

Research foundations meet to advance a shared people strategy

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On March 3 in Milan, the kick-off meeting of the inter-foundation forum

The development of talent, the centrality of people, the strengthening of skills, and the generation of impact: these are the elements of a shared *People Strategy* that bring together five of the main research foundations active in Italy — [AIRC Foundation for Cancer Research](#), [Fondazione Bruno Kessler](#), [Fondazione Human Technopole](#), [Italian Institute of Technology \(IIT\)](#), and [Fondazione Telethon](#) — which met on March 3 at the **Fondazione Telethon headquarters in Milan** for the **kick-off meeting of the People Strategy forum**.

The initiative was created with the aim of establishing a stable forum for discussion among foundations engaged in scientific research, **to share visions, experiences, and best practices in the management and career development of young researchers**.

People and talent at the heart of research

The five foundations share the understanding that **supporting researchers throughout all stages of their careers represents a strategic value not only for individual organizations but for the entire national system**, promoting exchange, growth, and international competitiveness.

The discussion focused on several key themes of **People Strategy in research**, including:

- [European Charter for Researchers](#)
- training and professional development, with the example of the Talent Development Program promoted by FB
- mentorship programs
- exchange programs
- alumni networks
- HR management processes (for example, tenure tracks)
- the creation of an ecosystem among foundations that enhances researchers' careers

Research careers are in fact going through a phase of **profound transformation**, in which the European dimension is becoming increasingly central. From funding programs such as those of the **European Research Council (ERC)** to opportunities for mobility and international collaboration, navigating this ecosystem today represents a crucial challenge for research organizations and the people who are part of them.

The role of foundations in European research

In this context, the table aims to strengthen the role of foundations as **actors complementary to the public research system**, capable of attracting talent, experimenting with new organizational models, and contributing to the growth of the national scientific system.

As pointed out by **President Ferruccio Resta**, who offered brief opening remarks at the start of the meeting, the main objective of the working group is to produce concrete results: the initiative was in fact created with **the aim of enhancing the quality of the researchers and organizations involved**, making the *People Strategy* an operational tool capable of supporting the development of foundations through the motivation and growth of people.

The table therefore represents an important opportunity to **develop and share best practices**, also for the benefit of the youngest or newly established foundations; **to encourage dialogue among institutions operating in different scientific fields** and therefore **strengthen the international competitiveness** of the Italian research system.

Francesca Pasinelli, board member of Fondazione Telethon and president of the [Advisory Board of FBK](#), also spoke, drawing attention to the need to rethink career models in research to make the foundation system more attractive in Italy. A goal that can only be achieved through greater flexibility in the labor regulatory framework, capable of reducing constraints and allowing foundations to compete internationally.

Resta also highlighted how the growing proliferation of new actors — also in the context of PNRR-related programs — makes it increasingly difficult to navigate the research system. The risk is fragmentation that weakens scientific quality in the absence of adequate **critical mass**.

For this reason, the table was created with the aim of **joining forces among foundations that operate with high quality standards and a strong international dimension**, identifying tools that make investment in young researchers sustainable.

In the medium term, the table aims to consolidate **a structured exchange of best practices** and, in the future, to contribute to building **a common voice for research foundations** that operate with high standards in the national and European scientific landscape.

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