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How to be a postdoc in Italy

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I started my postdoc experience in 2021. This is my first Post Doc together with my first stay in Italy. I found this position while I was searching Research Institutes in European countries that focused on Neuroscience. I was fascinated by some papers published by this Institute. I read more about the place, the city, and the climate :)) And I sent my CV to a couple of laboratories where I thought I could learn new techniques and also can use my skills for ongoing projects.

I arrived here directly from Japan: the culture and life approach are completely different from what I experienced before, but it's a great adventure. Besides the research part, there are a lot of opportunities to enjoy delicious food, sun, travel, and amazing architecture. Talking about the place where I work I think it's one of the best places where you can realize all the research ideas you have: comparable freedom of research life, impressive equipment of the labs, and huge investments.

Among the minuses of living here, I should emphasize the bureaucratic part of life: it can take months to solve issues with documents or health insurance (what took in Japan days or weeks here may take months).

For young researchers who are going to work with lab animals, I also recommend staying very patient. For doing experiments with animals you will have to write a project (they call it a license) describing all work procedures with exact numbers of animals, which is difficult to predict. As a result, I often faced a lack of mice or other restrictions. Approving of the licenses by ethical committees also may take months, so you need to plan your research activity in advance considering all these bureaucratic procedures. To be able to work with lab animals, it's also necessary to follow online and offline courses which take days and days, and hours, and hours. Many of them are in Italian. So, learning Italian is not mandatory but highly recommended.

The working atmosphere is very comfortable. Italian people are very friendly and always ready to help. They never stand off if you need some help. Unfortunately, I have only a few Japanese colleagues in our institute, but they also share with me positive experiences staying in Italy.

Message to the students who want to study abroad:

As I mentioned it takes time to solve bureaucratic issues, like document applications, medical insurance, registration in the city/apartment, etc. Compared to Japan, the system works differently. So, here just to be patient. Also, public transportation sometimes works with delays. After living in Japan it was stressful for me.

I could say that for somebody it wouldn't be easy to stay alone, far from friends and family. Adaptation may take some time, but this point depends on the person. I think that someone who is looking for a new experience and is ready for adventure will enjoy it.