

TEA

The European Archaeologist

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Early Research Careers in Archaeology (ERCA) Task Force

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In light of growing employment precarity for Early Career Researchers (ECRs) in archaeology, the European Association of Archaeologists has formed the “Early Research Careers in Archaeology” (ERCA) Task Force. ECRs are defined here as pre-tenured researchers, including postgraduates, postdocs and non-salaried scientists who plan to stay in academia. The Task Force recognises researchers engaged in a research career as ‘professionals’ regardless of their status and educational level, in line with the core principles of the [European Charter for Researchers](#).

Challenges encountered by ECRs typically include job insecurity, imposed mobility, as well as a lack of research freedom, independence and results ownership. Employment precarity is being exacerbated by a trend of casualisation and short fixed-term contracts in academia, as well as a culture of publish-or-perish even during periods of under- or un-employment. Pressures on ECRs working in archaeology are compounded by the fact that archaeology is a small, competitive field, with no standard ethical practices regarding, for instance, recognition of contribution to archaeological fieldwork and authorship. As a result of these worsening trends, ECRs feel increasingly under-represented and under-supported in archaeology. The European Association of Archaeologists wishes to address these troubling trends with the establishment of the ERCA Task Force.

The aim of this task force will be to work in close collaboration with the EAA Executive Board on the elaboration of a series of recommendations to improve early research careers in archaeology and address their consequences, including on mental health and life quality, with a view to provide support, level the playing field and make ECRs feel heard and empowered.

The activities of the task force will include:

- Creating a dynamic, independent and participatory forum for ECRs.
- Encouraging membership and participation of ECRs in the EAA to help create a representative discipline, reflecting the diversity of ECRs and the diversity of their research.
- Surveying attitudes and needs of ECRs in Europe to identify typical research career paths, support and mentoring provided, and highlight areas where improvements can be made.
- Tracking the European higher education job market to determine how many jobs are created, how many people are applying, and conditions attached to employment.
- Examining the different experiences faced by ECRs of various identities (ethnic, cultural, gender, sexual etc.) with a view towards intersectionality and equality, to acknowledge and remediate any asymmetrical challenges faced by ECRs.
- Devising a series of recommendations to improve early research careers in archaeology, based on survey results and existing guidelines, including the European Charter for Researchers.
- Identifying practical solutions that can be implemented by the EAA, such as a mentoring initiative for ECRs, and the possibility for ECRs to register their skills with the EAA to help maintain a sense of direction in research and improve employability beyond national boundaries.
- Creating an easily accessible database of knowledge and advice for ECRs and a network of support and mentoring.

Survey

To begin the consultation process, we have created an online and anonymous survey to hear from the ECR community and collect data about these issues. Questions concern your background, contract status, research activities and experiences in academia. Long-form responses are also possible at the end of the survey where you can share more in-depth experiences and suggest ways

for the discipline to move forward. We encourage ECRs to complete the survey and distribute it amongst your networks.

Focussed Interviews

Focussed interviews and further consultations will follow this initial survey. We will be interviewing archaeologists who have recently obtained a permanent position in academia to discuss the challenges that they have faced as they transitioned to tenure and the improvements that they would make for ECRs. In the same vein, we will reach out to people who have abandoned academic archaeology, or archaeology altogether, to find out what motivated their decision, from personal circumstances to systemic issues. We will also be interviewing senior academics, with a view to create intergenerational solidarity and address long-term trends in academia.

Employment Statistics

A key challenge for the Task Force will be to gather statistics on the academic job market, to make more transparent the extent of congestion in the recruitment system in different European countries. We firstly are interested in how many PhDs are defended each year, how many jobs are created in the meantime, how many people apply for jobs, how many abandon a research career, and what sort of employment conditions are attached to jobs. We are also keenly interested in identifying systemic trends which can lead to the exclusion of women and minorities from academia, and the impact of long-term unemployment on people's finances and mental well-being.

EAA 2020 Conference Session

To further hear from EAA members, the Task Force has also submitted a round table session to the EAA 2020 conference in Budapest, called *The Precariat in Archaeology*. This round table will explore the current challenges facing ECRs in archaeology. All members are invited to participate and share your experiences, opinions and potential solutions.

How to Get in Touch

If you would like to contact us, please e-mail ecataskforce@outlook.com. You can feel confident that any matter you wish to disclose will be treated confidentially by our team and will not be relayed to other members of the EAA unless you request it. We will also be setting up an online presence with dedicated Facebook and Twitter pages, so you can follow the progress of our team.

Community for the Archaeology of the Americas

by *Thibault Saintenoy* (thibault.saintenoy@incipit.csic.es) and *Marcia Hattori* (marcia.hattori@incipit.csic.es)

We are assessing the interest in creating a community for the archaeology of the Americas within the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA), this including archaeologists from everywhere who do their research and activity on the Americas (in the broader sense: Latin America, the Caribbean and North America). We are writing to you in order to share our motivation and to receive your feedback and input about this initiative. If you are interested to participate, please find more information at the following link where you will also be able to manifest your interests and express your ideas and expectations: <https://forms.gle/NjnKSzPDAXa5fH357>