



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RECRUITMENT OF RESEARCHERS – COMPARATIVE NOTES

ITALY - Last updated: 21 October 2008

UNIVERSITY: The undergraduate cycle starts after 13 years of primary and secondary education. Most universities are public. There are no strict entrance requirements in most disciplines at most universities. A first-level degree (*Laurea*) is typically obtained after three years; a second-level degree lasting two additional years is required for doctoral studies (*Laurea Magistrale*). Doctoral degrees were introduced about 20 years ago. Doctoral fellowships are awarded by competitive examination. Doctoral programs have a fixed duration of three years.

POST-DOCTORAL EMPLOYMENT: The most common type of fellowship for recent PhDs is the *assegno di ricerca* (literally, research check), an individual stipend of about €1200-1500 net/month for collaboration on a research project. *Assegnisti* are not usually considered employees and do not qualify for benefits. Usually, an individual can receive *assegni* for a maximum of four years, though sometimes co-financing between institutions or use of external funds can extend this period. In principle, *assegnisti* are selected via public competition (*concorso*), but the *concorsi* for *assegni* generally do not involve a written exam. Both at universities and EPRs (public research institutes) increasing use is being made of temporary employment contracts that are not specific to the academic or research sectors, such as *contratti di collaborazione continuativa* (co.co.co.) and *contratti di collaborazione a progetto* (co.co.pro.). The terms of these contracts are, roughly speaking, similar to those of an *assegno*, but there are fewer barriers to renewing and extending these contract types, and *concorsi* are usually not required. EPRs can also hire researchers under fixed-term employment contracts, often referred to as Article 23 or Article 36 contracts. These last for a cumulative maximum of five years, but are usually stipulated for much shorter periods and renewed periodically if funding permits. Fixed-term employees with these contracts are paid the same as entry-level permanent hires (currently, about €1600 net/month) and receive many of the same benefits as permanent employees. It is possible to stipulate an Article 23 contract without a *concorso*. However, EPRs are increasingly making use of *concorsi* with written and oral examinations to assign such contracts. These *concorsi* may be nationwide and centralized. There is no true equivalent of a tenure-track position in Italy.

PERMANENT EMPLOYMENT: Both at universities and EPRs, permanent positions are awarded via *concorso*. The entry-level university position is that of *Ricercatore* (researcher). In principle, *ricercatori* are hired to do research; they teach on a voluntary basis. In practice, universities rely on the availability

of *ricercatori* to handle a significant amount of the teaching load. Promotion to *Professore Associato* (*Associate Professor*) is via *concorso*, after several years of service as a *ricercatore*. A separate examination is required for qualification to teach courses. Promotion to the highest level (*Professore Ordinario*) is by *concorso*, but without examinations. At EPRs, there is a similar career progression; the three corresponding levels are *Ricercatore*, *Primo Ricercatore*, and *Dirigente di Ricerca*. Positions and promotions are awarded via *concorsi*, which involve examinations at the first two levels. Employees of EPRs, including research staff, are civil servants.