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Exploring careers

While chatting with graduate students from England, Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands last month, I repeatedly heard one complaint. Surprisingly it wasn't about money. Rather, the students said that they heard little about career paths outside academia, and that the information they did receive seemed murky and ill-defined.

This issue is especially pronounced in Europe, as there is no centralized clearing house for career information there. Several student and postdoc organizations in individual countries are making inroads, but the results, so far, have been fragmented. The European Commission has also been improving its offerings, with efforts such as the 'mobility portal' (see *Nature* 427, 868-869; 2004), but that website tends to focus on moving from country to country rather than general career information for scientists who want to work outside academia.

The US National Institutes of Health may have inadvertently provided at least a partial solution. Last month, it launched a website called LifeWorks (<http://science.education.nih.gov/LifeWorks>), which profiles more than 100 careers in the health and medical sciences.

Although LifeWorks is designed with middle- and high-school students in the United States in mind, it may actually prove to be a boon to young scientists in Europe and beyond. The ability to browse careers by salary, education and job title is relevant to job-seekers of any age. And reading about others' career successes in non-traditional scientific fields transcends boundaries.

Although we hope that *Naturejobs* provides some of the same advice and services, we recognize that the more information on careers that is out there, the better.

Paul Smaglik
Naturejobs editor

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