

To Janez Potočnik, Ph.D.

Commissioner for Science and Research of European Union

European Commission

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Subject: Non-meritocratic researcher recruitment procedures in Italy.

Dear Dr. Janez Potočnik,

We write to bring your attention to the researcher recruitment procedures in Italy. As pointed out by the European Commission and explicitly stated in your web page (http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/potocnik/profile/role_en.htm), one of the most important objectives pursued by ERA is to improve the condition of research and researchers in the EU.

We are members of *APRI*, the *Italian Association of Researchers* (most of us do not have a permanent position); we ask you to focus on one of the main problems, which, in our view, strongly prevent an improvement of scientific research in our country.

In fact, despite the most recent laws on the subject, in Italy most universities have established a (very low) limit on the number of publications to be submitted after public calls for researchers. In other words, a candidate with 300 publications receives the same evaluation as a candidate having a number of publications equal to the limit established by the public call (it is clear, given the well-established Italian tendency to advantage “internal” candidates, that this is a trick to advantage low-level candidates). We think that publications are crucial to evaluate a candidate’s experience and, in fact, the EU funding scheme is effectively and largely based on this parameter.

On the contrary, in Italy, the recruitment procedure is not based on meritocracy and, in order to give you some facts, we suggest that you should monitor some recent calls for researchers:

- Università di Sassari Biochemistry Scientific discipline (SSD) BIO/10 Maximum number of publications 3, Architecture SSD ICAR/21 Maximum number of publications 5
- Politecnico di Milano, Engineering SSD ING-IND/16 Maximum number of publications 3

(For the sake of brevity we omit other similar calls, which can be easily obtained on the website of the Italian Ministry for Scientific Research, www.miur.it)

On these grounds, it is clear to us that ERA’s main objectives are hindered by such a non-meritocratic recruitment system.

In our view, in a real, open and competitive system, funds and resources have to be assigned by following strictly meritocratic criteria. We hope, therefore, that you and the ERA board members will handle this problem and start to monitor funding not only at EU level, but also at a national level.

Sincerely,

APRI - Associazione Precari della Ricerca Italiani