

## **PRIDE Conference 2026 – Programme:** Hosted by the University of Helsinki

Wednesday, May 6, 2026

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9:00 Registration & Welcome Coffee

### **10:00 Start of Conference**

Welcome note by *Jouni Hirvonen, Vice Rector for Research, University of Helsinki and Minna Palander-Collin, Director of the University of Helsinki Doctoral School, and Lucas Zinner, Chair of the Board, PRIDE Network*

### **10:15 Keynote - Are Universities still attractive / still the place to be**

Keynote speaker: **Robert Harris** (Karolinska Institutet)

### **11:15 Session: Individual Perceptions of the landscape**

*Research careers look very different depending on where you stand—whether as a PhD or postdoc navigating uncertainty, an institution shaping policy, or an employer outside academia interpreting research skills. This session brings these perspectives together to reveal how expectations, misunderstandings, and incentives vary across sectors. By including alumni, non-academic stakeholders, and those currently “in transition,” we seek to illuminate how researcher careers are perceived beyond university walls. The aim is to foster mutual understanding and bridge the gap between academic culture and the broader labour market.*

Confirmed panelists: **Robert Harris, Vedran Galetic** (Airbus UK), **Maija Urponen** (Kaupunkitutkimus TA - Urban Research TA); Session Chair: *Melita Kovačević (PRIDE)*

12:30 Lunch

14:00 Speakers Corner

### **14:15 Session: Expectation and Reality. Let's Talk!**

*Doctoral and postdoctoral careers are often characterised by high expectations – in terms of academic future, mobility, recognition, stability and meaningfulness. However, how closely do these expectations align with the realities researchers face, both within and beyond academia? And to what extent are these assumptions realistic in the first place? This session invites an open and honest discussion about uncertainty, perspectives and the value of investing in a PhD, creating space for real-life experiences rather than polished narratives. Through open dialogue, we aim to question fundamentally false expectations, bring uncomfortable truths to light and promote more transparent communication about opportunities and limitations in the world of research. By addressing expectations early and openly, the session contributes to more realistic, empowering, and sustainable approaches to research career development.*

Confirmed speakers: **Neda Bebiroglu** (Observatory of Research and Scientific Careers- F.R.S.-FNRS), **Kenneth Wann** (PRIDE); Session Chairs: *Mathias Schroijen, João Pedro Pêgo*

15:15 Coffee Break

## 15:45 Session: Roles & Responsibilities

*Who holds responsibility for preparing researchers for diverse and sustainable careers—and where do those responsibilities begin and end? We examine the evolving role of universities while acknowledging the essential agency of researchers themselves in shaping their trajectories. We will explore what institutions can and should do, how supervisors, doctoral schools, career services and funding bodies share obligations, and where expectations may be unrealistic. By taking a holistic view, we aim to clarify not only institutional potential and limits, but also how empowered researchers and supportive structures together create meaningful career development.*

Confirmed speakers: **Sabine Hunke** (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), **Erkki Raulo** (University of Helsinki), **Raphaël Porcher** (Université Paris Cité); Session Chair: Lucas Zinner

17:00 General Assembly // 19:00 Social Dinner

## Thursday, May 7, 2026

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9:00 Recap by Kenneth Wann to start the day

## 9:15 Session: Changing the emphasis of the journey

*In the last twenty years, doctoral education has undergone a significant shift: the emphasis has moved from research to the researcher. This renewed focus on individuals not only highlights their specific personal and professional trajectories as integral components of the system, but also encourages the very same system (the academic institutions) to develop human-centred and sustainable solutions for them throughout their journey — supporting them in the present moment and in their future aspirations.*

Confirmed speakers: **Elena Hoffer** (alma.me), **Yolana Pringle** (VITAE), **Lisa Krammer** (Science Communication Center Vienna); Session Chairs: Ilaria Orsi, Madeleine Harbich

10:30 Coffee Break

## 11:00 Session: The Role of Career Development Units

*Career development offices are becoming important players in supporting researchers as they navigate increasingly diverse and complex career paths. Their work includes skills development, employer engagement and individual coaching – but their roles and responsibilities vary greatly between universities. This session will explore what approaches exist, where they are located, and how they can be leveraged within institutional structures to meet the needs of researchers. By sharing experiences and models, we aim to highlight their evolving function and emphasise the professional expertise they bring to modern research ecosystems.*

Confirmed speakers: **Chiara Lauritano** (Politecnico di Torino), **Liz Elvidge** (Imperial College London), **Barbara Janssens** (Dkfz – German Cancer Research Center); Session Chairs: Ilaria Orsi, Madeleine Harbich

## 12:30 Moving forward: Societal impact

Confirmed speaker: **Owen Gower** (UKCGE), **Denis Billotte** (CUSO)

13:15 End of Conference – Farewell Drinks