Announcement

Visiting Research Fellow Programme (VRFP-2022)

Objectives of the Visiting Research Fellow Programme

The Visiting Research Fellow Programme (VRFP) is an innovative approach to human capacity development and is designed to help professionals from OPEC Member Countries improve their expertise and technical skills in research in an array of energy-related issues. It does this by providing participants with the opportunity to become involved in the Secretariat’s research operation through practical experience and ‘learning by doing’.

Professional Benefits to Fellows

Participants in the VRFP benefit from being in the programme through:

- Involvement and close participation in the Secretariat’s research programme and studies;
- Contributing to ongoing projects in the Secretariat’s and strengthening of networks with Member Country professionals;
- Gaining experience at the Secretariat and deepening their knowledge of OPEC and understanding of its goals, priorities and activities;
- Opportunities to involve themselves in cutting-edge research and hands-on experience of policy issues in climate change and on a range of energy-related topics;
- Enhancing their professional experience through practical work assignments;
- Exposure to a rich international environment and interaction with researchers from OPEC Members and other countries;
- Broadening their career possibilities as a result of the experience and insights gained at OPEC.

General Eligibility Requirements

- The programme is open to applicants from Member Countries only. They must be nominated and supported by their respective OPEC Governors;
- Applicants should be professionals with a minimum of five years of relevant work experience;
- Applicants must be familiar with research methodology and should have a proven record of research experience;
- Participants are expected to be able to undertake the programme in English, which is the working language of the Secretariat;
- Applications must be submitted through the relevant Governor for OPEC.
**Expected Outcome/Deliverables**

- Participants in the programme will be involved directly in the research undertakings at the Secretariat and will contribute to them;
- Participants are required to deliver a report to the Secretariat on the findings of their research projects;
- Participants are required to make a presentation at the end of their assignments and to discuss their research findings with members of the Secretariat.

All intellectual property arising from research by the programme’s participants belongs to the Secretariat. An intellectual property and confidentiality agreement will be signed before a successful participant is formally accepted into the programme.

**Duration & Working Hours**

The duration of the programme will be six months. The Visiting Research Fellows are expected to observe the official working hours of the Secretariat.

**Allowances, Accommodation, Travel and Insurance**

Participants are required to have paid employment and to be able to fully support themselves financially while staying in Vienna, and they must provide adequate evidence of this through their nominating Governors before they can be admitted to the programme. The Secretariat will provide each participant with a monthly honorarium of €1,000 to assist with extra expenses. However, the Secretariat will not cover any costs related to the accommodation or travel of participants or their dependents. Participants must arrange their own health/sickness insurance and provide evidence that they possess adequate health coverage before arriving in Vienna. The Secretariat will not be responsible for any health or sickness claims stemming from the fellowship period. With regard to accident insurance at the workplace, the Secretariat will enroll participants in its accident insurance scheme for the duration of their stay in the programme at the Secretariat.

**Application Evaluation Criterion**

Candidates' professional merit and potential for successful research will be the main consideration when evaluating the applicants.

**Application Procedure**

Applicants are required to complete the application form, which includes writing an elaborate research proposal that should center on any of the topics listed below. Applicants are also requested to attach their latest Curriculum Vitae to the completed application form. The following are the research topics available in the different Departments/Office/Unit at the Secretariat for the 2022 VRFP:
Petroleum Studies Department

Introduction to the Petroleum Studies Department

Within the Research Division, the Petroleum Studies Department (PSD) is responsible for continuous monitoring of oil and product market developments in the short-term, and reporting thereon in a timely and precise manner to Member Countries. Its objective is to provide pertinent and reliable information and analyses in support of decision-making and policy-making in Member Countries, as well as to highlight the conditions under which the world oil markets are balanced.

PSD is also responsible for carrying out, on a continuous basis, research programmes and studies on short-term energy market issues. Its objective here is to make reports and ad hoc papers, highlighting particularly important issues available to Member Countries for their use and consideration.

A further area of responsibility is conducting a series of regular forecasts by elaborating on and analysing oil market scenarios. These findings will then be reported to Member Countries for information purposes, as well as in support of policy-making.

Research topics:

1) Revisiting the relationship between GDP and oil demand by sector amid structural changes caused by the impact of COVID-19

The proposed study aims to examine the general relationships between oil demand and GDP by main sectors to capture the structural change observed during the COVID-19 pandemic, if any. The study will use a yearly time series to estimate the short-term elasticities of GDP to oil demand. The main objective is to estimate GDP elasticity of oil demand first by main sectors and second on a regional level. The study will cover the world, main regions and a few highlighted countries.

The project’s aim is to estimate short-term crude oil consumption and real GDP elasticities based on a sectoral approach. Therefore, for each of the identified regions, the model would define the sectoral demand and adopt the oil demand as well as the prices based on the weight given to each sector.

The above specification may use one of the listed below models, however, any time series or econometrics model that fit with the proposal objectives and data could be utilized:

- ADRL model: to capture the short term co-integration relation between the listed variables.
- SVAR model: to capture the impact of a shock in any of the independent variables on the short-term oil demand results/findings.
- A dynamic panel oil demand.

The project will cover the main regions and sectors.

The project data provided by DSD will be structured as a time series data on annual basis.
Specific Eligibility Requirements

A successful candidate for this position should have a University degree in Economics especially applied economics, Energy economics (advanced degree preferred), a good knowledge in economics and energy modelling, a genuine innovative interest in data and statistical related subject, data science and the oil market. He or she should further demonstrate computer-programming skills, such as R, Python, STATA, SAS, E-views and Excel. Knowledge of database management systems.
Data Services Department

Introduction to the Data Services Department

The Data Services Department (DSD) is responsible for supporting the research activities in the Research Division through provision of statistical data management and analysis, software development, and documentation/references management services. The department is the central provider of reliable, timely, up-to-date data, documentation and information pertaining to the oil market in particular, and energy and related issues in general.

Research topics:

Petroleum products taxation structures in OECD main oil consuming countries and impact on oil demand

The study seeks to identify and summarize the petroleum products taxation structures in main OECD oil consuming countries, US, the UK, Germany, France, Italy and Japan. The study will optimally relate taxation structures on oil demand particularly focusing on the transportation sector.

Quantitative (statistical) research is expected to be carried out on historical data and optimally elaborate on possible taxation impacts on oil demand.

Specific Eligibility Requirements

A successful candidate for this position should have a genuine innovative interest in data and statistical related subjects and the oil market. He or she would ideally further demonstrate computer-programming skills, such as R, Excel with VBA.

Knowledge of database management systems such as SQL would be of advantage.
Energy Studies Department

Introduction to the Energy Studies Department

The Department is responsible for monitoring, analyzing and forecasting world energy developments in the medium and long term and reporting thereon. It also monitors developments, and undertakes specific studies, on energy demand and production-related technology and the emerging implications for OPEC.

Research topics:

Recent developments in global energy policies and their implications on OPEC and its member countries

Background

The global energy scene has been faced with diverse challenges, most recent is the COVID-19 pandemic based crisis that brought oil demand to a record low and the oil price to a very sharp decline.

Aside from the pandemic crisis, there has been an evolution of energy policies that continues to influence the global energy scene, the most prominent is the issue of climate change, this issue has caused regions, countries and energy companies all over the world to make plans and pronouncements of their intention to align with the Paris Agreement on climate change and for many, to subsequently attain net-zero emission by 2050.

The increased focus on climate change considerations by the World Bank and other financial institutions has increasingly made it more difficult for the oil industry to find sources of finance for exploration and production activities and to sustain global oil supply in the long term.

Objective

Based on the afore mentioned situation the study will identify key energy policies that could make a significant impact on the global energy sector and cause changes in the long-term global energy mix. It will also address the investment required and the structural change that is necessary in the sustainable production and consumption of fossil fuels in the long term.

Scope and work plan

The study will reference the WOO projections on global energy demand and supply in the medium to long term and give detailed analysis on investment patterns in the energy sector that has sustained current crude oil supply globally. It will also elaborate on the key energy policies of major economies that could alter the projected global energy mix and then provide a quantitative analysis of how these individual policies will affect future energy supply, if or when implemented. The study will then analyze how these policies have or will affect investments in the oil sector.

Furthermore, the findings of the study will be used to assess the potential impact/implication of the implementation of these policies on OPEC and member countries.
Environmental Matters Unit

Introduction to the Environmental Matters Unit

Within the Research Division, the Environmental Matters Unit (EMU) is responsible for monitoring, analyzing, reporting and advising on developments pertaining to the international debate on environmental matters affecting the energy sector. To this end, EMU’s activities are client based and result oriented. EMU places emphasis on the needs of Member Countries with regard to policy research and analysis related to emerging challenges in the climate change/energy nexus, as well as opportunities for sustainable development and efforts to eradicate energy poverty.

Research topic:

Energy Transition effects on the Middle East region

Energy continues to be one of the major drivers of global economy and plays a crucial role in the economic growth, prosperity and sustainable development of countries across the world. Access to reliable, affordable and sustainable modern sources of energy and energy security, shape energy strategies and long-term policies of countries and regions.

Development of innovations and technologies, reducing costs of various energy sources, emergence of new sources of energy, investment policies of financial institutions, geopolitical considerations, environmental policies, and regulatory frameworks could affect strategic energy planning, as well as global and national energy mixes. Middle East and North Africa continues to be one of the main exporting region of oil and gas at the global level, and changes in energy policies and the energy mix of major importing countries, could have significant impacts on the economies of energy exporting developing countries.

The study aims to review and assess the impacts of the abovementioned factors on future energy demand and exports of producing countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Analysis could focus on potential impacts on their export revenues, economic growth, sectoral impacts, and job changes, as well as on ways and means to mitigate such adverse impacts. The study could also evaluate the benefits of diversification within the energy sector, examining viable options such as producing hydrogen, electricity and petrochemical products.

Specific Eligibility Requirements:

- Advanced university degree (Master’s) in economics, energy economics, or environmental economics.
- Knowledge or familiarity with international climate change negotiation processes and impacts on the energy sector.
- Work experience on energy-related issues, and emerging trends that could affect global energy systems and the future energy mix.
- Interest in the region of Middle East and North Africa.
- Ability to perform research and assess the possible socio-economic impacts of energy transition on energy-exporting developing countries.
PR & Information Department

Introduction to PR & Information Department

The Department is statutorily responsible for presenting OPEC’s objectives, decisions and actions in their true and most desirable perspective, contributing to the awareness of governments, national and international institutions and companies, as well as the general public about OPEC and its activities, while presenting the OPEC Secretariat as a professional institution in the field of energy market data, analyses and projections.

Research topics:

1) Upgrading the OPEC Bulletin

The OPEC Bulletin is an important outreach tool for OPEC, providing information on OPEC activities, while also allowing for more “soft” reporting about Member Countries’ social and cultural news. The visiting fellow will examine how the look and feel of the magazine can be updated – from cover design to layout, to font colour and style, to paper size/format, etc. – so that the OPEC Bulletin better reflects the profile and global role of the Organization.

In other words, how can the current content could be improved, modified or updated to make the publication more timely and relevant to readers and other stakeholders? What other features or columns could be included? How can the OPEC Bulletin encourage contributions from non-Secretariat writers? How does it compare to other magazines of a similar calibre in look and content? In addition, the visiting fellow will examine how the preparation, editing and production of the magazine can be improved to make the magazine more timely and to standardize the production schedule.

Specific Eligibility Requirements

- University degree in graphic design and/or publishing preferred. A journalism degree would be welcome, with an emphasis on writing for publications.
- Advanced degree (Master’s) in similar or related fields would be useful but not required.
- Relevant work experience in editing, the preparation of manuscripts, magazine publishing, and layout and design.
- Knowledge or familiarity with economics, energy, and/or oil markets.
- Interest in public relations and media outreach.
- Proficiency in the use of Adobe InDesign (Adobe Photoshop would also be useful).
- Teamwork, initiative, creativity and professionalism are important traits in the candidate.
2) OPEC Design & Production in the 21st Century: On the Visual Display of Quantitative Information

Recent trends in academia, in the field of social sciences and financial services industry, demonstrate an ongoing move-away from overloaded PowerPoint slides towards greater simplicity, less text, and more eye-catching visual designs and graphical displays. These trends are particularly obvious for presentations of quantitative information and statistical data.

Given that analytical presentations are crucial to the work and activities at the OPEC Secretariat, it will be beneficial to revamp the style of PowerPoint presentations prepared, presented, printed and displayed through OPEC Website.

The participant should explore tools used in other fields to present quantitative information in visually appealing ways; audit OPEC materials in order to identify areas or specific products that could be improved by incorporating visual displays and infographics; propose new ways of working at PRID’s Design & Production Unit for their preparation, elaboration and production.

Specific Eligibility Requirements

- University degree in Design, Communications, Public Relations, Marketing or related field.
- Good communication and business presentation skills.
- Thorough knowledge of PowerPoint and Adobe Creative Suite
- Strong analytical and conception skills
- Knowledge of current tools for visualization
Legal Office

Introduction to Legal Office

The Legal Office contributes to the conduct of OPEC affairs by promoting the rule of law within the Organization and in its relations with governments, organizations, enterprises and individuals. It primarily advises on all legal matters to the Secretary General, governing bodies and internal departments, and represents the interest of the Organization in different fora. The Legal Office provides information, knowledge and advice on matters related to energy law issues for Member Countries, especially the energy transition.

Research topics:

1) The status of the law of the energy transition for the oil sector

Due to environmental pressure and technological progress, the energy transition process has been radically accelerated in the last years. The pace of the transformation has taken by surprise policymakers and legislators, who have not been able to keep the pace with the speed of developments.

The study required will provide an overview of the status of energy transition law in the oil sector and focus on analyzing the extractive industry developments and commitments regarding energy transition; the technology developments relevant to the sector reached so far and the existing public policy and regulation; identifying the achievements, challenges and concerns of resource-rich countries; also in light of the Covid-19 pandemic consequences.

The document expected as a result is an academic journal-style paper of around 20 pages, which will be peer-reviewed.

Eligibility Requirements

- Law university degree.
- English proficiency.
- Work experience in energy or environmental law is preferable.
- Five years of relevant experience since receiving the law degree.
- Some academic background/experience is preferable.
- Proficiency in the use of Microsoft Office suite.
- Ability to perform research on electronic platforms.
- Ability to work in legal and multidisciplinary area is essential.
- A writing sample (up to 5 pages) must be attached to the application and an interview will be performed after receiving applications.

The duration of the fellowship will be determined jointly with the candidate, between 3 and 6 months.
2) Climate change related judicial and administrative decisions – trends and developments

Since caselaw, at international and national levels, has developed substantially in the last five years, a thorough review of the most relevant climate related decisions is due.

The document expected as a result is an academic journal-style paper, of around 20 pages, which will be peer-reviewed.

Eligibility Requirements

- Law or public policy university degree.
- Experience working in the energy sector is preferable.
- Five years of experience since getting the bachelor degree.
- Proficiency in the use of Microsoft Office suite.
- Ability to work with legal colleagues is essential.
- A writing sample (up to 5 pages) must be attached to the application and a phone interview will be performed after receiving applications.

The duration of the fellowship will be determined jointly with the candidate, between 3 and 6 months.