

EUROPEAN RTD EVALUATION NETWORK

Update on Recent National Developments in Research Evaluation *November 2018*

Italy

New programmes on evaluation of research and development activities

Law n. 232 of December 11, 2016, established two funds for the financing of basic research activities and “excellent” Departments in Italy. In both cases, ANVUR was asked to define the algorithms to be used in order to distribute the funding.

A special research fund (FFABR) was established to finance basic activities undertaken by full-time assistant and associate Professors (hereinafter Professors) working for Italian state-funded universities. The fund was assigned to Professors on the basis of a ranking built on the basis of an indicator of individual scientific production. The indicator is the weighted sum of the publications of each Professor over the previous five years; the methodology used to assign a weight to each publication differ among Science, Technologies, Engineering and Manufacturing (STEM) and Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) fields: in the former, the weight is defined using an algorithm similar to the one that has been used in the VQR exercise, based on citations and journal impact; in the latter, weights were defined on the basis of the publication type (books, books chapters, journal article, etc) and of the ANVUR classification of scientific journals.

The amount assigned to each professor was 3,000 Euros. Overall, 17,303 applied for the fund, and the fund was awarded to 9,466 Professors. In particular, the number of awarded Assistant Professor was equal to 2,342 out of 8,156 applicants, corresponding to the top 25% of the applicants ranked by scientific sector. The number of Associate Professors awarded was equal to 7,124, with respect to 9,152 applicants, i.e. those ranking in the top 75% of the ranking by scientific sector.

Another special fund, denominated “Fund for excellent university departments” was also introduced by Law 232/2016. The endowment of the fund – 271 million euro – is distributed to Departments of state-funded universities that excel for the quality of research and for scientific, organizational and didactic planning.

The selection of the excellent departments is based on a two-step procedure. First, as mandated by paragraph 319 of Law 232/2016, ANVUR ranked Italian State Universities’ Departments on the basis of an indicator called «Standardized indicator of departmental performance» (Indicatore Standardizzato di Performance Dipartimentale - ISPD). ISPD is computed using VQR 2011-2014 scores and takes into account the position of the Departments in the national distribution. In order to allow

a proper comparison among Departments with different scientific composition, VQR scores were standardized considering their mean and average at the level of each Scientific Sector (SSD).

In the second step of the procedure, the Departments placed in the first 350 positions of the aforementioned ranking could apply¹ for funding. The second step of selection aimed at identifying 180 “departments of excellence” out of 350 and was carried out by an Evaluation Committee, appointed by the Ministry of Education. The applicant Departments were asked to present a departmental project to be evaluated on the basis of coherence and feasibility criteria. The list of the 180 “Departments of excellence” is available on [ANVUR website](#).

¹ Some limits in the number of applications for each state university were fixed by law: Each state university could apply with a maximum of 15 departments (Paragraph 322) or in the case the university had more than 15 departments ranked above 350th position, it could make a selection motivating the choice according to the ISPD assigned to the department, as well as to other criteria defined by the university. The number of Departments that could be financed in each scientific field was also defined in the annex of the Ministerial Decree no. 262 of May 11, 2017.