

HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS (HRS4R) AT THE INSTITUTE OF HUMAN GENETICS, POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

Incorporating the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers 2021-2023

The Institute of Human Genetics, Polish Academy of Sciences (IHG PAS) in Poznan recognizes the importance of human resources strategy for researchers and aspires to a group of modern international research institutions maintaining the standards developed under the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (hereinafter referred to as Charter and Code or C&C).

In the years 2016-2017 activities related to C&C were intensified due to the process of application for the HR Excellence in Research award that was submitted to the European Commission in August 2017, and in January 2019, the Institute obtained the right to use the "HR Excellence in Research" award.

The Commission's recommendation on the C&C issued in 2005 has been a reference point for shaping the OTM-R (open, transparent, merit-based recruitment) policy and the Institute's policy research conduct.

Creating a friendly scientific work environment and transparent rules for the recruitment of researchers is one of the objectives of the European Commission. The IHG PAS, thus, would like to contribute to the efforts of the European Commission towards a common research area and labor market for researchers, increased mobility, attractiveness of careers, more favorable working conditions, the development of various skills and know-how of researchers and more stable social security. But above all, **the IHG PAS would like to become recognized as an employer that is aware of the importance of human resources, strongly supports its researchers and offers attractive working conditions.**

For this purpose, the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers at the Institute of Human Genetics, PAS (described below) was formulated in accordance with the Charter and Code. The principles of the Charter and Code are to a large extent already an established practice endorsed at the IHG PAS.

The internal analysis of the present situation was initially conducted between August and November 2017, and again between August and November 2020, in order to define the gaps in the implementation of C&C. The outline of the strategy for overcoming these gaps was formed and published on the Institute's website. The outline is the result of a collaborative

work between researchers and administration of the Institute; its implementation is subject to both internal and external evaluations, and is monitored by the HR Working Group appointed in 2017 and led by prof. Ewa Ziętkiewicz.

The internal analysis has been carried out in four fields of the C&C:

- I. Ethical and professional aspects**
- II. Recruitment and selection**
- III. Working conditions and social security**
- IV. Training and development**

Thorough analysis of the existing regulations revealed that 26 out of 40 C&C principles are fully implemented at the IHG PAS, especially in relation to field I. Ethical and professional aspects, II. Recruitment and selection as well as field III. Working conditions and social security. However, weak points and gaps have been still identified in the fields: I. Ethical and professional aspects, III. Working conditions and social security and especially in field IV. Training and development. Corrective actions have been proposed for the 14 principles of the Charter and Code. In order to fully implement the principles of the Charter and Code at the IHG PAS, the action plan planned for the years 2021-2023 presents 25 actions that will be undertaken. By introducing measures presented in the Action Plan, we want to overcome the aforementioned gaps to fully implement all the C&C principles at the IHG PAS.

I. ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL ASPECTS

Ethical and professional aspects are governed by national legislation, which is publicly available to all researchers. It offers favorable conditions for the implementation of principles within the context of ethical and professional aspects. The analysis revealed that the legal framework supports these aspects and that the existing practice follows the principles of research freedom, the recognized ethical practice, professional responsibility, professional attitude, responsibility and non-discrimination. The existing practice is to a large extent consistent with the recommendations/principles of both the Charter and the Code in terms of ethical and professional aspects.

However, the analysis has revealed the need to improve communication and clarify issues related to **professional attitude** and **accountability**. A poor implementation of **good practice in research** referring mainly to the personal data storage has also been shown. Therefore, the IHG PAS undertakes actions to implement good practices in research concerning the policy of confidentiality and personal data as well as data storage and protection.

Also implementation of **dissemination and exploitation of research results** is still a weak point of the Institute. In June 2017, the new organizational structure was approved, and the Grant Office was set up to provide necessary support to the researchers, together with the

Scientific Secretary The currently proposed actions are intended to strengthen support for research commercialization and open access publishing.

The Institute has the ambition to attract and maintain international researchers, thus to obey the **non-discrimination principle**, all strategic internal documents will be provided bilingual, both in Polish and English.

Evaluation/appraisal systems will be revised and introduced, especially in terms of awards for best-performing researchers. Assessment of their professional performance will be done in a transparent manner by an independent committee.

II. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Polish national legislation already ensures open recruitment for researchers by the requirements of publishing job advertisements on the Ministry of Education and Science website as well as Euraxess portal. To fully implement open, merit-based and transparent **recruitment** (OTM-R), the IHG PAS has already introduced **OTM-R** policy (December 2017, update January 2021) and **New rules of appointing researchers for scientific positions based on strengthened OTM-R procedure**.

In accordance with these instructions, candidates will be informed about the selection procedure and the recruitment process prior to the selection and about the advantages and disadvantages of the position after the selection. Thus, the transparency principle will be implemented more clearly. New templates for job advertisements contain a description of working conditions and requirements, including information on the selection procedure and the recruitment process.

Although the recommendations for the selection principle have no legal or other restrictions, the selection procedure is not fully implemented in the recommended manner since that is a bit problematic for a research institution of this size to provide members of the selecting committee from different disciplines.

III. WORKING CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY

EXPECTATIONS of researchers in terms of working conditions have been deeply analyzed, and the strategy has been tailored to their expectations to the extent possible.

There are no legal restrictions for implementing most of the recommendations within the context of working conditions and social security.

All researchers building a career in research are recognized by the Institute of Human Genetics, Polish Academy of Sciences as professionals and treated accordingly from the beginning of their careers, namely at postgraduate level, considering all levels, regardless of

their classification at national level (e.g. employee, postgraduate student, doctoral candidate, postdoctoral fellow).

Recommendations on **recognition of the profession, research environment, working conditions, career development** as well as **access to career advice** are to a great extent linked to the financial capacity of the employer. Within the limits of the available funds of the IHG PAS as a public finance institution, we try to ensure a stimulating **research environment**, adequate training for researchers, appropriate equipment, facilities and opportunities, including remote collaboration over research networks, as well as compliance with national and sectoral regulations concerning health and safety in research.

In the 2020 survey we have diagnosed the need to inform scientists about raising funds for the purchase of large equipment and the need to involve them in the process of obtaining funds for equipment.

Working conditions covered by the legislation are to a large extent brought in line with the recommendations. However, the internal gap analysis has shown the need of flexibility deemed essential for successful research performance.

The IHG PAS aims to provide working conditions which allow both women and men researchers to combine family and work, children and career. Particular attention is paid to flexible working hours, part-time working, tele-working and so-called home office.

Access to career advice will be implemented in the form of individual consultations of early-stage researchers with their mentors. Ensuring that career advice is offered to researchers at all career stages, regardless of their contractual situation, requires additional financial and (adequately trained) human resources. This strategy will require the availability of mentors involved in providing support and guidance for the personal and professional development of researchers, thus motivating them and contributing to reducing any insecurity in their professional future. With regard to its capacities, the IHG PAS strives to create favorable conditions for **career development**. Therefore, dedicated courses and trainings will be possible, enabling the development of a scientific career.

The Director recognizes the importance of participation of young researchers in relevant information, consultation and decision-making bodies of the Institute, so as to protect and promote their individual and collective interests as professionals and to actively contribute to the workings of the institution. This laid the grounds to establish, in 2017, the Young Scientists Council. What's more, representatives of R1 and R2 groups participate in meetings of the Institute's decision-making bodies. In addition, since autumn 2020, the Director regularly meets with doctoral students to discuss the most important issues for them and to assure **recognition of the profession** since the very beginning of the scientific career.

IV. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Researchers in their training phase should establish a structured and regular **relationship with their supervisor(s)**. This includes keeping records of all work progress and research findings, obtaining feedback via discussions and seminars, applying such feedback and working according to agreed schedules, milestones, deliverables and/or research outputs.

Although **supervision and managerial duties** are expected from researchers, too little emphasis is being placed on training for performing such duties. Senior researchers should devote particular attention to their multi-faceted role as supervisors, mentors, career advisors, leaders, project coordinators, managers or science communicators.

Continuing professional development is also expected but limited by financial resources. Researchers at all career stages should seek to continually improve themselves by regularly updating and expanding their skills and competencies. This may be achieved by a variety of means including, but not restricted to, formal training, workshops, conferences and e-learning.

Access to research training and continuous development for all researchers at any stage of their career is not regulated by law. Such measures should be regularly assessed for their accessibility, take up and effectiveness in improving competencies, skills and employability.

In order to enable researchers to perform their **multi-faceted role** as supervisors, mentors, career advisors, leaders, project coordinators, managers or science communicators to the highest professional standards and to build up a more constructive and positive relationship with the early-stage researchers, to set the conditions for efficient transfer of knowledge, we will propose a suitable training for researchers at managerial positions for gaining additional knowledge and so-called soft skills.

Supervising the performance of professional duties is clearly defined; early-stage researchers can refer to their supervisor. Researchers, especially early-stage researchers, are informed accordingly. Supervisors should provide the trainees appropriate support, necessary progress and review procedures, as well as feedback mechanisms.