

17.9.2025

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**Title**

Supervision and early career work experiences of Estonian humanities researchers under the conditions of project-based fundings / Jaana Eigi ...

**Publication year**

2014

**Source/Footnote**

In: Higher education policy. - 27 (2014) 4, S. 453 - 468

**Inventory number**

37315

**Keywords**

Ausland : Estland : Forschung, Hochschullehrer ; Wissenschaftlerin ; Wissenschaftler

**Abstract**

We analyze a series of interviews with Estonian humanities researchers to explore topics related to the beginning of academic careers and the relationships with supervisors and mentors. We show how researchers strive to have meaningful relationships and produce what they consider quality research in the conditions of a system that is very strongly oriented towards internationalization and project-based funding, where their efforts are compromised by a lack of policies helping them establish a stable position in academia. Leaving researchers to face these obstacles alone places a great burden on them and may lead to a loss of talent in academia. Identifying and addressing these issues is thus important for both the well-being of early career researchers and the future of academia. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)