

Quarterly  
Newsletter  
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euraxess  
RESEARCHERS IN MOTION

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## EURAXESS China

Dear readers,

Welcome to the 3rd issue of our quarterly newsletter.

In this edition's **"In Focus"**, we zoom in on **Slovakia**. With the help of EURAXESS Slovakia we provide you with a comprehensive overview of the Slovak research collaboration landscape and Sino-Slovak opportunities. We also present some news about current reforms in the immigration landscape of China that might affect the visa situation of incoming researchers.

Finally, in our **"Meet the Researcher"** interview, we interview Prof Vladimír Šucha, a Slovakian professor and the Director-General of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission. In addition to holding this prestigious post, Prof Šucha has a long-term academic career with more than 100 papers published. He shares with us some insightful information about the JRC, while also discussing China and researchers' mobility.

Best regards

EURAXESS China team

# 1 Briefing

## Related department and contact information

1. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China
  - <http://fmprc.gov.cn/mfa/chn/>
  - 朝阳门南大街 2 号
  - Tel: 65961114
2. Beijing Municipal Human Resource and Social Security Bureau
  - <http://bjrbj.gov.cn/>
  - 永定门西街 5 号
  - Tel: 12333
3. Beijing Municipal Bureau of Foreign Experts Affairs
  - <http://beijing.caiep.org/>
  - 永定门西街 5 号
  - Tel: 12333
4. Beijing Administration for Industry and Commerce
  - <http://www.hd315.gov.cn>
  - 苏州街 36 号
  - Tel: 12315
5. Beijing Exit-Entry Health and Quarantine Department
  - <http://bithc.org.cn/>
  - 西北旺德政路 10 号
  - Tel: 82403675
6. Foreign Affairs Office of the People's Government of Beijing Municipality
  - <http://bjfao.gov.cn>
  - 正义路 2 号
  - Tel: 85622715
7. Administrative committee of Zhongguancun Science Park
  - <http://www.zgc.gov.cn>
  - 阜成路 73 号
  - Tel: 88828909

*Forum to Promote Researchers' Mobility:* The effects of the reforms of the foreigners' working permit system on China-based researchers.

EURAXESS China delivered a presentation outlining trends and challenges in EU-China researchers mobility at the „**Forum on Policy and Practical Measures to Promote Researchers' Mobility between EU and China**“ that took place in Beijing on 8-9 September. The forum is a part of the [EU-China Dialogue on Migration and Mobility Support Project](#) and was organised by the Beijing Offices' of the [International Organization for Migration](#) and [International Labour Organisation](#). The project aims at maximizing the benefits of international migration and strengthening the dialogue between the EU and China on Migration and Mobility. This was the first time the dialogue focused on **Researchers' Mobility**. Read the press release [here](#).

On the Chinese side, various important stakeholders involved in the reforms of the foreigner working permit system in China were present. Attending were representatives from the *Bureau of Exit and Entry Administration* of the Ministry of Public Security, *State Administration for Foreign Experts Affairs* as well as representatives of the municipal authorities in charge of the issue in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong.

The reforms are part of an overall overhaul of the foreigners' Working Permit system in China that aims at:

- Making a uniform system for all foreign workers,
- Creating initiatives that incentive highly talented workers to settle in China,
- Smoothing the way towards a permanent residence card for desirable long-standing talents in China.

The reforms focusing on talent attraction are being tested in three different pilot projects in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong. The Beijing project focuses on the **Zhongguancun Science Park** and includes measures that streamline the process of getting a work permit and permanent residency for highly skilled workers and entrepreneurs working for companies that are part of the Science Park. The measures also include ways for foreign graduates from Chinese universities to get a residency permit based on either involvement in a start-up company or an internship in the Science Park.

This new talent-attraction environment also adds **a new facility for Exit-Entry Services for the foreigners in the area**, the first one outside of the Public Security Bureau facility in Dongzhimen. If researchers working in some of the universities in Haidian are interested in saving a trip downtown, they can try this new facility. Researcher with first-hand experience of the facility vouch for its reliability, but reportedly the facility is not open to students. **The new visa**

centre is located at No. 22A Shuangyushubeili (海淀区双榆树北里甲 22 号院).

Aside from this, new measures will allow well-established eligible talents to apply for longer-lasting work permits. This paves the way towards permanent residence permit down the road (the so-called Green Card). This facilitation [reportedly](#) might affect foreign *deputy professors, researchers* or above. The benefits of such status are to be able to enter and exit China unrestricted and reside in China indefinitely.

Overall, the direction of these changes seems to have potential to be positive; especially for European researchers working and living in China long-term.



[Research and Development in Slovakia](#), Brochure, 2016



Several new [Science Parks](#) have been established since 2007. Comenius University Science Park in Bratislava (in the picture above) should provide the space for collaborative interdisciplinary research in the fields of biomedicine, biotechnologies, environmental medicine and related societal challenges. (Photo: Vladimír Kuric)

## 2 EURAXESS Country in Focus: The Slovak Republic

Slovakia is a young and dynamic country offering an increasing number of opportunities to carry out excellent research and to turn it to practical application or business ideas. It has been an attractive destination for foreign investors, having one of the highest shares of medium and high tech exports in the EU and being a number one producer of cars per capita in the world. Now Slovakia has a strong ambition to take another step forward, to become the hub of innovations and encourage more Slovak companies to follow the examples of ARDACO, c2i, ESET, Ecocapsule, GA Drilling and several others that are among the innovation leaders in their fields. Research and development should be in the heart of this exciting transformation.

### 1.1 Slovakia and its Research, Development & Innovation System

R&D in the Slovak Republic is carried out particularly at public sector institutions, including 23 public and state universities, 57 institutes of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and specialised research institutes established by state administration central bodies. The private sector currently lags behind in R&D activities but several targeted policies and funding programmes should help to increase the number of researchers in private companies in the near future.

The share of researchers in the working population is slightly under the average in EU. 42.7% of researchers in Slovakia are women, compared to 33.2% in the EU, and their share is also comparatively high in the majority of STEM disciplines. On the other hand, foreigners only comprised 2.44% of researchers employed in Slovakia in 2014 and increasing the number of international researchers in the R&D is therefore one of the main challenges for Slovak research institutions.

R&D expenditure in Slovakia is relatively low in comparison with the wider EU. In 2014, the overall spending on R&D was 0.89 % of GDP but it should increase to 1.2 % of the GDP by 2020. Considerable investment in the new research infrastructure has been made mainly due to the Structural and Investment Funds of the European Union. During the last decade brand new research infrastructures have been established or upgraded in all key research institutions and many research institutions now have an infrastructure comparable to that of the best R&D institutions in Europe. Further upgrades of the R&D infrastructure will be financed from the European Investment and Structural Funds in the period of 2014 - 2020. The establishment of these integrated scientific infrastructures has already seen the first success and the Slovak Republic became, together with Portugal, the most successful country in the first Teaming for Excellence Call (Horizon 2020) with a gain of four projects which should result in the creation of international centres of excellence.

## 1.2 Research Excellence in Slovakia

The areas with the largest potential to contribute to the excellent, cutting edge research on the international scale were defined in the Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation (RIS3 SK) which outlines the R&D priorities to be funded in the forthcoming years via national funding schemes but also via EU structural funds. These areas reflect both the scientific and research capacities available and the economic specialisation of Slovakia. The R&D priorities include the research of materials & nanotechnology, ICT and biomedicine & biotechnology. Technology priorities include industrial research, environmental & agricultural research and research on environmentally friendly and sustainable energy. The role of social sciences in tackling the global and local societal challenges is also stressed in the Strategy.

The majority of institutions producing excellent and innovative research are located in Bratislava, one of the most innovative regions in the new EU member states according to the EU Innovation Scoreboard. But research excellence and strong innovation potential can also be found elsewhere. The region of Košice is building its reputation as the Slovak “Silicon Valley” with a high concentration of ICT firms and related R&D activities. “IT Valley” cluster was one of the first industrial clusters in the region of Central and Eastern Europe awarded with the Gold Label of the European Cluster Excellence Initiative. The region of Žilina is becoming a home of top quality research on intelligent transport systems not only because of the presence of the numerous companies related to the car and transport industry but also due to the ERA Chair grant awarded to the University of Žilina.



Researchers considering a short-term research stay in Slovakia can choose from a variety of available options. The largest programme providing funding for study and research stays in duration from 1 - 12 months is The National Scholarship Programme (NSP) administered by SAIA, n. o., a mobility funding agency being also a member of European EURAXESS network. More information about the programme is available at [www.scholarships.sk](http://www.scholarships.sk)

## 1.3 Recruitment Opportunities

### 1.3.1 Public Sector Recruitment Opportunities

Most researchers in Slovakia are employed in public sector institutions, with universities being the most important employers of research staff. All positions open at the Slovak universities are published on the webpage of the Ministry of

Education, Science, Research and Sport of SR. Similarly, the Slovak Academy of Sciences announces all vacancies via its public website. Experienced scientists from abroad who are interested in working at the institutes of the Slovak Academy of Sciences can also apply for a fellowship within the SASPRO programme, co-funded under FP7. The programme allows applications for a fellowship from 12 to 36 months, while the field of science within which it is possible to submit applications is not limited.

PhD candidates are considered to be regular students in Slovakia and receive a monthly scholarship if enrolled as full time students. Selected PhD programmes offered in English language can be found in the overview prepared by SAIA.

Slovak researchers working abroad who consider returning to Slovakia might be interested in the **reintegration programme “Návraty”** introduced last year. The programme enables research institutions from the public sector to open the positions for highly qualified Slovaks living abroad and receive the extra funding from the state that would enable them to provide competitive salaries and other conditions to the returnees.

### **1.3.2 Private Sector Recruitment Opportunities**

Slovakia is a country with a strong industrial base, tradition of industrial R&D and high share of medium and high technology production. Nevertheless, R&D activity of the business sector remains relatively low which is reflected also in the lack of the R&D positions at Slovak companies. Recently introduced innovation policies (support to clusters, innovation vouchers, tax reliefs) and funding programmes indicate a positive shift that should contribute to the development of stronger research potential in the business sector.

Besides supporting the R&D capacities in the established industries and companies, creation of new technological start-ups is strongly supported. This support is not limited to Slovak citizens only. Concept Paper on Start-up support in Slovakia adopted by the Slovak Government in 2015 foresees various advantages for international researchers who decide to start their innovative business in Slovakia. These include start-up visa, grants and more. With its population of around 5 million Slovakia might be too small to be the final market for start-ups but it is ideal for testing new ideas.

## **1.4 Funding Opportunities**

The competitive funding for R&D and innovation projects is provided by several public agencies. Major R&D grant agency in Slovakia is the Slovak Research and Development Agency (SRDA) offering funding for research project in both basic and applied research and across all scientific areas. Employees of universities and the Slovak Academy of Sciences can also apply for smaller grants supporting basic research (VEGA grants) and use of its outcomes in the educational process (KEGA grants).

Larger infrastructural project and collaborations between the academia and industry are mostly supported by the Structural and Investment Funds of the

European Union. More than 2.2 billion euro is allocated in the Operational Programme Research and Innovation for the period 2014 - 2020. Two agencies are involved in the distribution of funding from this Programme: the Research Agency and the Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency

## 1.5 Research collaborations

Slovakia enjoys all benefits of being a part of the European Research Area with an access to the major international R&D funding programmes, collaborative networks and some of the world best research infrastructures. As a member state of CERN, European Space Agency or Institute for Nuclear Research in Dubna it provides its researchers with an opportunity to participate in some of the most challenging research projects of the time. Its geographical location, historical ties and current policies (see e.g. EU Strategy for the Danube Region) make it an especially attractive place to develop research collaborations with the regions of Balkan and Eastern Europe.

## 1.6 Important information for incoming researchers

The instrument of hosting agreement was introduced to simplify the relocation of third country researchers to Slovakia. Researchers who signed a hosting agreement with a research institution or a university can apply for a temporary residence for the purpose of research and development. This type of residence requires fewer administrative duties and allows faster decision-making procedure. In this case, a researcher does not need a work permit or a confirmation of a possibility to fill a vacant position.

Practical assistance to international researchers is available at EURAXESS Service Centres in five Slovak towns. The most comprehensive summary of practical information for mobile researchers is available on the national portal of the Slovak EURAXESS Network ([www.euraxess.sk](http://www.euraxess.sk)) and in the regularly updated International Researcher's Guide to Slovakia.

Text prepared by Janka Kottulová, Katarína Košťálová and Mária Sásová, EURAXESS Slovakia team in SAIA, n. o.



## 3 Meet the Researcher: Prof Vladimír Šucha, Director-General, Joint Research Centre of the European Commission

*Prof Vladimír Šucha, the Director-General of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission shares with us some insightful information about the JRC, while also discussing China and researchers' mobility.*

### Vladimír Šucha

Director-General, Joint Research Centre

Prior to becoming the Director-General of the JRC, Vladimír Šucha served as the Deputy Director-General and spent 6 years in the position of director for culture and media in the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission. Before joining the European Commission, he held various positions in the area of European and international affairs. Between 2005 and 2006, he was director of the Slovak Research and Development Agency, national body responsible for funding research. He was principal advisor for European affairs to the minister of education of the Slovak Republic (2004-2005). In parallel, he has followed a long-term academic and research career, being a full professor in Slovakia and visiting professor/scientist at different academic institutions in many countries. Professor Šucha has published more than 100 scientific papers in peer reviewed journals.

**Is this your first trip to China in this capacity? What do you hope to achieve for JRC in China?**

I have visited China a few times before, but this is the first time I am here as a Director-General of the JRC. The aim of my visit is to enlarge the cooperation with China. I'd like to see Chinese institutions become more strategic partners for the JRC in the future. I want to enhance the collaboration with existing partners, but also looking into broadening the collaboration with other institutions.

**Last year, you signed a collaborative research agreement with the Institute of Remote Sensing and Digital Earth of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS RAD). What does your collaboration focus on?**

We have been collaborating with CAS RAD for almost 8 years - the cooperation started after the Sichuan earthquake in 2008 when China needed to understand better certain elements of earth observation and disaster risk management, which is one of the main issues JRC deals with. Since then, the cooperation has developed also in earth observation and finally we reached an agreement on various aspects of digital earth, such as remote sensing, air quality, or satellite observation. We also collaborate with other CAS institutes, but the scope of the collaboration is rather narrowly defined.

**China has been undergoing massive changes in science and technology. What impression does the local environment give to you?**

Indeed, the speed of R&D development has been remarkable. China has understood the importance of science and technology - at all levels of the government, as well as at the level of university students. During my short visit, I was able to see their cutting-edge understanding of what innovative ecosystem means, and this is admirable. In many ways, China jumped fast ahead and avoided many mistakes as they learned from the others' experience, to become an important player in the field of science and technology.

**How should European researchers respond to this and engage?**



### Joint Research Centre

**(JRC)** is the European Commission's science hub, bringing together scientific knowledge for Europe. As the science and knowledge service of the European Commission, the JRC's mission is to support EU policies with independent scientific evidence. Located across five different spots (in Brussels, Ispra, Karlsruhe, Seville, Petten), the JRC hosts specialist laboratories and unique research facilities and is home to thousands of scientists working to support EU policy.

The JRC carries out research in a wide variety of fields, mainly in the areas of agriculture and food security, energy and transport, environment and climate change, health and consumer protection, information society, safety and security, innovation and growth, measurements and standards, and nuclear safety and security.

While most of the scientific work serves the policy Directorates-General of the European Commission, the JRC addresses key societal challenges while stimulating innovation and developing new methods, tools and standards. Learn more at <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/>

There are many levels on which European researchers can get involved. According to the few European researchers I have met here, they understand China is becoming a place to be, not only thanks to high level of investment into R&D, but also positive and vibrant environment. Energetic momentum in scientific institutions affects behaviour, and such “vibe” is very important for the advancement of science. Science cannot be pushed forward by tired and cynical people. It needs to be dynamic, driven by curiosity. I could feel this spirit here, at least in the institutions I had the chance to visit.

It is very important to realise that the world of science has become multipolar. It is not just a few renowned institutions in the West that drive global science but also China and other parts of the world. China is a place we can learn from and collaborate with at an equal level.

### **EURAXESS promotes researchers' mobility. Do you consider mobility an important element of driving scientific progress?**

Mobility and scientific exchange is irreplaceable. It helps you understand the diversity of fields, cultures, and backgrounds, which is the key driver for innovation and creativity. New communication technologies might have changed the world, but scientific progress cannot be achieved only through emails. It requires personal contact and interaction.

Mobility at all stages – from university and PhD students, to post-docs, mid-career and senior researchers – is one of the most important dimensions of a researcher's career, although the form and the length of mobility differ. If you are an advanced senior researcher with many professional and personal duties, it is difficult for you to leave for 6 months. Still, you can – in fact, you have to – go visit other places for a few weeks. However, obviously, mobility and brain drain are closely interlinked. This is a danger in many countries, so it needs to be factored in regional, national, or local policies.

### **These days, junior researchers are facing a different situation in terms of funding, employability and career development. What advice do you have for young people who intend to enter a research career?**

The most important thing is to keep curiosity and enthusiasm. We can have political discussions about visa, access to funding or research infrastructures – and this is all important, but even if you have these ingredients in place but lack the curiosity, the science will die.

No scientist is motivated only by his or her salary. Everybody is motivated by moving the frontier of knowledge, by the curiosity to discover something new. This kind of hunger needs to be present and can be nurtured mostly by an open mind, openness to different disciplines, backgrounds and cultures. My own scientific background is in the field of earth and environmental sciences. My best, most interesting, challenging and rewarding scientific advancements were always in collaborating with researchers from completely different fields.

However, I have also a word of caution, because science is undergoing a huge crisis right now. There are four big challenges to face – the deficit of multidisciplinary, the deficit of integrity, the data revolution, and the emergence of non-traditional players in traditional scientific fields. We have citizens, platforms and different types of companies producing science. Such multiplicity of players transforms science into something very complex, difficult to grasp. One needs to keep this in mind when entering any field of research.

**Professor Šucha, thank you for your time!**

## 4 In case you missed....

### 4.1 Event Outlook

Name	Field	Date	Location	Website
1. Outreach Information Event (TBC) in Dalian	All fields	20 October 2016	Dalian	Send an email us at <a href="mailto:china@euraxess.net">china@euraxess.net</a> if you want to join
2. EURAXESS-European Research Day + Science Slam	All fields	2 November 2016	Beijing	<a href="http://scienceslamchina.com">http://scienceslamchina.com</a>
3. Shenzhen Hi-Tech Fair	Science and Hi-Tech	16-22 November 2016	Shenzhen	<a href="http://www.chtf.com/english/">http://www.chtf.com/english/</a>
4. EURAXESS Researchers Night	All fields	24 November 2016	Shanghai	Send an email us at <a href="mailto:china@euraxess.net">china@euraxess.net</a> if you want to join

### 4.2 The 13<sup>th</sup> Five-year National S&TI Plan

**State Council** approved this summer the 13th 5-year **National Science and Technology Innovation Plan** (“十三五”国家科技创新规划的通知).

“The plan [is meant to] to play the key leading role of scientific and technological innovation in uplifting the industries to the medium- and high-end, developing new growth drivers, expanding new development space, improving development quality and efficiency.”

See it [here](#) in Chinese and [here](#) is a summary in English.



### 4.3 EURAXESS Science Slam China 2016 coming up!

Only 8 days to go! If you are interested in participating in the EURAXESS Science Slam China 2016 apply at <http://scienceslamchina.com> before the deadline **8 October**.

If you are a China-based researcher, show your creativity with a short introduction of your research in front of a live audience. The best slammer wins a trip to Europe.

Apply to participate on [scienceslamchina.com](http://scienceslamchina.com) with a written pitch describing your planned presentation (less than 300 words).

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#### **About us**

EURAXESS China is a networking tool for European researchers active in China and for Chinese researchers wishing to collaborate and/or pursue a career in Europe. EURAXESS China provides information about research in Europe, European research policy, opportunities for research funding, for EU-China and international collaboration and for trans-national mobility. **Membership is free.**

Visit us at [china.euraxess.org](http://china.euraxess.org) and [Join](#) the EURAXESS China community.

EURAXESS Links networks have thus far been launched in North America (USA & Canada) Japan, China, India, in ASEAN (currently focusing on Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam and Indonesia) and Brazil.