



OPEC Summer Fellowship Programme (SFP) 2023

Announcement

Visiting Research Fellow Programme (VRFP-2023)

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 2023 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) Assessing the impact of high inflation and monetary tightening on crude oil demand and supply

The proposed study aims to empirically analyse the impact of inflation and interest rates on global crude oil demand and non-OPEC crude oil supply, with a focus on the US, especially when these are increasing. The study will use time series of the different variables and cover historical as well as current data, with special focus on the recent developments, considering the COVID-19 pandemic and the geopolitical tension in Eastern Europe. The main objective is to gain a deep understanding of the relationship between the highlighted main macro-economic variables and the fundamentals of the oil market, which might help in providing a better forecast of short-term crude oil global demand and non-OPEC (US) crude supply growth.

The above specification may use the SVAR model: to capture the impact of a shock in any of the independent variables on short-term oil demand and non-OPEC supply. However, any time series or econometric model that fits the proposed objective and data could be utilized.

The project could cover the main oil importing countries, such as the US, Germany, Japan, China and India in terms of oil demand. Regarding non-OPEC supply, the focus would be on the US and could include other major non-OPEC oil producers, if these countries are subject to short-term monetary tightening or inflation rate fluctuations and subject to data availability.

Regarding the studied variables, the time series data is to be provided by DSD to best match the studied variables.

Specific Eligibility Requirements

A successful candidate for this position should have an advanced university degree in economics, especially applied economics, applied energy economics (PhD is preferred), a good knowledge of energy modelling, a genuine innovative interest in data science and the oil market. Expert knowledge in E-views and Excel is an absolute prerequisite. He or she should further demonstrate computer programming skills, such as R, Python, STATA, SAS. Knowledge of database management systems is also preferred.

2) Trends in South Korean crude and refined products trade

The objective of this project is to analyse developments in crude and product trade flows for the Republic of Korea (South Korea) since 2010, including the factors driving changes in import and export patterns.

The tasks include organizing a database of crude and product trade flows based on the following data sources: Korea National Oil Corporation (KNOC); JODI; IEA-Mods.

Report should address the following:

- Review crude trade including sources and grades, identifying the factors driving any shifts over the period covered, including the shift in crude quality.
- Assess the strategy employed by Korean importers/exports to respond to key developments over the period, including the shale boom, the outbreak of COVID-19, the reaction to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and Energy Transition commitments/developments.
- Analyse product trade flows (imports and exports) by major product including key import flows such as naphtha and LPG, as well as key outflow such as gasoline, gasoil/diesel, jet fuel, along with trends in fuel oil, and other categories.
- Consider South Korea's product trade flows within the overall Asian regional balance including key competitors from inside and outside the region.
- Assess likely developments in the next two to five years with regard to South Korea's crude and product trade flows.

Specific Eligibility Requirements

Applicants should be professionals with a minimum of five years of relevant work experience, and be familiar with research methodology and should have a proven record of research experience.

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:

1) 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.

2) Overview of historical and current petrochemical capacity evolution

The aim of this study is to conduct an analysis of the historical evolution of petrochemical capacities worldwide, as well as to summarize prospective capacity expansions of future projects. In this light, the impact on current and future oil demand stemming from the petrochemical industry will be assessed.

Specific Eligibility Requirements

A successful candidate for this position should have a genuine innovative interest in data collection and statistical related subjects, and the oil/petrochemical market in general. He or she would ideally further demonstrate data gathering skills. Knowledge of data systems such as Excel and 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:

1) Quo vadis, automotive industry?

The road transportation sector currently accounts for around 45% of global oil demand. Moreover, recent projections indicate that this sector will remain to be among those with largest incremental demand in the foreseeable future.

At the same time, automotive industry is undergoing significant changes. Electric vehicles (EVs) gradually penetrate sales of new vehicles, especially passenger cars in China, Europe and the US. However, the largest expansion of new sales will likely take place in developing countries where sales of EVs are still very low. Moreover, these countries also experience strong growth in commercial vehicles with a different dynamics in terms of alternatives to internal combustion engines. On top of these trends, improvements in fuel efficiency will also play a significant role in shaping future oil demand in this sector.

This study will try to capture all these trends by looking at investment trends and strategies of car manufacturers, technology advancements and regional specifics of new vehicle sales, including related policies, and provide some insights about future composition of the global and regional vehicle fleet. Moreover, the objective of the study will also be to provide estimates of future oil demand in this sector based on varying assumptions on the penetration of alternative vehicles.

2) CCUS, current state and prospects

This study would focus the latest developments related to Carbon Capture Utilization and Storage (CCUS), including the discussion of major announced CCUS projects. It should give a reasonable outlook for possible CCUS capacities between 2023 and 2030.

The study would also assess the estimated costs of CCUS projects on the regional level (life-cycle or 'levelised' unit cost of production and cost per tonne of CO₂). In addition, the study should give a cost outlook based on the learnings and economies of scale.

Furthermore, the study should assess potential CCUS capacities on the regional and global level. In this respect, it should discuss the major challenges related to the scaling-up and commercialization of CCUS technology, including, regional policy framework and regulation.

Specific Eligibility Requirements

A successful candidate for this position should preferably have an advanced university degree (Master graduates or PhD candidates) in a relevant field to Energy, Economics, or Energy Policy. He or she should also have working experience in the energy industry.

Environmental Matters Department

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) OPEC and the media: The impact of news coverage on the image and perception of OPEC

Since the creation of OPEC in 1960 until today, the media covers OPEC news in general, with an emphasis on oil prices, in particular, in a very interesting manner, depending on many factors (media policy, geopolitics, financial crisis...etc.).

The evolvement of digital media has changed how news are being covered and transmitted, making it possible for everyone to get free and fast access to news. Some might see this as a threat, where others might see it as an opportunity for a faster, wider and cheaper news dissemination.

Taking into consideration the importance of enhancing OPEC's image and perception, the researcher could analyze and look in depth into the historic development of how OPEC news are covered in the media, what factors could impact such coverage and how does the public perceive OPEC news. The study should also cover the negative the media could have on OPECs image, oil prices and decisions made.

Furthermore, the findings of the study will be used to assess the potential benefits from turning how the media is dealing with OPEC into our benefit. (From a cartel into a market stabilizer)

Specific Eligibility Requirements

- University degree in Public Relations, Digital Media & Communications, Marketing, Journalism or related field.
- English proficiency
- Relevant work experience in Public Relations or media relations.
- Knowledge or familiarity with economics, energy, and/or oil markets.
- Interest in public relations and media outreach.
- Excellent communication and presentation skills
- Proficiency in the use of analytical and research tools
- Teamwork, initiative, creativity and professionalism

2) 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.

3) 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.