

EDITORIAL

Moving on: mobility for early-career neuroscientists

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The mobility of researchers is fundamental to develop a knowledge-based society that fosters innovativeness and competitiveness. Domestic mobility is welcome but international human resources are the main objective. Research institutes, universities and laboratories want to recruit skilled professionals, and constraining their human resource pool within national borders means losing an enormous potential workforce. This is the macroscopic point of view behind the huge importance that policy-making institutions, such as the European Union, give to mobility. In fact, migration of professionals is a worldwide trend in most labour areas, not only in science. However, mobility can also be viewed from another perspective - the point of view of the individual researcher or doctoral student, who is affected by those mobility and research policies that will finally be averaged in statistics and outcomes. In this opinion article, we - four mid-career neuroscientists with considerable experience in scientific mobility - want to focus on the personal aspects, conflicts and motivations of mobile scientists. We will share our opinions on how researchers can benefit from, but also on how they might be disadvantaged by, changing workplace and country. We also discuss the ideal career stage(s) for researcher mobility, the impact of language barriers, and the practical support available to those who have decided to move. Such a decision is likely to leave an indelible mark on our career, but do we dedicate enough time to think about why and when we should move? Are we aware of the problems we might face?

Why move? Some pros and cons of scientific mobility

Scientific mobility is not a new phenomenon at all. Even centuries ago, researchers and artisans moved to other countries, to learn from outstanding scholars or simply for a better quality of life. However, the mobility of scientists has increased markedly over the past decades. Nowadays, international mobility is an integral part of the career for many talented researchers worldwide. Why do researchers move? In 2012, the GlobSci survey asked more than 16 000 researchers from all over the world exactly this question (Franzoni *et al.*, 2012). Respondents unequivocally named two major reasons for moving: the outstanding faculty or research team at the target institution, and the opportunity to improve their personal career prospects. The reputation of the foreign institution and the extension of the international network were listed as important as well.

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Apart from funding issues and general working conditions, the opportunity to learn new techniques, methods or approaches is certainly a major benefit of moving to another lab. Moving to another lab will also significantly extend your scientific network, a factor that should not be underestimated. A broad network of collaborators means, for instance, more potential candidates for collaborative research initiatives, or simply more qualified scientists you can ask for advice or discuss your ideas with. Beyond the specific skills, you may acquire and the people you meet in another lab, research abroad will also bring you in touch with different academic and scientific cultures - which may differ quite markedly between, for instance, Stockholm and Seville. These experiences may be very helpful for deciding how you will run your own lab, once you are in this very privileged position. Last but not least, moving to another lab will most likely foster your scientific independence. Some PIs have difficulty adjusting to a new role of a long-known lab member. For example, they find it hard to allow a former PhD student, now a post-doc, the degrees of freedom required to develop independence. However, if you arrive as a post-doc in a new lab, your (relative) independence is taken for granted. Moreover, you will often have to overcome obstacles in the new research environment, which will help you to mature. In sum, moving to another lab may be a critical ingredient in a successful scientific career. In particular, research experiences abroad are increasingly relevant in job or grant applications. For certain funding schemes (see below), international research experiences are even mandatory.

However, although research abroad may be highly beneficial to your career prospects in academia, it can be hard to make it happen. And if you do decide to move, there may also be disadvantages (for an overview of several experiences, see <http://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2011/08/content-collection-international-mobility>). Things may turn out differently than expected. Cultural and language barriers may be greater than assumed, or it might be more difficult than expected to be far away from family and friends. The equipment you are used to may not be available in the new lab or the new colleagues may be less supportive than you had hoped. However, even if everything goes smoothly, after moving it will take some time before you are ready for take-off again. Moving to another lab will take some time (and effort) before you are familiar with the procedures, routines and techniques in the new lab - this will certainly affect your short-term scientific output. And when you are finally used to everything and have worked in the lab for some time, another problem may arise: losing contact with your colleagues in your home country. Although there are differences between researchers from different countries of origin, the vast majority of scientists aim for a (tenured) position in their home country (Franzoni *et al.*, 2012). In order to get a position in your home country, it helps to stay in touch with the scientific community

and your network at home, but this is not that easy when you are on the other side of the world. Attending relevant meetings or giving talks in your home country may be just two ways of keeping contact with your network at home. Some further tips on how to maximize the benefits and reduce the likelihood of disadvantages of moving to another lab are listed in Table 1.

Career stage: when should I move?

Thus, it is clear that you need to take your time, because making the decision of moving abroad is definitely a ‘big’ one. First, you should be clear that you want to pursue a scientific career, and you have a better chance of knowing this by the end of your PhD. After having experienced for several years the effort and dedication that this career needs, you will be in a better position to find your way. Simply by thinking about future goals motivates us to pursue them, and for reaching our goals, we need to develop specific plans. The decisions of when, where and how to move will then develop much more easily.

Graduate students are probably in a more vulnerable position when doing their PhD. abroad. You need close supervision on a daily basis and being “at home” might help you get through this period of learning and setting the basis of your career. Nevertheless, during this period you might also benefit from short-term programmes of mobility in international laboratories. Those could involve spending a few months in the laboratory of some of your supervisor’s colleagues, or in key laboratories that can teach you a particular technique or perform specific training. Going through these short stays might also be inspiring for your future scientific decisions on which laboratory to go to, which topic to study, which country to work in, etc.

After your PhD, you will have a pretty good idea of what specific topic in neuroscience you would like to dedicate yourself to for the next few years. This is also a good time to take risks - changing research topic, changing model system, etc. - and a fantastic time for moving country. You are still young and (hopefully)

TABLE 1. Tips for moving to another lab

Think carefully about where to move!	What are the topics that interest you the most? Are there any specific techniques you want to learn? Who is the leading expert in that field or technique?
Get in touch with the new lab!	How will the new colleagues help you getting started? Is there sufficient funding for the planned projects? Is the equipment you need available?
Plan well ahead!	Is there anything that you can prepare in advance (e.g. ethics proposal)? How can you arrange all the non-scientific things that are important when moving (e.g., visa, housing)?
Stay in contact with the scientific community in your home country!	Is there a chance to give talks in your home country? Is there a way to collaborate with researchers from your home country?
Decide whether and how to move on!	If you want to go back home: Is there any specific mobility scheme to go back? Is there a specific deadline? Is there anyone to contact at the returning institution? If you want to stay in the country: Are there any funding options for foreign researchers? Could you apply for international (e.g. EU) funding?

full of energy and motivation. Don’t get fixed to your bench! More than likely, the best lab for the type of research you would like to do is not around the corner but in another country. Spending time in leading labs has proven to be a useful step in the career of nearly all successful investigators. Going abroad and exposing yourself to a new environment is a rich and exciting experience for anyone, both at a personal and scientific level. When choosing a country to move to you should explore several possibilities and strongly consider doing interviews to personally visit the labs, the city and get a flavour of the country. Keep an eye on the possible effect of cultural differences in an attempt to avoid stress and conflict. For example, those moving from Europe to some oriental countries may benefit from cultural advice to better understand unfamiliar hierarchies, conflict management and body language. And, of course, national language can be a major hindrance to mobility (see below).

Another additional aspect to consider when moving to another country is your partner/family situation. To balance dual-career couples is of course not an easy issue, especially if your partner is a non-scientist and has to find a new job as well. This is an issue that more and more scientists are facing as the number of dual-career couples is increasing. There are several strategies. A common one is that couples decide to favour the career with the better prospects and opportunities when taking the move. There is also the possibility that, for a short period of time, everybody follow his or her own opportunity and the relationship stays in a second plane. However, this latter option is obviously not ideal for several reasons, especially when the couple has children. When your partner is a scientist things become slightly easier. Dual-hiring strategies in which universities or institutions offer a position to the partner according to his or her specialization have become much more common and are a clear point for negotiation [see also (Karadottir *et al.*, 2015; Poirazi *et al.*, 2016)].

Our profession has, among other eccentricities, an all-or-nothing career evolution, in other words, the only possible outlook for a developing scientist is to become a boss, a principal investigator. After one or several post-docs, you need to find your independent research, define your own niche and set up your lab. At this point, you are at the neck, where the bottle narrows. Early-career researchers face a limited job market and mobility will probably become a necessity. Usually, you will find few or no local research institutions recruiting young investigators, so you will need to look ahead and search further away. Then, some opportunities will appear. In this way, besides the intrinsic benefits of mobility already described, moving country can substantially increase the possibilities for young researchers to continue the natural development of their scientific careers.

Language as a barrier for mobility?

Now that we have discussed when to move in your scientific career, the next obvious question is: ‘where?’. Here, it’s important to consider language and cultural differences among countries. One of the major benefits of the European Union is to allow efficient movement of people across borders. For instance, taking up a PhD position in another European country has become very easy and is almost as natural as choosing any local programme at home. However, European scientists face one of the remaining boundaries that hinder fully efficient mobility – national language. With more than 20 official languages, it is one of the ultimate barriers that many European research institutes face on the way to full internationalization. Evaluating the European Union’s progress on

integration over the last two decades showed that differences in language have replaced work visas as the main practical barrier to efficient mobility (Bartz & Fuchs-Schündeln, 2012). It even seems that language borders matter more than country borders in explaining the lack of full integration. Young scientists have high levels of education, understand cultural differences and have knowledge of more than one language, but still experience inefficient communication as a major obstacle on cross-border mobility. Of course, most neuroscience research labs use a single working language, which in the majority of cases is English. However, this strategy is open to the shortfall of misinterpretation, simply because some important information may get lost in translation (Feely & Harzing, 2003). Moreover, researchers may be less able to express scientific ideas to their fullest or incorrectly interpret messages from their colleagues or supervisor. Regional languages or cultural effects seem to play less of a role than national languages as a hindrance for mobility. More generally, language barriers may also breed uncertainty, promote group separation, undermine trust, and lead to polarization of opinions. The relevant question is – are scientists moving where the jobs are, or where the language abilities allow you to go? Working in a lab without knowing the national language may be feasible, but this may be more difficult in the case of everyday life. Some countries embrace diversity less easily than others. For instance, learning French may in fact be wise when you are interested in moving to a research institute in Lyon. Meanwhile Britain, thanks to the English language, has an advantage in the competition for foreign scientific talents. By comparison, the mobility patterns in the US are quite different; here students and postdocs are more mobile than any European scientists (http://www.scienceurope.org/uploads/PublicDocumentsAndSpeeches/SE_and_Elsevier_Report_Final.pdf). Some of the reasons for the differences between the US and Europe are indeed the lack of language barriers and smaller inter-state cultural differences. However, the national languages will remain different and distinctive across Europe. As the language barriers cannot be removed, they should be recognized and managed. As with any other skills shortage, research institutes should support language-training programmes. Alternatively, labs may still go with a single working language, but focus on recruiting employees who are fluent in this particular language. Organizing informal meetings for international students also allows support on a more personal level. For instance, the Dutch government has created an application called ‘Path Finder’ to provide international students with some initial tailored information (<https://rlb.nuffic.nl/products?hoInstance=uu&language=EN&lifeEvent=studyinNL>).

Who can help me move? Funding opportunities and other support for researcher mobility

Once you’ve made the decision to get mobile with your neuroscience career, who’s going to help you do it? Financially, the good news is that, with international mobility and cooperation being such a huge part of the scientific landscape these days, there’s a plethora of funding opportunities for those looking to carry out their research in a new location. If you’ve already identified your future destination, you should be able to get plenty of assistance from them first. In many cases this can be direct, with your new institution providing you with relocation funds and/or start-up money for your laboratory – often this can form part of negotiating the terms of your new position (Karadottir *et al.*, 2015). But you can also receive plenty of indirect support from your future employer, including pointing you towards appropriate sources of independent funding and then

actively supporting your applications. Make sure you profit from all the assistance you can get here!

To help would-be mobile neuroscientists, we’ve also provided a non-exhaustive but diverse selection of funding sources in Table 2. Given the demographic and remit of FKNE, our focus here is on funding for people looking to set up or relocate their own laboratory, especially within Europe. The huge range of schemes available to fund internationally mobile PhD students or post-docs are beyond our scope, although Europe-based early-career neuroscientists should probably start by checking out the highly popular mobility programmes run by the EC (http://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/about-msca/actions/if/index_en.htm) and EMBO (<http://www.embo.org/funding-awards/fellowships>). We’ve also focused on relatively open mobility, allowing movement within large groups of nations or between one specific nation and anywhere else. But there are plenty of schemes – too many to list! – focusing on specific movement between two particular countries, or even between particular institutions. Once you have an idea where you’d like to move to it’s well worth checking out what you’re eligible for – you might be pleasantly surprised... For this, and for many other funding-based enquiries, you’ll also probably benefit from a visit to the excellent Society for Neuroscience page for international funding schemes (<https://www.sfn.org/awards-and-funding/global-funding-sources>), which lists programmes by region and then by country. The fantastic EURAXESS site (<http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/#>) also contains a wealth of information on mobility funding schemes (and much more) with a European focus.

For long-term moves to a new country, there are several schemes specifically targeted to mobile researchers that *require* relocation. These include the prestigious international Human Frontier Science Program (HFSP) Career Development Award, which provides 3 years’ support to HFSP Fellows to set up their own laboratory in a different nation. In Europe, various country-specific schemes operate to attract incoming overseas researchers, including programmes specifically designed to bring new PIs to Austria, Croatia, Germany, Ireland, Italy and Luxembourg (Table 2). Worldwide, there are also good funding opportunities for those wishing to start or move their lab to China, Singapore, Brazil and Australia (Table 2).

In addition, there are even more funding programmes that do not necessarily require relocation, but do actively *support* researcher mobility. Chief among these are the Starting and Consolidator Grants from the European Research Council (ERC). These not only provide 5 years’ salary and research funding for cutting-edge science, but also include generous extra relocation funding if you are planning to move to Europe. Prestigious national funding schemes, including those in Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK (Table 2), are also open to overseas researchers looking to relocate. The UK’s Medical Research Council (MRC) also has a ‘Money follows researchers’ policy, which means that MRC grant holders can maintain their funding if they move to another location within the EU (let’s see if that one survives the referendum...).

Even if you’re not looking to relocate for good, short-term mobility can still have a big impact on your science, and there are plenty of schemes that support overseas stays of a year or less. These include outgoing programmes that support researchers travelling from one particular country (e.g. Belgium, Denmark, the UK, the USA; Table 2) to various overseas locations, and incoming programmes that support foreign researchers from a range of nations to spend time in a particular host country (e.g. Germany, Japan, China, the USA; Table 2).

TABLE 2. Sources of mobility funding for researchers setting up or relocating their laboratory. All information and links were correct at the time of writing, but are always liable to change!

Country	Funding body	Scheme(s)	Direction	Link
Long-term schemes that <i>require</i> mobility				
International	HFSP	Career Development Award	n/a	http://www.hfsp.org/funding/career-development-awards
Austria	WWTF	Vienna Research Groups	Incoming	http://www.wwtf.at/programmes/vrg/
Croatia	Croatian Government & MSES	NEWFELPRO	Incoming / Outgoing	http://www.newfelpro.hr/
Germany	DFG	Emmy Noether Programme	Incoming	http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/programmes/individual/emmy_noether/
Germany	DFG	Research Fellowships	Outgoing	http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/programmes/individual/research_fellowships/in_brief/index.html
Germany	Humboldt Foundation	Sofja Kovalevskaja Award	Incoming	https://www.humboldt-foundation.de/web/kovalevskaja-award.html
Germany	Humboldt Foundation	Alexander von Humboldt Professorship	Incoming	https://www.humboldt-foundation.de/web/alexander-von-humboldt-professorship.html
Republic of Ireland	SFI	President of Ireland Future Research Leaders Programme	Incoming	http://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/closed-calls/the-president-of-ireland-future-research-leaders-programme.html
Italy	The Giovanni Armenise Harvard Foundation	Armenise-Harvard Career Development Awards	Incoming	http://www.armeniseharvard.org/career-development-awards/
Luxembourg	FNR	ATTRACT	Incoming	http://fnr.lu/funding-instruments/atract/
Australia	ARC	Australian Laureate Fellowships	Incoming	http://www.arc.gov.au/australian-laureate-fellowships
Brazil	FAPESP	Young Investigator Award	Incoming	http://www.fapesp.br/en/yia
China	Chinese government	1000 Talents	Incoming	http://www.1000plan.org/en/index.html
New Zealand	Neurological Foundation of New Zealand	Repatriation Fellowship	Incoming	http://www.neurological.org.nz/grants-careers/grants-applications-deadlines/scholarships-fellowships
Singapore	NRF	Fellowship / Investigatorship	Incoming	http://www.nrf.gov.sg/about-nrf/programmes/nrf-fellowship-and-nrf-investigatorship
Spain	Ramón y Cajal-MINECO	5-years contract	Incoming	http://www.idi.mineco.gob.es/portal/site/MICINN/
Long-term schemes that <i>support</i> mobility				
International	ERC	Starting & Consolidator Grants	n/a	https://erc.europa.eu/funding-and-grants/funding-schemes
Denmark	The Danish Council for Independent Research	Sapere Aude	Incoming	http://ufm.dk/en/research-and-innovation/councils-and-commissions/the-danish-council-for-independent-research/for-applicants/what-can-you-apply-for/dff-sapere-aude
Finland	Academy of Finland	Academy Professor / Research Fellow	Incoming	http://www.aka.fi/en/funding/funding-apply-now/our-funding-opportunities/
France	Inserm	ATIP Avenir Program	Incoming	https://www.eva2.inserm.fr/EVA/doc/2016AVE/AO_ATIP-Avenir_2016_English.pdf
Ireland	SFI	SIRG Programme	Incoming	http://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/closed-calls/sfi-starting-investigator-research-grant-(sirg)-programme-2015.html
Netherlands	NWO	Vidi / Vici	Incoming	http://www.nwo.nl/en/funding/our-funding-instruments/nwo/innovational-research-incentives-scheme/vidi/index.html
Portugal	FCT	Investigator Programme	Incoming	http://www.fct.pt/apoios/contratacaodoutorados/investigador-fct/index.phtml.en
Sweden	Swedish Research Council	Starting / Consolidator Grant	Incoming	http://www.vr.se/inenglish/researchfunding.4.12fff4451215cbd83e4800021418.html
Switzerland	SNF	Ambizione	Incoming	http://www.snf.ch/en/funding/careers/ambizione/Pages/default.aspx#FAQ
UK	Wellcome Trust	Sir Henry Dale Fellowship / Investigator Award	Incoming	https://wellcome.ac.uk/funding/
Australia	NHMRC	Career Development Fellowships	Incoming	http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants-funding/apply-funding/career-development-fellowships
Short-term mobility schemes				
Belgium	FWO	Grant for a long stay abroad	Outgoing	http://www.fwo.be/en/fellowships-funding/international-mobility/outgoing/grant-for-a-long-stay-abroad/
Denmark	Danish Council for Independent Research	International Research Stays	Outgoing	http://ufm.dk/en/research-and-innovation/councils-and-commissions/the-danish-council-for-independent-research/for-applicants/what-can-you-apply-for/overview-of-instruments/fse-international-research-visit-grants
Germany	Humboldt Foundation	Various programmes	Incoming / Outgoing	https://www.humboldt-foundation.de/web/programmes-by-target-group.html
UK	Alzheimer's Research UK	Travelling Research Fellowship	Outgoing	http://www.alzheimersresearchuk.org/grants/travelling-research-fellowship/
UK	Royal Society	International Exchanges	Outgoing	https://royalsociety.org/grants-schemes-awards/grants/international-exchanges/

(continued)

TABLE 2 (continued)

Country	Funding body	Scheme(s)	Direction	Link
UK	Leverhulme Trust	International Academic Fellowships	Outgoing	https://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/funding/grant-schemes/international-academic-fellowships
China	Chinese Academy of Sciences	President's International Fellowship Initiative	Incoming	http://english.cas.cn/cooperation/fellowships/201503/t20150313_145274.shtml
Japan	Japan Society for the Promotion of Science	Fellowship programs for Overseas Researchers	Incoming	https://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-fpo/index.html
USA	Fulbright Scholar Program	Core Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program	Outgoing	http://www.cies.org/program/core-fulbright-us-scholar-program
USA	Fulbright Scholar Program	Core Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program	Incoming	http://www.cies.org/program/core-fulbright-visiting-scholar-program

Finally, as if deciding on a move abroad and then finding the money to support it weren't hard enough, you then have to face the challenge of physically relocating and starting to do science in a hugely unfamiliar environment. Fortunately, there are various organisations that can make this process a lot easier for you. Your first stop should be the EURAXESS site (<http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess>), which contains a huge amount of Europe-focused but also worldwide information for mobile researchers. This includes funding opportunities, helpful information, and plenty of links on living and doing science elsewhere. In specific countries, FNAK (www.fnak.fr/en) provides invaluable assistance to foreign researchers navigating the tortuous waters of French bureaucracy, while DAAD (www.daad.de/en/) provides information and support for overseas researchers in Germany. The Humboldt foundation also provides their Fellows with a publicly available practical guide to living in Germany (www.humboldt-foundation.de/pls/web/docs/F15600/practical_hints.pdf), and an amazingly comprehensive equivalent for foreign researchers working in Japan is provided by JPSP (https://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-plaza/51_lifeInJapan.html). But wherever you're moving to, don't underestimate the help you can get from your future colleagues – many will be foreign researchers too and will already have been through all of the steps you have to deal with, and have survived! Ask around and you'll soon be pointed in the right direction.

Conclusions

For many scientists, changing countries is nowadays a common feature of their careers. It seems unfair to think that researchers who are not mobile because of, for example, family restrictions are not passionate enough about their research. However, even moving to another institute or University within the same country will also significantly extend your network and boost your scientific career. Other scientists have experienced that trips to scientific conferences or collaborators can replace cross-border mobility to some extent. In other words, you can be mobile even if you don't move permanently. We urge students and postdocs to seek advice from their mentors on all of these issues, while also being aware of potential bias: 'we're losing good scientists from our country' can be a really bad guiding principle. Many studies have shown that mobility is important for a scientific career and that it will become an increasingly vital part of European science (Schiermeier, 2011). What remains unclear, though, is whether researchers are excellent because they are mobile, or whether they are mobile because they are excellent!

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The authors are scholars of the FENS-Kavli Network of Excellence, a network of young neuroscientists, with the goal of fostering exchange – scientific or about science policy – between excellent junior/mid-career neuroscientists who are either currently working in Europe or received their academic training in Europe.

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