



**Towards a new academic career framework for Latvia:
Achieving excellence through professional development and good human resource management**

Diego Ambasz | Task Team Leader

23 February 2022

2 Purposes of the meeting

- To describe the project methodology
- To present the report by the World Bank Team
- To present and discuss the Ministry's draft concept note
- To agree future steps

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Diego Ambasz

4 Academic Careers in Latvia



Academic careers are an important aspect of higher education policies and practice, and thus impact countries' **competitiveness** beyond the narrow field of human resources (HR) management in higher education.



Latvia has a **“fragmented” approach to academic careers**, aspects of which have developed historically but which are now **likely to hamper the development** of a dynamic higher education and research system.



Fragmentation of academic careers **results in complicated HR arrangements and processes** on the institutional level, and often fragile arrangements for individuals.



Academic careers in Latvia are a succession of individual jobs, which makes planning for such a career difficult and the academic career overall **less attractive**.



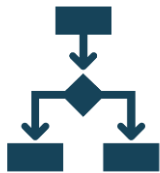
Internationalization—a major **source of “fresh thinking”** and **potential quality enhancement** in higher education—is weak and affects several aspects of academia.

5 Project Objective and Outcome



The specific objective of the project is to support the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science in reforming its academic career system by proposing a new academic career framework in line with European and international good practice, including a proposed system of academic positions and related selection and promotion processes. The new framework will be accompanied by a proposed roadmap for implementation and an analysis of legal and financial implications, also developed under the project. ”

Detailed Project Description, March 2020



Intended Outcome: Enhanced **attractiveness and efficiency** of the Latvian higher education system, in line with European and international good practice

6 Timeline: Project



Scope	Inception Phase	Diagnosis	Recommendations	Dissemination & Follow-up
Outcome	Clarity on reform goals	Authorities have a better understanding of international developments in ACs and steps needed to reform Latvia AC Framework	Authorities have a better understanding of the specific options for their future AC Framework	Joint understanding across sector regarding the new framework and next steps
Outputs	Virtual Kick-off Event “Ideas Paper”	Study Visits Information Event	Workshop: Where do we stand—where do others go? Options for Academic Career Framework Workshop: Framework and Roadmap development	Delivery of report on future Academic Career Framework Dissemination event

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT PHASES

Lucia Brajkovic

8 Overview of the project phases (1)

- September 2020 – Contextual analysis of key legislations and policies:
 - status and role of academics
 - general career patterns in academia
 - selection and recruitment procedures in HEIs
 - international mobility of academics
- September 2020 – “Idea Paper” to frame the project and identify key issues
- November 2020 – February 2021 – A brief survey and two rounds of stakeholder interviews:
 - 8 group interviews, total of 26 stakeholders identified by the Ministry
 - Semi-structured interviews with around 6 key questions, more or less the same for all groups

9 Overview of the project phases (2)

- Four webinars:
 - Information event (October 2020)
 - Finland (December 2020): focus on tenure track
 - Ireland (January 2021): focus on governance of the system and on teaching and learning
 - New trends in staff recruitment and selection (May 2021): focused on a new framework for academic careers
- Meetings with the Working Group to share findings and discuss proposals as they were being developed: August 2021, January 2022
 - Meeting in January surfaced many questions from the Working Group, which were answered and integrated in the final report

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Andrée Sursock

11 Key findings from stakeholder consultation (1)

At the system level:

- Main challenge: two distinct tracks for teaching and research
- Main recommendations:
 - Review funding conditions to address:
 - the tight funding environment
 - the separation of external funding and budget funding, which creates disconnects in work plans and (financial) resource allocations
 - the current funding allocation model, which appears to be tightly connected to teaching hours and outdated calculation premises
 - Provide framework conditions for positions that are recognized internationally
 - Loosen the regulation on election (required now for all positions)

12 Key findings from stakeholder consultation (2)

- Main challenges at the institutional level:
 - Lack of systematic career planning
 - Absence of permanent core staff
 - Poorly defined tasks of core academics
 - Weak internationalization
 - No mandatory retirement age
- Main challenges for individual staff:
 - Lack of predictability of academic careers
 - Lack of adequate salaries for main employment => accumulation of a series of jobs to reach a certain income level

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMPONENTS OF A NEW ACADEMIC CAREER FRAMEWORK

Elias Pekkola

14 Four principles

- Strengthen the role of full-time staff
- Reconsider the role of the election process
- Strengthen the role of information-based steering and management of academic work and careers (Ministry and HEIs)
- Strengthen internationalisation through HR-planning and both incoming and outgoing mobility

15 Provide titles that are understood internationally

Levels	Teaching-oriented Position	Research-oriented Position	Qualification	Practice / Professionally-oriented Positions	Qualification
R1	Junior Lecturer	Junior Researcher	Master's degree	Part-time / Visiting Teacher (R1 or R2)	Master's degree or equivalent expertise
	Assistant	PhD Candidate			
R2	Lecturer (Docent)	Postdoctoral Researcher	PhD	External Experts (R2)	
	Assistant Professor (tenure-track)*		PhD	Junior Clinical Positions (if needed) (R1-R2)	
R3	Senior Lecturer	Senior Researcher	PhD	Senior Clinical Positions (R3)	
	Associate Professor (tenure-track)*		PhD		
R4	Professor**	(Research) Professor**	PhD	Professor of Practice/ Adjunct Professor (R3-R4)	PhD or equivalent expertise
		Research Director		Professor (fine arts) (R4)	
Red: Permanent Positions		Green: 6 years	Blue: Part-time Fixed-term		
*External Review					
**International Review					
Note: The title names are not final. The use of certain terms, such as <i>Lecturer</i> and <i>Associate Professor</i> should be carefully discussed to avoid confusion.					

16 Reconsider the role of elections

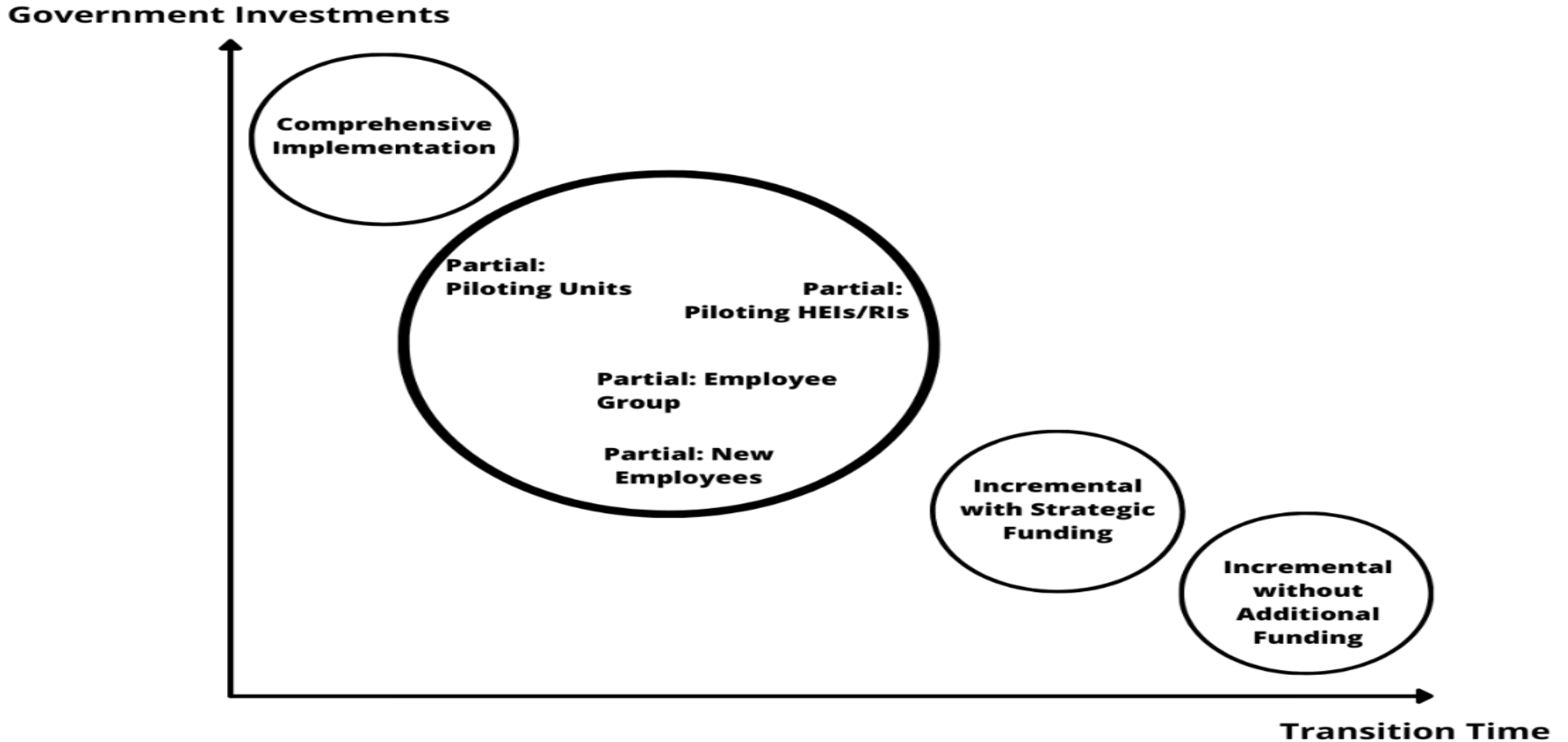
Selection to the professorial position is performed in three stages:

- **Internal evaluation:** Conducted by an independent, internal committee established by the institution that creates a shortlist of candidates after having verified that there are no conflicts of interest between the candidates and committee members. The committee may also have external members to secure objectivity and disciplinary expertise;
- **External evaluation:** Conducted by an external commission or independent reviewers that have been nominated by the institution and which evaluates the scientific qualifications of shortlisted candidates;
- **Selection:** Conducted by an internal committee, which selects the most suitable candidate for the position from among those recommended by the external evaluation commission. As part of the selection process, and in order to preserve collegiality, the shortlisted candidates could be asked to present a public talk. The internal committee could ask the audience for their views on the candidate. The recruitment decision is made by the institution based on the recommendation of the internal committee.

17 Retirement age, data collection/analysis and internationalization

- Retirement age and pension policies should be discussed nationally to provide an exit point.
- Strengthen steering by using information
- Strengthen internationalisation through HR-planning and both incoming and outgoing mobility.

18 Implementation: Four possible scenarios



19 Sketching a Roadmap

2022

Use the WB report to develop a white paper and a detailed roadmap

Identify resources and develop a Call for volunteer institutions or units

2023

Select Pilots

Establish Reference group to follow-up and support the development of pilots and strategic projects

2025-2027: Evaluate the pilots

2027-2030: Draft regulation

20 Designing the pilots: Some questions to ask

- What kind of budget is needed for those units volunteering for a pilot?
- What should be the optimal size of the unit piloting the new framework?
- What should be the scale, at national level, of the pilot that would allow a credible evaluation (How many people, how many units)?
- What is being piloted (tenure track)? Within what timeframe? What aspects could be evaluated in a such short time frame (e.g., recruitment, negotiating the contract, performance evaluation)? There is a need to test a few aspects within a very limited timeframe (2 years).

21 Evaluating the pilots: Some questions to ask

- Should the evaluation be based on quantitative or qualitative data?
- What should be the success factors? For instance, number of applicants per position, number of international applicants, do the institutions have concrete career plans (recruitment processes, performance, the nature of the staff contracts and balance between teaching and research)?
- Should all the indicators be the same for all the universities?
- What happens to staff who have been recruited during the pilot phase if the pilot is evaluated negatively?

THANK YOU

Diego Ambasz

