

(English version)

Question for written answer E-000986/25
to the Commission
Giuseppe Antoci (The Left)
(6 March 2025)

Subject: Criticism of the bill on developing and promoting research and the excessive level of job insecurity faced by Italian researchers

The Italian Government's bill on developing and promoting research ⁽¹⁾ has been met with widespread criticism, as it could introduce even more job insecurity into the academic world. Although a reform did set out to make research careers more stable (by replacing research cheques with contracts, for example) ⁽²⁾, bureaucratic delays have hampered the practical implementation these measures, thus threatening the effectiveness of the reforms foreseen in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) ⁽³⁾.

The bill has been strongly criticised by associations such as ADI ⁽⁴⁾ and trade unions such as FLC CGIL, which have reported the inconsistencies with Italy's commitments at EU level to the Commission ⁽⁵⁾ ⁽⁶⁾. They argue that the new measures, providing for post-doc contracts and fellowships without adequate safeguards, could make the market even more insecure for researchers, in contradiction with the EU's goals for universities to strengthen their autonomy and quality.

In response to the criticism, the Minister for Universities and Research announced that it would be suspending the parliamentary proceedings on the bill to review its content.

In view of the above:

1. What does the Commission make of the researchers' and trade unions' criticism about Bill 1240 and the reforms provided for in the NRRP?
2. What does it make of the worrying phenomenon of job insecurity in Italian universities ⁽⁷⁾, considering the European standards on stable academic employment and the European Charter for Researchers in particular?
3. Could it support Italy in the structural financing of pre-tenure and tenure-track university positions?

Submitted: 6.3.2025

Answer given by Mr Dombrovskis on behalf of the European Commission
(14 May 2025)

The Commission is aware that the Ministry of University and Research presented to the Parliament in September 2024, the bill No 1240 'Provisions on the valorisation and promotion of research' with the aim of further modifying the rules concerning the career of researchers, already reformed following the entry into force of the decree-law of 30 April 2022 'Further urgent measures for the implementation of the Italian National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)', converted with amendments into law of 29 June 2022, no. 79. The Commission, in the context of the implementation of the NRRP, maintains a constant dialogue with the Italian Authorities as well as stakeholders, including trade unions, and carefully monitors the implementation of the reforms and investments. At this stage, the bill no. 1240 has not been adopted. The Commission is not in a position to comment on a draft law.

The Commission attaches high importance to promote job security and stability for researchers ⁽⁸⁾, within the remit of EU competences. These elements are addressed in the European framework for research careers and the European Charter for Researchers ⁽⁹⁾. The Commission supports Member States and stakeholders in the implementation of the new framework through a set of initiatives.

Regarding the possibility for the Commission to support the structural financing of pre-tenure and tenure-track university positions, it is a responsibility of the Member State to propose measures amending its Recovery and Resilience Plan, that the Commission can then assess in accordance with the Recovery and Resilience Facility (Regulation (EU) 2021/241).

⁽¹⁾ Bill 1240 <https://www.senato.it/leg/19/BGT/Schede/Ddliter/58531.htm>.

⁽²⁾ Law 79/2022 ('PNRR-bis').

⁽³⁾ Reform 1.1 and its practical application vis-à-vis 'pre-tenure' university posts, within the meaning of Article 24(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/241.

⁽⁴⁾ Italian doctoral students' association.

⁽⁵⁾ FLC CGIL report <https://www.flcgil.it/files/pdf/20250204/lettera-flc-cgil-a-commissione-europea-rischio-annullamento-obblighi-pnrr-riforma-1-1-missione-4-componente-2.pdf>.

⁽⁶⁾ ADI report <https://dottorato.it/content/ricerca-e-ddl-1240-ladi-presenta-un-esposto-alla-commissione-europea-sul-pnrr>.

⁽⁷⁾ In January 2025, more than 30 000 people were in temporary employment, with 7 770 researchers on fixed-term contracts and 24 077 on grants (Ministry for Universities and Research database).

⁽⁸⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/7282/oj/eng C/2024/7282, 05/12/2024>.

⁽⁹⁾ Council Recommendation of 18 December 2023 on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe.