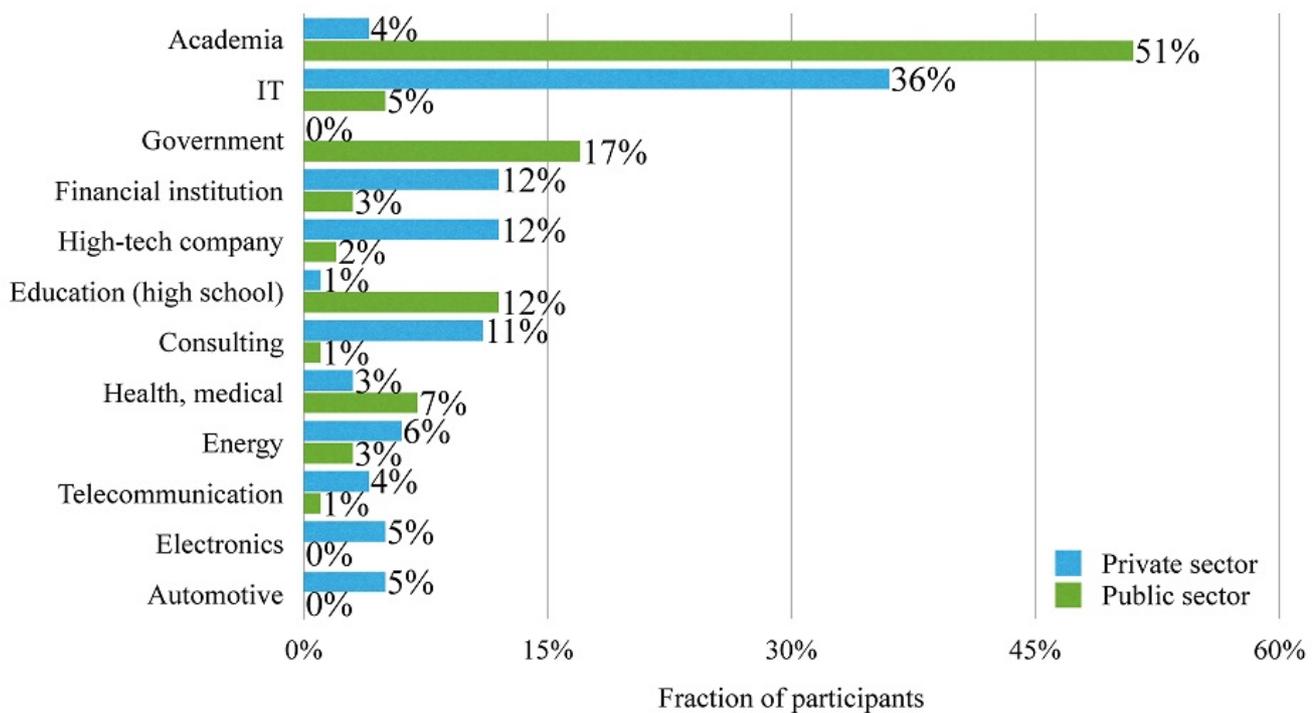


# CERN's impact on the careers of people

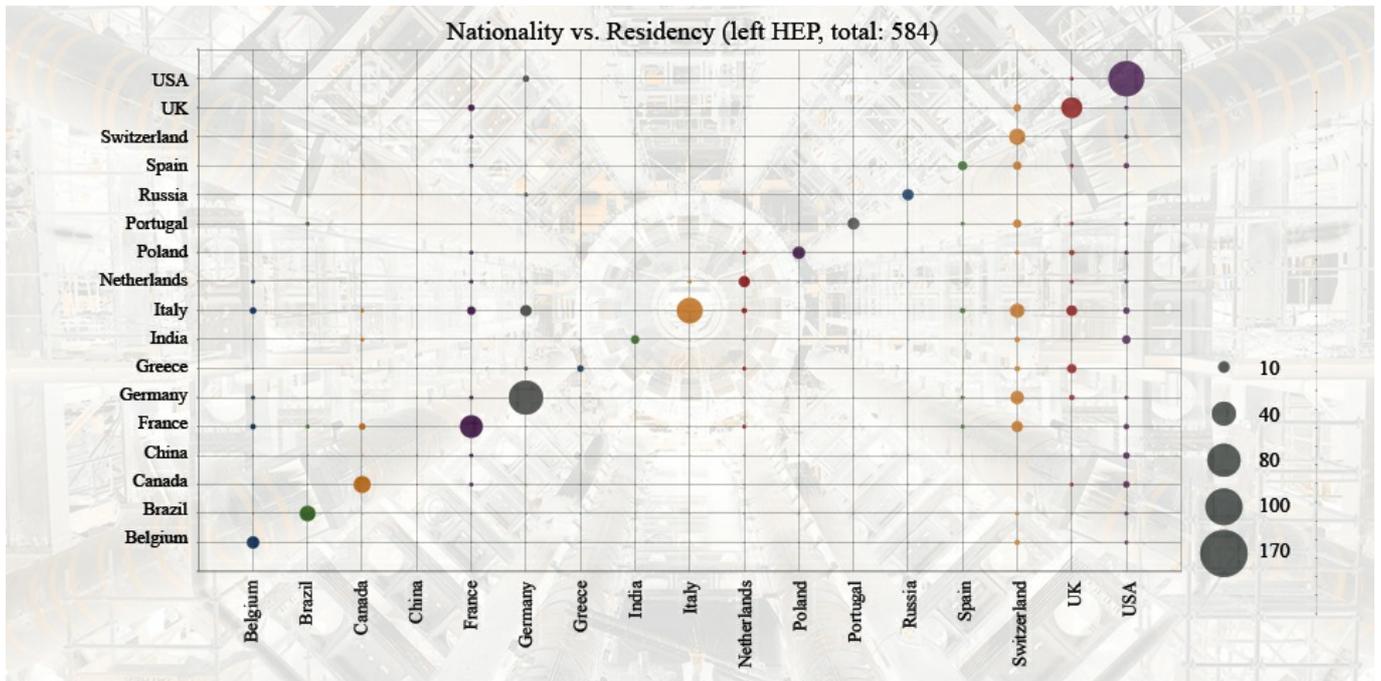
✍ P. Giacomelli 📅 20-12-2019 ↗ <http://www.primapagina.sif.it/article/1030>



Sectors in which former CERN users continue their careers. The percentages correspond to the fractions of answers. Blue, results for the private sector; green, results for the public sector.

CERN is the largest laboratory in the world for research in high energy physics (HEP) and has a well-established scientific reputation since many years. After the discovery of the Higgs boson at the Large Hadron Collider, announced in 2012, CERN has also become well known to the general public. What people might not know is that a working experience at CERN may have a profound influence on people's future careers. In fact, on a daily basis around 10000 people work at CERN, many of them coming from outside institutions, and a significant fraction of these people are at an early stage of their career.

To investigate and try to quantify the impact of a working period at CERN on people's careers, in 2016 the Director General of CERN, Fabiola Gianotti, appointed a "Students Career Study Group" that I had the responsibility to organize and coordinate. Using an online questionnaire and retrieving information on a strictly anonymous way, we were able to collect feedback from almost 2700 persons who worked or are still working at CERN. This represents the largest statistical sample on which similar studies have been reported so far at CERN. The questionnaire addressed several professional and sociological aspects, like age, education, nationality, time spent at CERN and satisfaction with the CERN environment. Italians were the most numerous to reply to the questionnaire among the 84 nationalities represented in the sample. Additional questions were asked to the people who left the field of HEP (757 people, about 28% of the total sample): current job, type of activity, impact of the experience and skills acquired at CERN on the current job and so on. The preliminary results of this study have been presented to the CERN Council on three occasions in the past and have attracted a lot of interest.



Country of nationality (y-axis) as a function of residence (x-axis). The bubble size is proportional to the number of people that left HEP. Only nationalities with at least 40 entries are shown.

The final results of this study have recently been published as a CERN Yellow Report. The first 40 printed copies of the Yellow Report have been distributed last week to the members of the CERN Council during their end of the year session. Among the many interesting results one may outline the following ones: more than 80% of the people are satisfied or very satisfied with their period spent at CERN. Among the people who are still working in HEP, 76% of them would definitely like to continue in the field and 21% more are considering it. Among the people who left HEP, 70% of them did it because of the uncertain path towards a permanent position; two thirds of them work in the private sector, as can be seen on figure 1; most people went back to their country of origin (figure 2); their satisfaction with their current job is high or very high for 79% of respondents; for more than 70% of the people the impact of their experience at CERN in obtaining their current job was positive or very positive.

Not every result is positive though: almost 70% of people who left HEP replied that CERN's services were not very useful in finding a new job. This specific result has been reported to the CERN management that is now pursuing ways to improve on this aspect and provide more guidance to people interested in transitioning out of HEP. The recently created CERN Alumni programme is an important first step in this direction.