

EURAXESS North America: Taking European research worldwide

EURAXESS North America has built a bridge between North America and Europe, in terms of European research careers, funding and collaboration opportunities. *Research Features* spoke to the project's leaders – **Viktorija Bodnarova** and **Dr Dimah Mahmoud** – to discuss in more detail why a European Union-backed initiative is proving so successful in maintaining the relationship between researchers either side of the pond.

Back in 1492, a Spanish expedition headed by Christopher Columbus saw the first Europeans reaching the shores of the United States of America. Over five hundred years later, a lot has changed, but the number of Europeans travelling to and from North America is a figure that just keeps on growing.

Of those Europeans, a significant proportion are scientists, with over 100,000 European researchers now residing in the USA. This influx has had a fantastic impact on science, due to the nature of the discipline and its reliance on collaboration.

At the heart of this, EURAXESS North America pulls a lot of the strings. Through its community of over 5,000 researchers, managers and students, the organisation works tirelessly to transfer information between researchers either side of the pond, and maintain the collaborative science effort between Europe and the rest of the world.

We spoke to the project's leaders – Dr Dimah Mahmoud and Viktorija Bodnarova – to find

out more about the fantastic work they do, and why supporting European researchers in North America is so important.

Hi Dimah and Viki! Can you briefly explain the aims of EURAXESS? How does EURAXESS North America fit into this?

VB: Backed by the European Union and its Member States, EURAXESS – Researchers in Motion is a unique pan-European initiative delivering information and support services to professional researchers, while enhancing scientific collaboration between Europe and the rest of the world. Our target audience are researchers, universities/academic institutions, entrepreneurs and businesses.

In general, EURAXESS has four main pillars:

- 1 Jobs & Funding – Providing researchers and innovators of all nationalities and scientific domains, as well as research managers, with a platform to look for job vacancies, funding and hosting offers in academia and industry in Europe.
- 2 Information & Assistance – We have Service Centers in 40 European countries offering free services for scientists and their family members to facilitate

Information is key to success and scientists are increasingly looking for opportunities outside their countries to do more multidisciplinary and comprehensive research



relocation from their home country to a European one. Scientists get personalised help on topics such as accommodation, visas & work permits, health care, taxation etc.

- 3 Partnering – This is a collaboration tool designed to allow registered users of the EURAXESS portal to search for both individuals and research organisations/ businesses to explore various angles and possibilities of partnership or collaborative projects.
- 4 EURAXESS Worldwide – This is where we come in. This is essentially the networking arm of EURAXESS – supporting and facilitating researchers’ efforts in connecting or collaborating with European researchers and institutions alike.

Take EURAXESS North America for example. Our aim is two-fold: firstly, to provide information about European fellowships, grants and calls for proposals for researchers of all nationalities, experience and scientific fields including social sciences and humanities; and secondly, connect and network European scientists based in Canada and the US to the European Research Area through a platform called European Scientific Diasporas in North America.

A large part of EURAXESS North America’s activities aims to promote opportunities in Europe to researchers working in the US and Canada. Why is this important?

DM: Information is key to success and scientists are increasingly looking for opportunities outside their countries to do more multidisciplinary and comprehensive research. By collaborating with others, they increase their chances for both impact and credibility. Broadening their horizons about European funding opportunities is one way to achieve this. Through our work, we want to make sure researchers are aware of the huge array of possibilities Europe offers and allow them to explore those opportunities. So, while we won’t write them the cheque, we will tell them where they might find it.

What are your respective roles at EURAXESS North America?

VB: Based in Washington DC, our team consists of two people covering the region. We travel to many locations across Canada and the US to attend and present at conferences. I’m the Regional Representative and Dimah is the Programme Officer, but between the two of us we wear many more hats to get things done.



L-R: Dr Kenneth L. Knappenberger Jr. (Florida State University), Dr Graham Harrison (US National Science Foundation), Dr Mary Kavanagh (Delegation of the European Union to the US), Viktoriya Bodnarova (EURAXESS North America), Dr Yves Berthelot (Georgia Institute of Technology)



European Research Day 2016, Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

North America is one of the top destinations for European researchers – in fact, according to NSF’s statistics, there are approximately 100,000 European-born researchers in the US



Viktoriya Bodnarova and Dr Dimah Mahmoud, Regional Representative and Programme Officer respectively, from EURAXESS North America

EURAXESS targets all researchers, not just those in a particular area. How do you keep up-to-date with such a range of subjects?

VB: Our new portal has been developed with this specific question in mind – how to manage and communicate all the opportunities. There are six Worldwide EURAXESS locations which each monitor and scope their respective domains: ASEAN (encompassing ten South-East Asian Nations), CELAC (Latin American and Caribbean States), China, India, Japan and North America (encompassing Canada and the United States of America). This is, of course, in addition to the many EURAXESS Service Centres across Europe.

Each Service Centre feeds the portal the opportunities relevant to their country, scope or location. Per day, no less than 6,000 job and funding opportunities are posted on the portal. This in turn allows us, the Global Hubs, to tap in and pick what caters to our members and regions, to disseminate through our monthly flash notes and social media platforms.

Why is it important to support European researchers (the European Scientific Diaspora) working in North America? Are there common challenges that frequently crop up?

DM: Having been exposed to European as well as North American research landscapes, they are the perfect mediators, mentors and policy advisors. Through their experience, both personal and professional, science policies can be shaped, new partnerships can be formed and better results can be achieved. North America is one of the top destinations for European researchers. In fact, according to NSF’s statistics, there are approximately 100,000 European-born researchers in the US. Such a number cannot be found anywhere else outside Europe, so connecting them to Europe is of utmost importance.

At EURAXESS North America we facilitate and further these connections, which is exactly what we’re now working on through the establishment of something we’re very excited about called the Joint European Mentoring Initiative (JEMI).

Last year the first European Research Day was held in North America. What can we expect from the event this year?

DM: Energy, and LOTS of it!! We’re partnering with Google, DISCOVERY Lab and FUTOUR – all of which are innovative hubs in their own rights – so we’re expecting a LOT of creative juices to be flowing through the Google offices in DC where we’ll be holding the event.

VB: That’s right! We’re really excited about how we’ve put this year’s European Research Day together. Just to give you an idea, last year’s event was a lunch seminar in Atlanta discussing European Funding Opportunities. This year, HQ’s mandated this be a global event, in that each Hub would hold an European Research Day, but the theme, time and scope could be catered to each location. For our part, we’re focusing on Research Career Development as an overarching theme. We’ve really tried to put the researchers themselves and their needs centre stage, so we’re inviting them to roll up their sleeves with us and really engage in the topics we’ll be addressing. These will include: Mentoring, Networking for Research, Transatlantic Partnership Opportunities and Successful Grant Writing.

• For further information about EURAXESS North America and any of their upcoming events, please visit their website at euraxess.ec.europa.eu/worldwide/north-america



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