



European Association of Social Anthropologists  
Association Européenne des Anthropologues Sociaux

# **EASA MEMBERSHIP SURVEY 2018: Summary of findings and recommendations**

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## Overview

This brief summary presents the key findings of the survey conducted among EASA members in 2018. The survey was a collaboration between EASA and the PrecAnthro Collective, whose members have worked together and mobilised since 2016 to raise awareness about the challenges of developing an academic career in anthropology. The themes explored in the survey reflect existing academic research on changes to the academic profession and the casualisation of labour in Europe and beyond.

The survey enquired into the extent to which and how trends already documented in other disciplines, and in academia as a whole, affect anthropologists. These trends include a growing division between research and teaching, the deprofessionalisation of academic labour through multiple contract types, the imperatives of international mobility and cyclical fundraising, and weak labour unions.

This summary of findings captures overall trends as well as regional differences in the anthropological profession in Europe.

## Key findings

A total of 809 EASA members completed the questionnaire. They comprised 35.2% of all members in 2018. Respondents were spread across 59 nationalities. Most of them resided in the West and North of Europe – only 9.7% were residents of East Central and South East Europe. In total, 65.9% declared themselves to be ‘employed in academia’ (at a university, research institution or similar) as their primary job. Most worked in social-science departments and two thirds of them in departments of anthropology, ethnology or similar.

While the survey attests to the great variety of experiences and significant country differences, the most typical respondent (and, by extension, EASA member) is a woman aged around 40 who works in academia. She has likely been educated in either the UK or Germany and is very likely to work in the UK, Germany or Italy. She is possibly in a relationship but has no children. She is probably dissatisfied with her current employment and her work–life balance, which is very likely due to the fact that she works on a fixed-term contract and as the years go by, her chances of obtaining a permanent contract decrease.

### Fixed-term employment as a norm for anthropologists

- **Academic precarity:** Among those who identified ‘employed in academia’ as their primary status, only 44.3% had a permanent contract, and only 31.3% were on permanent and full-time contracts. This means that over two thirds of all academic anthropologists in Europe are in some form of precarious employment.

- **Country differences:** In the three countries in which one third of all survey respondents held their primary job, less than 50% of all respondents had permanent contracts: Germany – 12.1%, Italy – 28%, and the United Kingdom – 49.4%. For those who had ultimately been offered a permanent contract, the number of years it took them after obtaining their PhD also varied: Germany – 8.8 years, Italy – 8 years, UK – 4.6 years. The highest proportion of fixed-term contracts were in Central Europe (including Germany and Austria) and Russia where the *Habilitation or Doktor nauk* tenure path prevails.
- **Gender differences:** While men and women were equally represented among those on fixed-term contracts, women held a higher proportion of very short-term contracts, i.e. under six months. Women were also less likely to be in senior positions (29% of men versus 19% of women). There are more women than men in permanent jobs in the West/North but not in the South/East of Europe. Yet, overall, while men comprise 24% of doctoral students, they represent 42% of full professors in our sample.
- **Generation differences:** The average age of those on permanent contracts was 49.9 years. Those who secured such contracts took on average five years following the PhD before gaining tenure. Of the lecturers and assistant professors, only 37.3% had permanent full-time contracts, while of the full professors, associate professors and senior lecturers, 72.1% had such contracts. The chances of gaining a permanent contract after the PhD and of getting a job in academia decrease over time.

## Job and grant applications and other work-related overtime

- **Job applications:** Early career researchers in particular spent an excessive amount of time at work applying for jobs: many felt this to be a full-time job in its own right. Half of all respondents spent more than one month a year applying for jobs. Less than 10% had not applied for a job in 2018.
- **Funding and job applications:** Unless applying for funding was their primary job responsibility (20%), respondents spent less time writing funding proposals than applying for jobs. A total of 17% spent more than one month a year working on job applications, including those in secure positions. As many as 60% of full professors wrote proposals for big projects during the last 12 months.
- **Pastoral care and administrative work:** While in other disciplines women report taking on more administrative and pastoral-care-related work, among the EASA membership, men reported doing more committee work and equal amounts of supervision.
- **Academic career development:** On average, 65% of respondents reported they spend about 6.5 hours a week on average doing work that is not directly required or recognised by their job, such as peer-reviewing publications or working on projects for which funding streams had already ended.
- **Overtime:** Up to one quarter of all work remains uncompensated. Permanent workers spent slightly more unpaid overtime on tasks that are part of their jobs. However, the fewer the contract hours, the greater the unpaid overtime: adjunct faculty received a wage for approximately only two thirds of the time required to fulfil their contractual obligations. Many PhD students reported working on their thesis during overtime – only after having finished teaching or doing other tasks requested by their supervisors.

## Job and studies-related satisfaction and prospects

- **Studies-related satisfaction:** Less than half of the students in the sample were satisfied with their education situation; the number of students who were completely dissatisfied with their situation was twice as large as the number who were completely satisfied.
- **Job satisfaction:** A total of 53% of all respondents were dissatisfied with their current employment, their education situation or both. A permanent contract contributes to positive job satisfaction. However, almost 70% did not regard academia as a career-enabling environment.
- **Job prospects:** Most respondents were pessimistic, with two in three anthropologists who wanted a permanent job believing that this would be unlikely within the foreseeable future. Yet only 4% were planning on leaving academia within the next five years and most remained committed to advancing their academic careers by accepting temporary, part-time jobs, and changing workplaces and even countries, or working a significant amount of overtime to achieve such a goal.

## Financial stability and the ability to plan for emergencies and the future

- **Income differences:** Only in eight out of 21 countries were respondents' average monthly incomes – i.e. academics' income as highly skilled professionals – above national averages. The survey suggests persisting divides: academics in East Central and South East Europe said their incomes did not meet their needs, and that they were unable to save or manage unexpected expenses.
- **Income stream(s):** Only 42.7% of respondents reported covering their living expenses solely from the wages of one full-time job. Respondents often had to rely on sources and streams of income other than wages to cover their monthly expenses. Even when students were excluded from the sample, the numbers remained high: a total of 22% depended on support from a partner and 9.7% from relatives, and 25.5% depended on more than one employment contract.
- **End of the month/emergencies:** Only one in four anthropologists had money left at the end of the month. While 60% of respondents said they were able to handle a major unexpected expense, worryingly, 27% were 'not at all' able to do so. Temporary teaching fellows or instructors were the most vulnerable: of these, 68.8% said their income did not cover their needs, 80.7% had no money left at the end of the month, only 6.2% were 'completely' in a position to deal with an unexpected expense, and 53.1% were 'not at all' able to do so.
- **Having a family:** Only 45.3% who were below the age of 40 said they were provided with parental leave, which might make it difficult to decide freely and responsibly on the number, spacing and timing of their children. Women, and those with partners and small children also shared anxieties around managing the work–life balance, commuting and moving country.
- **Family background:** Two thirds of respondents came from middle-class families. This calls for reflection on how students from working-class backgrounds are encouraged and provided (or not) with the resources to pursue university education, doctoral degrees and academic careers in anthropology.

## Work–life balance and (hyper)mobility

- **Work–life balance:** While respondents saw a healthy work–life balance as central to their life projects, approximately only 41% were more or less satisfied with their existing work–life (or study–life) balance. Women, people in relationships and those with children under ten years of age experienced difficulties in maintaining a healthy work–life balance.
- **Commuting:** A total of 68% commuted to their workplace daily or several times a week, although women commuted less frequently. Most commutes were via land, especially using public transport (40%) and bicycles (34%), while 8% reported an aeroplane commute and one third of the respondents travelled several times a month. On average a respondent spends €123 per month on commuting.
- **International mobility:** More than 50% of respondents had moved between countries in the five years before 2018. Almost 20% had changed countries three or more times. Among those aged 31–35 years, only one third had not left their countries for work or education (excluding fieldwork), while a quarter had changed countries for work three or more times over the last five years. Overall, however, such movements were related not to age but to the type of employment contract: of workers on fixed-term contracts, 39% did not move country in this period, but 63.3% of tenured staff stayed put.
- **Inter-institutional mobility:** A total of 72.1% of academics did not work at the department in which they received their highest degrees. Only 14.5% of respondents had never left their alma mater. A total of 13.4% returned to their alma mater after a period spent elsewhere. There were, however, significant differences between countries.

## Workplace facilities and relations

- **Workspaces:** While most respondents had been provided with some sort of workspace by their employer, 29.4% considered their workspace insufficient. Many of them were frequent commuters. Almost half of the graduate students in our sample were either not provided with a workspace or deemed it in-sufficient.
- **Funding and facilities:** Many PhD students and academics reported not being provided with computer facilities, career training, research, conference or publication funds.
- **Discrimination, harassment, unfair treatment:** More than half of the respondents had personally experienced discrimination, unfair treatment, harassment, bullying, verbal, physical or emotional abuse. Two out of three had witnessed such treatment in the case of a colleague or a student in their immediate context. The most prominent grounds were gender or citizenship, but among ‘other’ reasons given, respondents often reported bullying and mobbing along power and status differentials, which arises from the academic hierarchies.
- **Representation:** Up to half of the respondents do not feel that their interests are sufficiently represented in their academic context. A total of 15.9% reported that there was nobody who represented their interests, and 18.6% were unaware of the presence of representatives. They even saw benevolent representatives as not in a position to defend them adequately.

- **Trade-union membership:** EASA members in Nordic countries were among the most unionised. German-speaking countries and South West Europe lie below the sample average, and the countries of East Central Europe are on the whole, with a few exceptions, much below the average. Precariously employed academics did not join unions because they felt that unions did not represent their interests as the unions were dominated by senior faculty or administrative staff. Insecurity regarding staying in academia or in the country of employment was another reason for not joining.

## Recommendations

A framework is needed for career progression and tenure for anthropologists across the continent, which would encourage receiving tenure following a certain number of teaching or research contracts. Employers should take on the responsibility of guaranteeing career progress inside institutions.

Cyclical project funding must be reduced to a minimum, with a discrete budget granted to universities to develop long-standing, well-resourced research programmes. Departments should reduce overtime workloads and be aware of the risks of creating exploitative working environments.

Governments and institutions should ensure PhD programmes have resources to provide employment contracts and salaries to all PhD students. They should be granted access to fieldwork, conference and career development funds. Student fees and debt-inducing loans should be discouraged.

Professional organisations and learned societies as EASA – while not legal bodies or trade unions in their own right – could and should increasingly engage in lobbying activities and introduce standards of good practice to be observed by institutions that adhere to our professional values.

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This document represents the key findings and recommendations of the full report:

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