

European Job Market Morning

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EUROPEAN ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION
Developing and Applying Economics as a Science in Europe

Who am I?

- Associate Professor of Economics at Tilburg University (since 2020)
- Assistant Professor of Economics at Tilburg University (2017-2020)
- Ph.D. from LMU Munich (2017)

- Was on the job market 2016/2017: Europe & US
- Member of junior hiring committee at Tilburg University: 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 (chaired twice)

PART IV

Interviews & Flyouts

Interviews

Interviews: Structure

- It seems that the market moves towards virtual interviews (also this year)
- Interview typically lasts 30 minutes.
- Sometimes: Interviewers start by pitching their institution / the job for the first 5 minutes.
- Most important part: Your JM Spiel interrupted by questions from the committee.
- Then sometimes: questions about teaching or other papers.
- Finally: Time for one or two quick questions from you.
- Important: Dress as you would for an in-person (business professional)

Before the interview

- When scheduling interviews, make sure not to schedule your preferred employers for the first day (you get better with practice).
- Try to schedule interviews with your preferred employers early in their day, they'll be fresher and more attentive.
- A few days before the interview, ask who will be present. Make sure to research what they're working on or if there's any other way you can relate. Make cheat sheets with most important info.
- Acquire some basic information about the department, school, city, country. This ensures you don't ask questions during the interview you could have googled + you can signal interest.
- Expect that some people (clearly not all) may have read your JMP.

Your JM Spiel

- Prepare (and memorize) a polished summary of your job market paper
- You should have enough to say for 30 minutes, but you will (almost) never need it.
- You will be asked lots of questions, many of which you can (hopefully) answer through parts of your Spiel.
- The purpose of the Spiel is that you bring across how cool your JMP is, and committees will try to find out how “smart” you are.
- Make sure to have your Spiel **memorized perfectly** and practiced often enough that it **does not sound rehearsed**. Use everyone you can find for practice!
- With online interviews: memorizing not needed **if** you can read it in a way that it sounds natural! Use teleprompter software to avoid eye movement.

Spiel: Structure

- Start with one sentence about the field you work in, then briefly motivate the setting, describe the methods and give a preview of the results, and importantly: say why they are important. This should be 2-3 minutes.
- After that, continue with a more detailed description of what you do but be prepared to be interrupted for questions anytime.
- Ideally, structure the Spiel in chunks. This will allow you to jump back and forth whenever a question pops up.
- Because you won't have slides, make sure to have enough structure to not lose your audience.

Preparing for and responding to questions

- Make sure to have rehearsed, convincing answers ready to the most obvious questions.
- Likely, someone will ask a question you haven't heard before. Try to fully engage with the question (don't be shy to ask for clarification) and deliver an answer that shows your ability to think and reflect.
- If you need a few seconds (not more) to think, do it. Fill the thinking time: "That's a great question that I hadn't thought about. Let me think for a second..."
- If you don't know the answer to a question or can't credibly alleviate a concern, acknowledge it. Promise to get back to the committee with an answer. Describe everything you can do to alleviate a concern.
- It's okay to say: "Yes, I'm aware of this concern. I haven't had yet time to address it, but I plan to take the following steps next:..."

Other papers

- Make sure to also have rehearsed short Spiels (~5 minutes each) on your other papers.
- These can be much more condensed and should really only be high-level summaries, and descriptions of the contributions (but you may receive questions on the methods).
- Also prepare a short Spiel on teaching. You can borrow from your teaching statement.

Questions at the end

- You should not ask more than two questions as time will usually be almost up.
- If you don't have any real questions: ask when you can expect to hear back and what the timing of the whole process looks like.
- Don't ask about salary or teaching load and other details of the contract yet, this is better left for later.
- Also don't ask questions you could have easily googled.
- You can ask questions that show you came prepared.
 - “I saw that you have a center on innovation research, and I was wondering whether you would think I could meaningfully contribute to the work of the center given my research interests.”
- It's also perfectly fine to say that you have no further question at this stage (while stressing that you already know a lot about the department and really like what they're doing).

After the interview

- Make sure you write down all unanswered questions or questions where you weren't satisfied with your response.
- Also try to write down who asked which questions.
- Send a “thank you” email after the interview (or at the end of the day) to each committee member. This email should contain:
 - A generic thank you for the interview and how much you like the department (plus reiteration of additional reasons why this place would be a good fit)
 - If applicable: Good answers to any unanswered questions.
 - (Optional: Acknowledge a question asked by this committee member.)
- Very few candidates send thank you emails, but, in my experience, they do influence committee members! (Has become more since I've presented these slides for the first time)

Flyouts

Structure

- Virtual flyouts usually consist of a talk & bilateral meetings via Zoom, Webex, MS Teams, or a similar platform.
- In-person flyouts may also feature *some* remote bilateral meetings, and seminar attendance may be *partly* virtual.
- In-person flyouts also often feature a dinner and/or a lunch but this varies hugely across countries. Don't be offended if you don't get to dine lavishly.
- Some places may book travel arrangements for you, others will reimburse you later. (have a credit card!)
- At some places you will meet graduate students, teaching staff, some places may even not have meetings at all.
- A few places fly out several candidates at once, this can be (but doesn't have to be) awkward.
- Just as with interviews: try to avoid scheduling your preferred places early!

Travel to the flyout

- Non-EU students: Take care of Schengen visa early on!
- If the flyout is in person, make sure to plan enough time (in case a train/flight gets delayed/cancelled etc.).
- Ideally, only have carry-on, no checked luggage. Use a garment bag for suits.
- Get rest, be prepared!
- Usually, arrival is on the evening before. Already explore the area to not get confused on the day itself.
- Some (usually younger) places/faculty may invite you to additional informal dinners the evening before. Ask for dress code, formal attire may not be required/desired.

The job market talk

- Job market talks vary in length between 20 minutes and 1.5 hours. Most common: 60 minutes.
- Sometimes required: a short talk on teaching.
- Expect varying crowd sizes: Don't take low attendance personal.
- Make sure your talk is well rehearsed (practiced many, many times with peers and ideally: faculty!).
- Make sure to stick to the time: NEVER run over.
- Be entertaining yet serious, respond courteously to questions and try to answer them to best of their ability.

Bilateral meetings

- Throughout the day, you will meet many people who will (mostly) want to talk about your research and get to know you.
- Show interest and enthusiasm by also asking them about their research (don't push it though).
- Engage in active listening and have intellectual conversations that show your qualities as an academic.
- Also chance to ask questions about life in the department/city/country (esp. to junior people).
- Smaller departments may struggle to fill your schedule: don't take offense.
- Keep an eye on the clock and make sure to not run over by more than a couple of minutes.
- Make use of bathroom breaks!

Some questions to ask during bilateral meetings

- How does the department support junior faculty?
- What class sizes are you teaching? What are the students like?
- How does supervision of graduate students work?
- What admin tasks do people do?
- Is there money for research assistants / data etc.? Are there competitive grants at the department/school/university/country level?
- What do you like about this place? What do you dislike about this place?
- Where do people live? What living standards can they afford?
- What is life as an international in country X?
- What language do you teach in? Do you support acquiring language skills?
- What does the tenure process look like?

Lunches

- Quite often, lunches are directly before your seminar: Make sure to eat light! Soup stains on suits are not desirable.
- Expect to have lots of research discussions, especially about your JMP.
- Some faculty members who didn't have time for bilateral meetings may use the lunch to get to know you and your research.
- Lunches may range from fancy, creative cuisine to bland sandwiches. Don't take it personally: administrative constraints may dictate what you can afford to feed to a job market candidate.
- Be likable and interested. No off-color jokes!

Dinner

- Conversations at dinner may be more personal and aimed at getting to know you.
- Be likable and interested, no off-color jokes, no secrets! Don't gossip!
- Don't drink too much alcohol.
- At some point you may be asked about your outside options, preferences. Think carefully what to say.
- The dinner is your time to ask any unanswered (and more informal) questions.

After the fly-out

- Make sure to keep all receipts for reimbursement.
- Send follow-up emails to all people you met. Thank them for the day, possibly refer to discussions you've had during the day.
- Reflect on all interactions: if things seemed off, discuss with someone you trust (ideally advisor).
- If you receive a dominating offer, immediately let your dominated options know.
- Inform the hiring committee about all developments on your end.

Further readings

- All resources used/discussed in these slides (and more) can be found here:

<https://sites.google.com/view/econgradadvice/home>

