

Research, with its social and economical benefits, is nothing without the people who perform it. Act now, by supporting early-career researchers, preserving the long-term budget and invest in the next generation of Europe!

Thanks for listening.

Giulia Malaguarnera

Reference document:

<http://eurodoc.net/news/2020/the-aftermath-of-the-pandemic-for-early-career-researchers-in-europe>

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