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Awards for endeavour

Three separate programmes that have made the headlines in recent weeks illustrate how various countries are addressing their employment issues. Each programme offers a different approach to a specific problem, which gives each a unique set of pros and cons.

In Germany, the Sofja Kovalevskaja Prize was designed to attract 29 foreign scientists to the country (see *Nature* 415, 568; 2002). It had the advantage of generosity — the prize for each recipient was 1.2 million euros (US\$1 million). But the award was just a one-off, never to be repeated.

Scientists affiliated with the State Research Center of Virology and Biotechnology in Koltsovo, Russia — once the source of biological weapons and defence systems for the Soviet government — are now adapting their skills for use in the drug industry. Their training is paid for in part by a \$600,000 grant from the US Department of Commerce and is assisted by scientists from the American Association for the Advancement of Science. But its participants admit that, even if they learn the skills, Russia's drug industry has yet to catch up with its US counterpart.

Finally, a new programme from the Fogarty International Center, part of the US National Institutes of Health (NIH), will fund up to 20 researchers from developing countries to do research in their native countries. The catch is that only researchers who are already funded by a Fogarty training programme or who work on the NIH's campus in Bethesda, Maryland, will be eligible for the \$50,000 awards.

Although each of these programmes has its limitations, it is encouraging to see novel approaches being applied to difficult scientific employment problems. Indeed, it's heartening that any effort is being made at all.

Paul Smaglik
Naturejobs editor



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