

HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS AND ACTION PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 2015 - 2018



March 2015

(This document has been submitted to the European Commission for review)

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1. Introduction

IBEC

The Institute for Bioengineering of Catalonia (IBEC) is a cutting-edge research centre set up in 2005 by the Departments of Innovation, Universities and Enterprise and Health of the Government of Catalonia, the University of Barcelona (UB) and the Technical University of Catalonia (UPC) and based in Barcelona. It is a non-profit foundation that conducts excellent interdisciplinary research at the frontiers of engineering and life sciences, creating knowledge that helps to enhance quality of life, improve health and create wealth.

HRS4R background

As the principles of the “Charter for European Researchers” and the “Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers” are fully in line with IBEC’s strategic goals and ongoing development plans, in October 2012 IBEC signed a Declaration of Commitment to these principles. IBEC also committed to work towards the implementation of an "HR Strategy for Researchers" to establish a framework and detailed action plan with the aim of creating an attractive, supportive and stimulating environment to carry out research. Two years later, many initiatives aligned to the overall strategy of IBEC reflecting this decision have been developed, even if their link to the Charter and Code was not explicit.

In 2014 a new IBEC Strategic Plan 2014-2017 was designed and implemented. According to this plan, the goal of HR is to run a distinctive specialist training programme to attract international talent. This goal is addressed via the roll-out of the two programmes and subprogrammes, which are implemented through actions assessed by a battery of indicators of execution and results.

1. Human resources programme

- Attracting talent: Attracting and keeping top national and international talent with whom IBEC can successfully maintain its position as a centre of excellence.
- Good HR practices: Creating a professional environment for both researchers and technical and administrative staff that attracts, develops and keeps talent and fosters achievement of the organizational goals.

2. Training development programme

- Range of training: Creating a distinctive range of top-class training at international level. Attracting outstanding candidates both nationally and internationally.
- Mobility for predocs and postdocs: Making IBEC a top-class training centre for experts in bioengineering and nanomedicine by offering its researchers intersector scientific exchange programmes with other centres of excellence.

The IBEC HR Strategy and Action Plan is directly aligned to the programmes of the IBEC Strategic Plan 2014-2017. The IBEC HR Strategy for Researchers document explains the motivation, approach, outcomes and future plans associated with the current IBEC HR strategy. It is aimed mainly at researchers at all career stages as well as all members of IBEC, regardless of their position or contracting situation.

2. Internal Analysis

During the second half of 2014 and the first months of 2015 an internal analysis was performed to identify the internal procedures and practices in need of improvement, by matching them to the principles described in the Charter and Code. Thus, the Charter and Code serve as an instrument for continuous improvement for researchers. IBEC's Directorate designated the HR Unit to lead the design, coordination and implementation of the HR Strategy and its Action Plan.

The opinions of researchers and other IBEC staff related to IBEC's fulfilment of the Charter and Code principles was obtained through the following approaches and methodologies:

Legislation analysis

IBEC's internal analysis started with an examination of the existing legislation that has an impact in the implementation of the principles described in the Charter and Code. This legislation set the framework on which all the internal analysis would be developed.

The analysis was conducted by the Human Resources, Knowledge Exchange, and Research Affairs units. They concluded that IBEC practices are in compliance with the Charter and Code.

Survey

To assess the degree to which the principles of the Charter & Code are applied at IBEC, a survey was designed and sent to the IBEC community, including researchers at all career stages (R1 to R4), technicians and administrative staff.

The survey was launched by the Director in September 2014 in three languages (English, Spanish and Catalan) and reached 250 people.

IBEC's survey was organized into 28 statements, divided into the following four dimensions:

- **Recruitment.** Keywords: content and transparency of job announcements; selection and method for evaluating candidates; judging merit; recognition of qualifications.
- **Working Conditions and Attractive Research Environment.** Keywords: professional development; career advice; mentoring and supervision; mobility.
- **Training.** Keywords: stability and permanence of employment; professional recognition; non-discrimination; research environment; gender balance; career development; decision making.
- **Ethical and Intellectual Property Aspects.** Keywords: intellectual property; confidentiality; research freedom; code of ethics, dissemination and exploitation of results.

Focus groups

After compiling the results of the survey, four internal focus groups were set up (one for each dimension) to discuss the different aspects arising in each dimension, with the aim of elaborating a list of actions and an entire HR Strategy in accordance with IBEC's Strategic Plan.

Researchers at all career stages were invited to join voluntarily, and gender balance was also taken into account. A total of 35 people took part in the four focus groups.

The internal analysis aimed to address those statements that obtained less agreement in the survey. These areas of improvement were the key subjects of discussion in the focus group meetings. A series of actions were proposed in concordance with the principles of the Charter and Code.

The meetings took place in November and December 2014.

On 20/11/2014, the Head of Human Resources Unit attended the Mutual Learning Seminar in Brussels organized by the EC. The aim was to learn from other centers with similar experience, to share experiences and to better implement the HRS4R.

Meetings with the Directorate

After compiling the legislation analysis, the results of the survey and the four focus groups, the Human Resources Unit developed an action plan proposal that was presented to the Directorate (Director and Managing Director) for a first discussion and revision. As a result of the meeting, some actions were withdrawn from the plan due to uncertainty in the budget allocation for implementing the action.

A second meeting took place a week later where both the Director and Managing Director approved the new version of the action plan and discussed which key players would be responsible for developing and preparing each action.

Group leaders and Heads of Unit feedback

All Group Leaders and Heads of Unit were informed about the draft of the action plan, and suggestions for improvements were collected to be included in the final version.

Two further informative sessions are planned in March and April for the Heads of Units and Group Leaders to provide more details about the process of implementing the Action Plan.

3. Action Plan

IBEC's Action Plan consists of 17 Actions with different scopes, from short-term and hands-on actions to important and long-term ones significant to the progress of IBEC.

Recruitment Dimension:

• Action number:	1
• Title:	Develop a recruitment and selection policy and an interviewer guide.
• Principle under which it falls:	12 and 13 (Recruitment)
• Responsible:	Human Resources
• Timescale:	2 nd Trimester 2016

• Indicator:	Documentation and dissemination
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• Action number:	2
• Title:	Final candidates at senior positions involved in a job interview, who were evaluated by a selection panel, will be informed about the strengths and weaknesses of their applications.
• Principle under which it falls:	15 (Transparency)
• Responsible:	Group Leaders; Selection Panel; Human Resources Unit
• Timescale:	3 rd Trimester 2016 (ongoing)
• Indicator:	Strengths and weaknesses template; Number of evaluations

• Action number:	3
• Title:	Train Group Leaders and Senior Researchers in the recruitment and selection process and in interviewing skills. Periodic training will be provided.
• Principle under which it falls:	14 (Selection)
• Responsible:	Human Resources Unit
• Timescale:	3 rd Trimester 2016
• Indicator:	Number of training sessions; Number of participants

• Action number:	4
• Title:	Define and disseminate a new PhD brochure.
• Principle under which it falls:	12 and 13 (Recruitment)
• Responsible:	Human Resources Unit; Communications Unit
• Timescale:	2 nd Trimester 2015
• Indicator:	Document

• Action number:	5
• Title:	Organize a yearly Open day for undergraduate students to attract them to apply for internships and future Master and PhD positions.

• Principle under which it falls:	13 (Recruitment)
• Responsible:	Human Resources Unit; Communications Unit
• Timescale:	2 nd Trimester (yearly, starting in 2015)
• Indicator:	1 Open day per year; Number of participants

Training Dimension:

• Action number:	6
• Title:	Extend training opportunities for postdocs and senior researchers.
• Principle under which it falls:	40 (Supervision); 28 (Career development); 30 (Access to career advice)
• Responsible:	Human Resources Unit
• Timescale:	4 th Trimester 2015 (ongoing)
• Indicator:	Number of training sessions; Number of postdocs and senior researchers trained

• Action number:	7
• Title:	Improve the planning and visibility of the training actions for researchers. Create a yearly training Plan and publish it at IBEC's Intranet and Internet.
• Principle under which it falls:	38 (Continuing professional development)
• Responsible:	Human Resources Unit
• Timescale:	1 st Trimester 2016 (on going)
• Indicator:	Training plan published yearly in March

• Action number:	8
• Title:	Provide training sessions about job placement, preparation of CV, interviewee skills and different options of career development in research and other sectors. Periodic training will be provided.
• Principle under which it falls:	39 (Access to research training and continuous development); 30 (Access to career advice)
• Responsible:	Human Resources Unit; Research Affairs Unit

• Timescale:	3 rd Trimester 2015
• Indicator:	Number of training sessions; Number of participants

• Action number:	9
• Title:	Provide training in Technology Transfer.
• Principle under which it falls:	38 (Continuing professional development)
• Responsible:	Knowledge Exchange Unit; Human Resources Unit
• Timescale:	2 nd Trimester 2016 (on going)
• Indicator:	Number of training sessions; Number of participants

• Action number:	10
• Title:	Mentoring program: young researchers (mentees) are appointed with senior researchers (mentors). Includes training for mentors.
• Principle under which it falls:	28 (Career development)
• Responsible:	Group Leaders; Directorate; Research Affairs Unit; Human Resources Unit
• Timescale:	1 st Trimester 2017 (ongoing)
• Indicator:	Number of mentees; Number of training session

• Action number:	11
• Title:	Revise job descriptions, including identification of core competencies for researchers.
• Principle under which it falls:	28 (Career development)
• Responsible:	Human Resources Unit; Group Leaders; Directorate
• Timescale:	1 st Trimester 2016
• Indicator:	Job descriptions and core competencies for researchers are defined

Working Conditions and Attractive Research Environment Dimension:

• Action number:	12
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• Title:	Create mechanisms for conflict resolution establishing procedures for conflict situations.
• Principle under which it falls:	34 (Complaints/Appeals); 36 (Relationship with supervisors)
• Responsible:	Human Resources Unit; Group Leaders; Directorate
• Timescale:	2 nd Trimester 2017
• Indicator:	Procedure is defined

• Action number:	13
• Title:	Create and implement a new annual performance and development appraisal system for PhD students & postdocs to monitor their progress. Provide training in strategies for setting and agreeing objectives and how to provide feedback.
• Principle under which it falls:	11 (Evaluation/ Appraisal Systems)
• Responsible:	Human Resources Unit; Group Leaders; Finance Unit; Scientific Committee
• Timescale:	4 th Trimester 2017 (ongoing)
• Indicator:	Percentage of performance and development interviews; Training sessions

• Action number:	14
• Title:	Create, implement and disseminate measures of IBEC Equal opportunities and diversity plan (2014-2016). The Plan consists of 17 actions. Create a new Plan as of 2017.
• Principle under which it falls:	27 (Gender balance); 10 (Non-discrimination)
• Responsible:	Gender and Diversity Committee; All support Units
• Timescale:	4 th Trimester 2015 (on going)
• Indicator:	Implementation of the 17 actions and dissemination of the plan

• Action number:	15
• Title:	Improve and update the current induction plan: Initial training, welcome materials and induction presentation.
• Principle under which it falls:	28 (Career Development)

• Responsible:	Human Resources Unit; Core Facilities Unit; Communications Unit
• Timescale:	4 th Trimester 2015 (ongoing)
• Indicator:	Satisfaction survey

Ethical and Intellectual Property Aspects Dimension:

• Action number:	16
• Title:	Creating a code of good scientific practice.
• Principle under which it falls:	2 (Ethical principles); 3 (Professional responsibility); 4 (Professional attitude)
• Responsible:	Group Leaders; Scientific Committee; Human Resources Unit; Communications Unit
• Timescale:	3 rd Trimester 2016
• Indicator:	Document

• Action number:	17
• Title:	Course in ethics in research and on good scientific practice. Dissemination and inclusion in the welcome package for newcomers.
• Principle under which it falls:	38 (Continuing professional development)
• Responsible:	Knowledge Exchange Unit; Human Resources Unit
• Timescale:	4 th Trimester 2016
• Indicator:	Number of training sessions; Number of participants