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## Central stations

**A**re you a PhD who is tired of fighting for work in an over-crowded market? Well, you might consider moving to Estonia. Rein Vaikmäe, a scientific adviser to the Estonian government, estimates that his nation needs to produce about 200 PhDs a year to grow its science base. It currently averages about 80 — and many of them leave the country.

Heading for Estonia, or one of the other new members of the European Union (EU), for scientific employment might not be so far-fetched. Several schemes are pouring money into these countries to repatriate its best young scientists who left during tougher times (see page 440). Mart Ustav, who now heads the microbiology and virology department at the University of Tartu in Estonia, recalls the old days all too clearly. “You couldn’t travel. You couldn’t communicate. You were behind the barbed wire,” he says.

Times have changed drastically. Repatriation and funding from philanthropies have seeded a critical mass in select scientific disciplines throughout central Europe — often planted in classical scientific training the Soviet era left behind. What is missing, say Vaikmäe, Ustav and other scientists in the region, is infrastructure and national funding.

But the next generation of scientists is already finding ways to work with what they’ve got. Karolina Tkaczuk, a graduate student at the Technical University of Lodz in Poland, made her research choice based on her country’s strengths and limitations (see page 442). She uses the hour-long train commute between Lodz and Warsaw, where she is doing her research training, to study and think. If more investment continues to pour into central Europe — from individual nations, as well as from philanthropies and the EU — then Western scientists might be willing to come along for the ride.

**Paul Smaglik**  
Naturejobs editor



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