

# Lessons learned along the path of an early career researcher

Raphaël Monat  
[rmonat.fr/emw24/](https://rmonat.fr/emw24/)

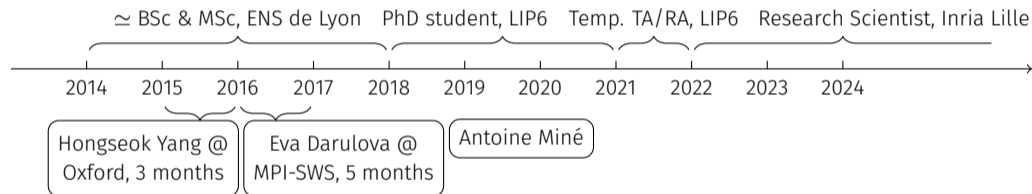
ETAPS Mentoring Workshop  
7 April 2024

The logo for Inria, featuring the word "Inria" in a red, cursive script font.

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2 years as faculty

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Implemented in Mopsa



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## Formal methods for computational laws



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## Formal methods for computational laws

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# Current Research Interests


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Monat, Fromherz, and Merigoux. “Formalizing Date Arithmetic and Statically Detecting Ambiguities for the Law”. ESOP 2024  
~> Thursday afternoon

Laura Kovács, EATCS Bulletin

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“There are many advices one gets and one should filter out among these advices. Actually, it is impossible to follow all advices.”

### Laurence Tratt, and his alternative sources of advice

“I’ve been given a lot of advice over the years, but I think that which I’ve derived from history has had the greatest influence on me.”

Focus on academic careers.

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- ▶ Private sector from startups to big tech

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Various positions researcher, teacher, software engineer, project manager, ...

Switching to other fields is possible too!

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We are all learning, e.g. from advisors, senior collaborators, ...

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- ▶ Feel free to ask questions during the talk!

# Outline

- 1 Ways of doing research
- 2 Diversity in CS & academia
- 3 Taking care of your health
- 4 Low moments
- 5 Carbon footprint of our research
- 6 Faculty applications

## Ways of doing research

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We all have different theory-practice preferences

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In my case: software is both a target and a product of my research

- + Motivating me

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- ▶ Allowing replication of scientific results by third parties

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Doesn't entail industrialization

## Diversity in CS & academia

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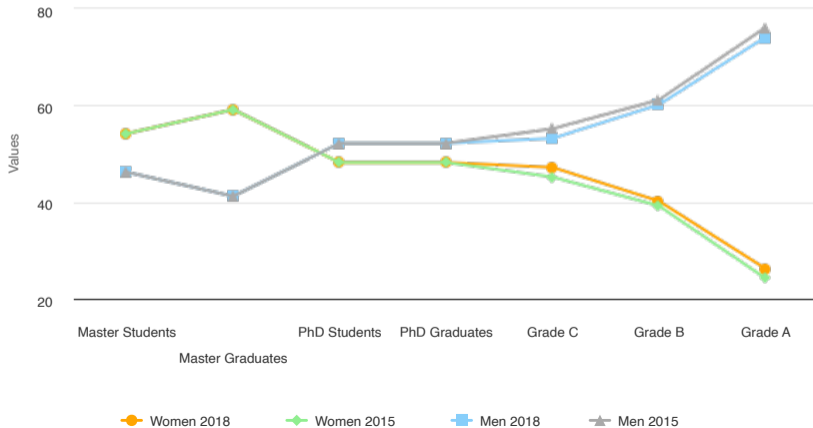
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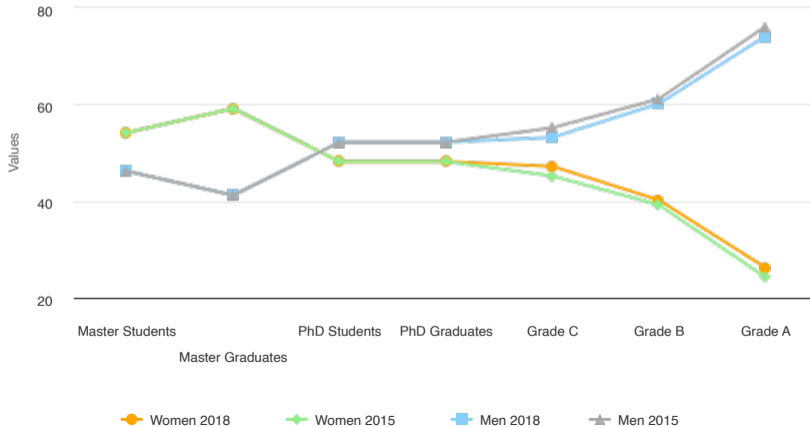


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Women at Inria:  
PhD/post-doc: 23%,  
Research scientist 19%,  
Research director 17%

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Diversity and inclusion session on Monday afternoon

IPSOS 2023 poll

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## Incorrect behaviors in academia

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- [Peter Roenne](#)

## Taking care of your health

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### Some stress factors I experienced during my PhD

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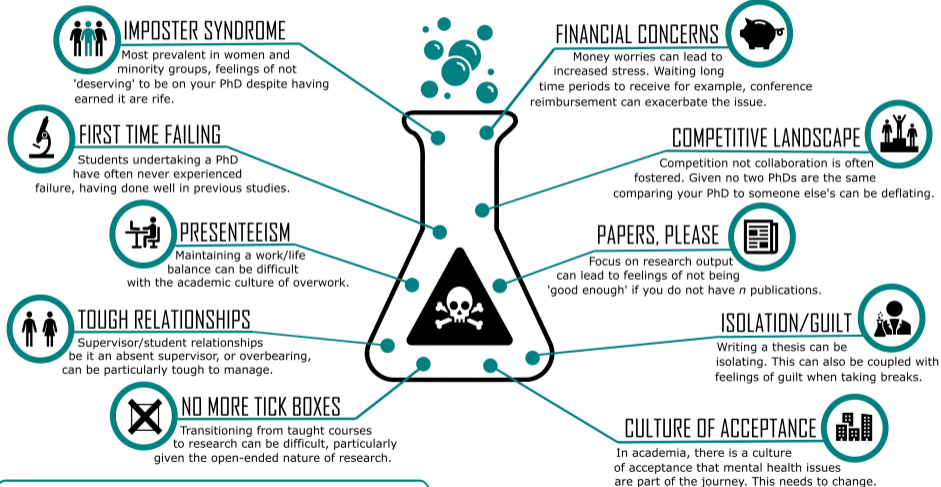
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## Managing Your Mental Health During Your PhD

# MENTAL HEALTH DURING YOUR PhD THE TOXIC MIX

A study by the University of California, Berkeley, found nearly half of postgraduate students met criteria to classify them as depressed.<sup>1</sup>

This poster explores the common stressors that PhD students may be exposed to during their PhD.



SELF-HARMING?  
SUICIDAL THOUGHTS? CALL SAMARITANS NOW ON 116-123

Reference: 1. Graduate Student Happiness & Well-Being Report, 2014, University of California, Berkeley.

Part of the #mentalhealth series by Dr Zoe Ayres (@zjayres). Free to distribute.

## Taking care of your health

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A focus on work-life balance

# A paradox about work time in academia

High freedom

Heavy workload

## ACADEMIA



WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM



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- ▶ There are long term health consequences to overwork
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- ▶ In my opinion, there is a life outside work. May avoid burning out

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## Labour Laws in France

- ▶ Theory: 1607h/year for civil servants
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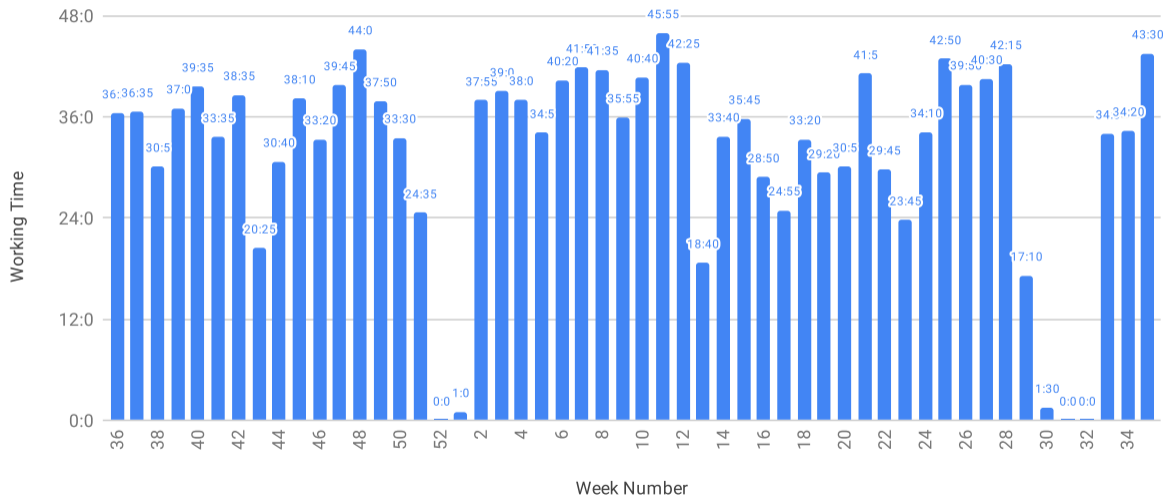
- ▶ Theory: 1607h/year for civil servants
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## In practice: a spreadsheet with working hours.

No finer-grain tracking for each task.

⚠ presenteism

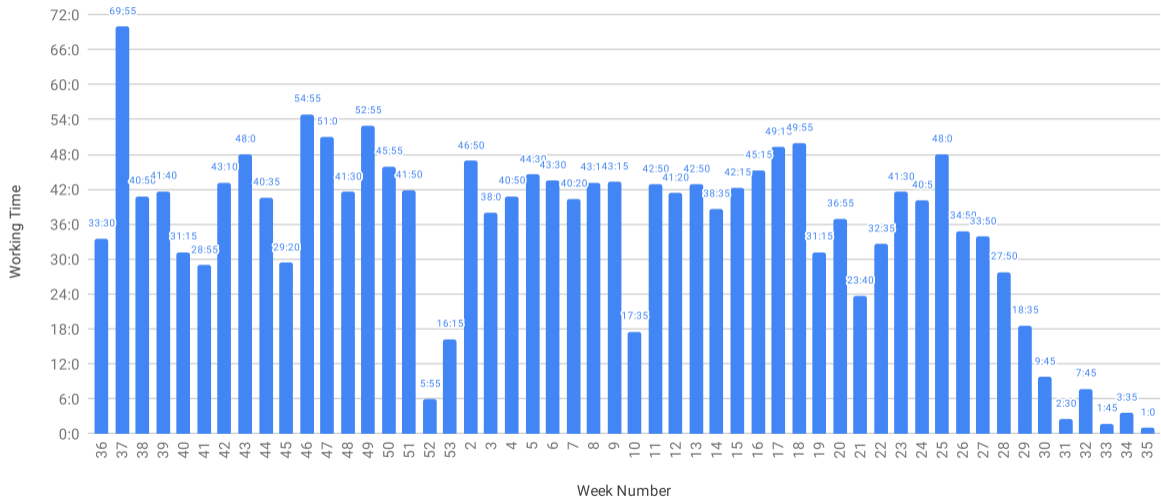
# 2018-2019, first PhD year



Total: 1657h

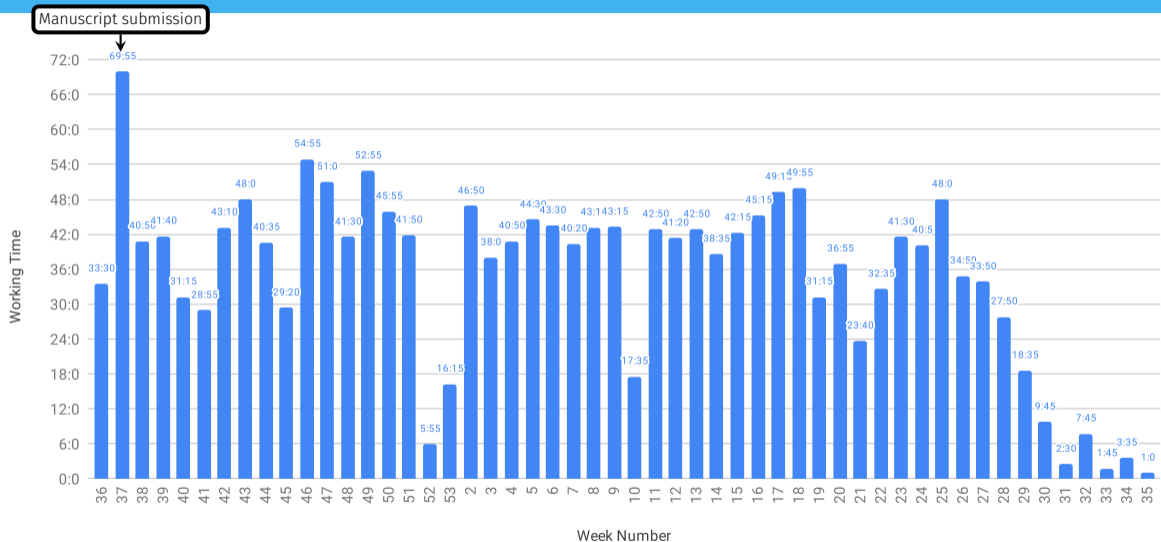


# 2021-2022, PhD defense, job hunting, lots of teaching



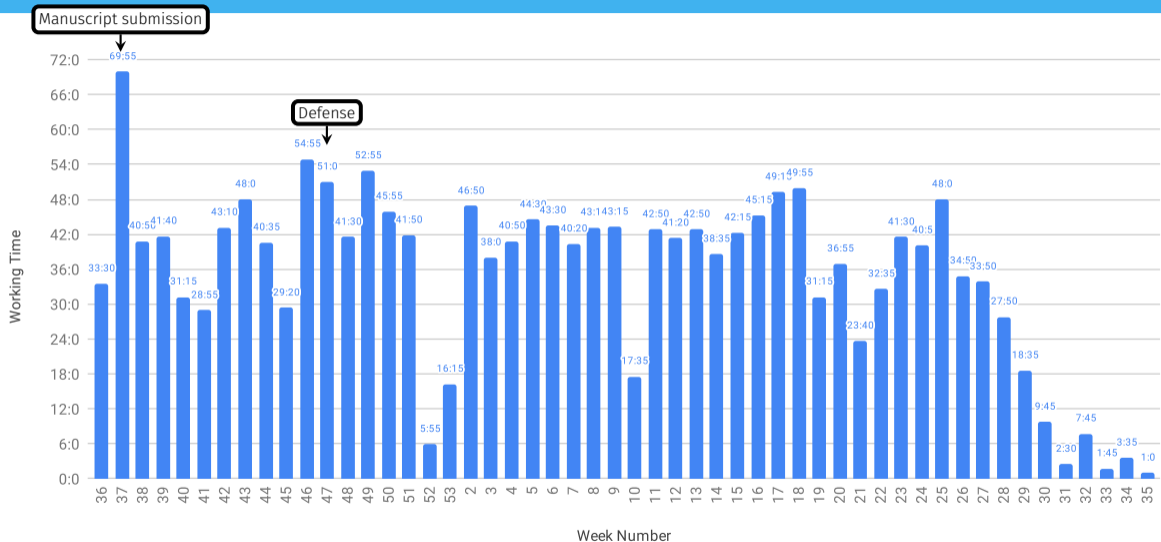
Total: 1832h

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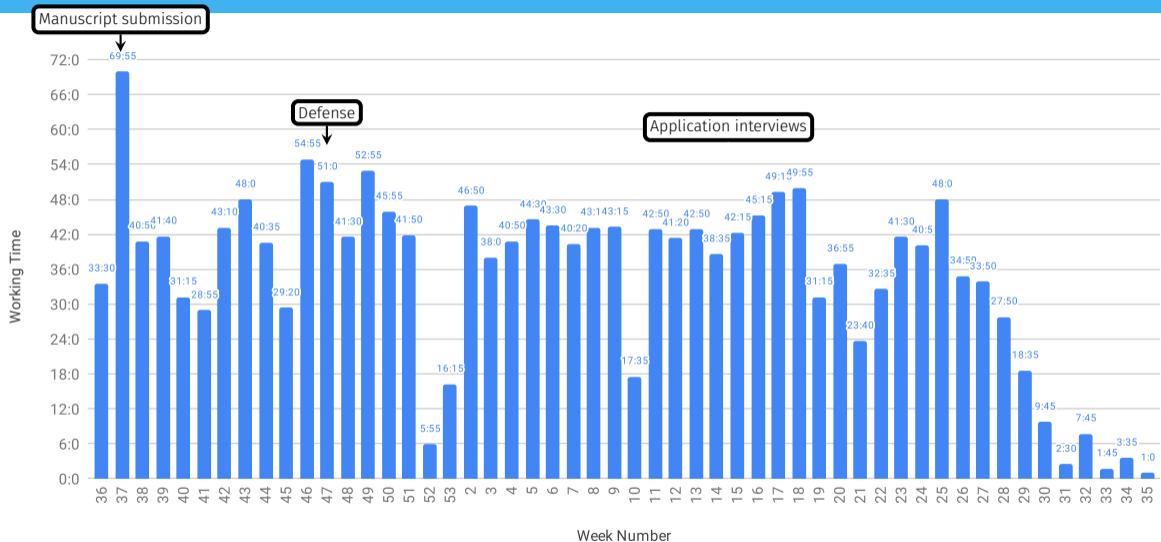
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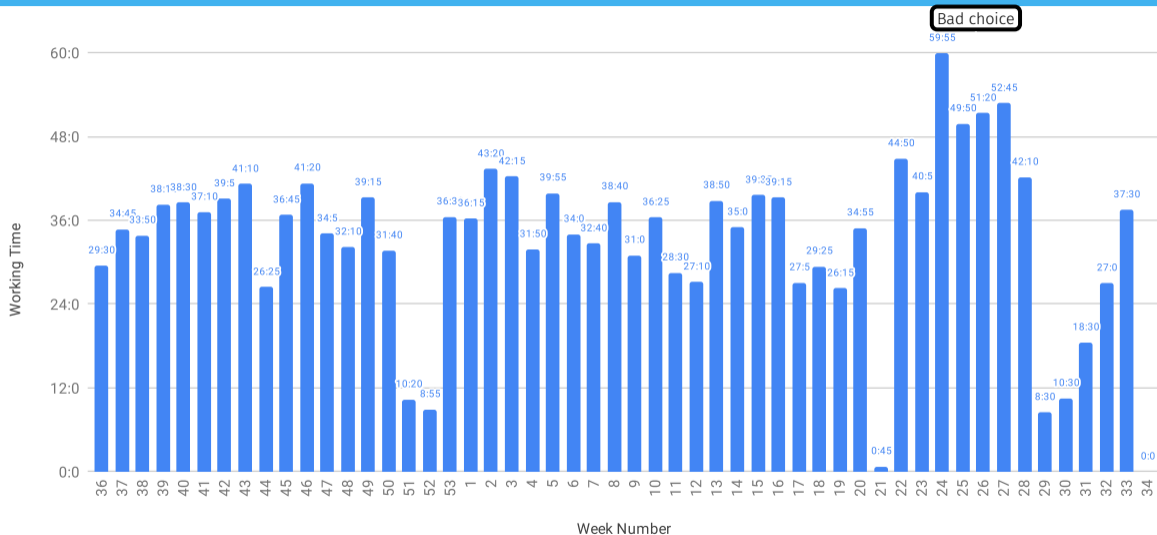
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# 2022-2023, First year on a permanent position



Total: 1735h (incl. additional teaching hours €)

## Tracking my working time, takeaways

### Identification of work peaks

Noticing weeks where I did too much

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75% weekends are work free

25% are mostly train trips where I “pass time”



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For me, having real weekend breaks is important.

## A key skill: judging “invitations”

### Plenty additional tasks

Teaching, student advising, paper/PC reviews, funding & job reviews

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- ▶ It's much better than being late and rushing work



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Discuss deadlines, review load,

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I can choose to work in the evenings if I need to, or for flexibility concerns

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  - does not apply in rare emergencies
- ▶ What about commits & development, instant chat?

Low moments

---

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### Some suggestions

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## Some suggestions

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- ▶ Checking you have taken time off recently
- ▶ Knowing periods of seemingly no progress can be part of the research
- ▶ Identifying and addressing influencing factors
- ▶ Having hobbies outside of work will help

## Low moments

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A focus on paper rejections

## Peer review and rejection

Peer-review is a cornerstone of the current academic approach

Goals: constructive criticism, exchange of ideas

A lot of submissions are rejected

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- ▶ Less painful with multiple ongoing projects



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## Funding

- ▶ Amazon funding  $\rightsquigarrow$  work in progress

## Carbon footprint of our research

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# Reducing the carbon footprint of our professional activities

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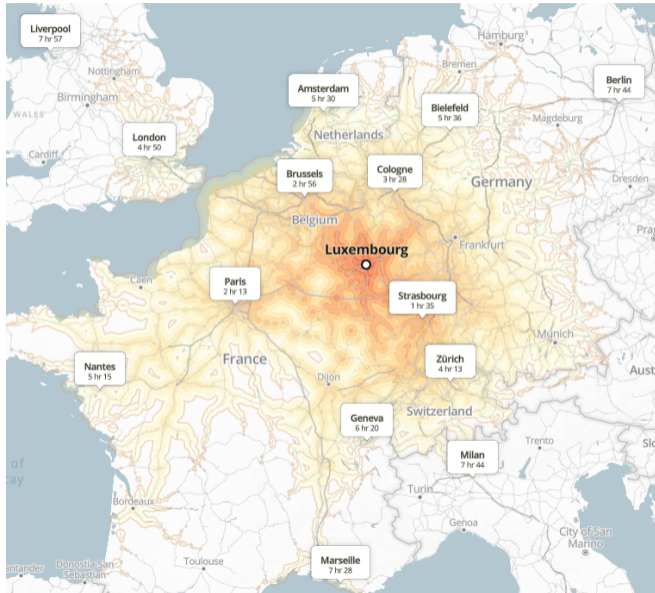
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Also consider the pledge for sustainable research in theoretical computer science

# About travel in Europe



[chronotrains.com](http://chronotrains.com)  
[seat61.com](http://seat61.com)



## Faculty applications

---


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- ▶ Find successful applications to have models

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## Research scientist

- ▶ No teaching duties
- ▶ 16 positions in total at CNRS
- ▶  $\simeq$  38 positions in total at Inria

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- ▶ show that you can work on different topics, with different people

## Job applications in France (III)

### The process

Jan/Feb    Written application submission

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Jan/Feb    Written application submission

Apr/May    Interview  $\rightsquigarrow$  preliminary ranking

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### Some implicit constraints

For researcher positions: get in touch with teams **before** applications open

- ▶ e.g, October or November of Y for jobs starting in Fall of Y + 1
- ▶ in my experience, teams are happy and helpful with their candidates

Details, see experience of [a3nm.net/work/applications/](https://a3nm.net/work/applications/)



### If you have multiple offers

Congratulations! Some advice to help your choice

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 Calendar

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- ⚠ Calendar
  - ▶ Geographical location & personal choices

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  - ▶ Discussing/Negotiating

# Lessons learned along the path of an early career researcher

## Discussion

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