

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

**Incorporating the European Charter for Researchers
and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers
2019-2021**

The Institute of Plant Genetics, Polish Academy of Sciences (IPG PAS) in Poznan, Poland recognizes the importance of the human resources strategy for researchers (HRS4R) and by implementing the provisions of 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) maintains the standards, fosters international collaboration and contributes to development of an open and attractive European labour market for researchers.

HRS4R IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

- **December 2012:** professor Bogdan Wolko, Director of the IPG PAS signed the declaration of endorsement of Charter & Code. The implementation process has started.
- **April 2013:** the HR Working Group for the Charter & Code has been appointed. The committee comprised 11 people: P. Kachlicki, Z. Zwierzykowski, A. Kosmala, G. Koczyk, T. Pniewski, M. Jędrzycka, B. Naganowska, M. Błoch-Przybylska, M. Kaczmarek, J. Strakowska, A. Stachowiak-Szrejbrowska. The first step of the implementation was to analyze to what extent the existing practices at the IPG PAS are in line with the provisions of the Charter and the Code. Therefore, all the principles and requirements arising from the provisions of the Charter and Code have been analyzed for their implementation at the IPG PAS
- **June 2013:** a questionnaire was elaborated and sent to all researchers and PhD students (June 2013). Next, results of previous steps have been summarized
- **December 2013:** the HR Working Group prepared a report on the Internal Gap Analysis and the Action Plan in order to incorporate the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers
- **January 20, 2014** the IPG PAS **was awarded the prestigious "HR Excellence in Research"** award for the implementation of the provisions of the Charter and Code
- **January 2016:** self-assessment after 2 years (questionnaire and internal gap analysis)
- **April 2016:** a report after self-assessment sent to the European Commission
- **April 2016:** a report and Action Plan 2016-2018 accepted by the European Commission
- **January 2018:** division of the HR Working group into the WG and the Steering Committee; current composition of the HR Working Group: A. Stachowiak-Szrejbrowska, M. Błoch-Przybylska, H. Ćwiek-Kupczyńska, P. Kachlicki, A. Kosmala, M. Kroc, A. Kuczyńska, B. Naganowska, K. Stefanowicz, N. Witaszak. Steering Committee – prof. Bogdan Wolko, Director of the Institute, prof. Małgorzata Jędrzycka, Deputy Director for Research.
- **February 2018:** self-assessment after 2 years (questionnaire and internal gap analysis)
- **March – June 2018:** work of the HR Working Group towards the new Action Plan

- **October – November 2018:** meetings of the Steering Committee with researchers (R1-R2 and R3-R4) to discuss the Action Plan developed by the HR Working Group

- **November 2018:** the HR Steering Committee adopted the Action Plan 2019-2021

The Commission's recommendation on the C&C issued in 2005 has been a reference point for analyzing the state-of-the-art at the Institute as well as shaping Action Plans for the years 2013-2016, 2016-2018 and 2019-2021 as well as stemming from them internal documents and policies, including the OTM-R (open, transparent, merit-based recruitment) policy released in December 2017.

The Charter and Code are key elements in the European Union's policy to make research an attractive career, which is a vital feature of its strategy to stimulate economic and employment growth. The IPG PAS, thus, would like to contribute to the efforts of the European Commission towards a common research area and labour market for researchers by creating a friendly scientific work environment and transparent rules for the recruitment of researchers. The Institute would like to be recognized as an employer that supports its researchers and offers attractive working conditions.

For these reasons the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) at the Institute of Plant Genetics, PAS was prepared based on the principles of the Charter and Code and the results of the questionnaire. The "HR Excellence in Research" award was granted to the IPG PAS in January 2014 and since then the Institute has been continuously improving its standards.

The internal analysis of the present situation was conducted between February and June 2018 in order to define current gaps in the implementation of C&C. This internal analysis has been performed by a multidisciplinary team composed by members of the following units: European and International Research Projects, Academic Staff (R1-R4) and Human Resources. The draft gap analysis and action plan that resulted from this process was presented to and discussed with the Steering Committee composed of Director of the Institute and Deputy Director for Research.

The outline of the strategy for overcoming these gaps was formed and published on the Institute's website together with the Action Plan for the years 2019-2021. Therefore, by means of a continuous improvement process, further implementation of the Charter & Codes is facilitated.

Action plan for the years 2019-2021 is the result of a collaborative work between HR working group and Steering Committee and upon communication with researchers of the Institute and its implementation is monitored by the HR Working Group.

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

I. Ethical and professional aspects

- *Research freedom*
- *Ethical principles*
- *Professional responsibility*
- *Professional attitude*
- *Contractual and legal obligations*
- *Accountability*
- *Good practice in research*
- *Dissemination and exploitation of results*
- *Public engagement*
- *Non-discrimination*
- *Evaluation/ appraisal system*

II. Recruitment and selection

- *Recruitment (Charter)*
- *Recruitment (Code)*
- *Selection*
- *Transparency*
- *Judging merit*
- *Variations in the chronological order of CVs*
- *Recognition of mobility*
- *Recognition of qualifications*
- *Seniority*
- *Post-doctoral appointments*

III. Working conditions and social security

- *Recognition of the profession*
- *Research environment*
- *Working conditions*
- *Stability and permanence of employment*
- *Funding and salaries*
- *Gender Balance*
- *Career Development*
- *Value of mobility*
- *Access to career advice*
- *Intellectual Property Rights*
- *Co-authorship*
- *Teaching*
- *Complaints/ appeals*
- *Participation in decision-making bodies*

IV. Training and development

- *Relation with supervisors*
- *Supervision and managerial duties*
- *Continuing Professional Development*
- *Access to research training and continuous development*
- *Supervision*

A throughout analysis of the existing regulations revealed that 27 out of 40 C&C principles are fully implemented at the IPG PAS and in relation to 13 principles (underlined above) additional actions are required to improve the current status of the C&C implementation, especially in relation to field **I. Ethical and professional aspects** as well as field **III. Working conditions and social security** and **IV. Training and development**. By introducing measures presented in the Action Plan for the years 2019-2021, we want to overcome the aforementioned gaps to improve the implementation of the C&C principles at the IPG PAS.

The proposed actions of the Charter and Code have been assigned to the following principles:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Professional attitude 2. Accountability 3. Non-discrimination 4. Research environment 5. Career Development 6. Access to career advice 7. Teaching 8. Complaints/ appeals 9. Participation in decision-making bodies 10. Relation with supervisors |
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">11. Supervision and managerial duties12. Continuing Professional Development13. Supervision |
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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.

The analysis has revealed a poor implementation of **professional attitude** principle, thus, the IPG PAS undertakes various actions to improve this situation. A new design of the Institute website, that will be more informative and user friendly, with strengthened use of the internet tools for internal communication, will be launched in 2019. To diminish an administrative burden related to project preparation and implementation, the Grant Office has been created (new organizational structure approved by the President of the Polish Academy of Sciences in June 2018). The Grant Office provides support to the academic staff of the Institute when it comes to filing applications for the external funding. It also provides information on external funding opportunities and advises researchers individually. These measures guarantee that the researchers stay well informed about the external funding opportunities at all times and are familiar with the formalities of carrying out research projects as well the requirements set by funding bodies. The Grant Office collaborates closely with researchers when applying for and carrying out their research projects. This way, the administration is informed when research projects are delayed, remodeled, complemented, terminated prematurely or suspended for different reasons. This allows the administration to support to researchers in their projects. Additionally, based on the researchers requests, bilingual financial Frequently Asked Questions will be prepared to avoid basic mistakes in these matters.

Some obstacles have been also shown for a more coherent implementation of **accountability**. To simplify some procedures related to the financial management, new rules of documents circulation are planned as well as simplification of formalities associated with orders and forms. Moreover, academic staff receives information on their responsibility and the required professional attitude. Researchers receive support concerning the fulfilment of their contractual and legal obligations, including externally funded projects.

The **non-discrimination** principles are obeyed in the Institute, however, it has to search for external funds to install equipment assisting disabled people in entering the main building and especially the lecture hall located at the second floor.

II. WORKING CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY

This area of the Charter and Code is the weakest point of the Institute and requires improvements in 6 out of 14 principles. All researchers' comments, requests and expectations in terms of working conditions and social security have been thoroughly analyzed. Many of them were somehow related to the consequences of lower financial support from the state since 2014 due to the fall of the Institute to the B category. The financial condition of the Institute, even after gaining again A category in 2017, influences a lot Director's possibilities and actions that can be undertaken. Nevertheless, the strategy

has been tailored to researchers expectations to the possible extent. Moreover, there are no legal restrictions for implementing most of the recommendations within the context of working conditions and social security. Noteworthy, the new legal act on science in Poland of 20 July 2018 has changed a lot in the research community. Additionally, still many implementation regulations have not been issued by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, thus hampering decision-making process and changes in particular research institutions.

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

Actions related to **research environment, career development** or **access to career advice** are to a great extent linked to the financial capacity of the Institute as a public finance institution. Taking into consideration available funds, we do our best to ensure a stimulating research environment, adequate training for researchers, appropriate equipment, facilities and opportunities. Other issues related to **teaching, complaints/appeals** or **participation in decision-making** bodies require internal actions to be undertaken in order to facilitate implementation of these C&C principles.

Due to the pilot ERA Chair BIO-TALENT project (July 2014 - June 2019), researchers have possibilities to participate in lectures, seminars and workshops, both science-related and soft-skills related. To improve **research environment** we are establishing common genetic engineering facility. Additionally, the internal gap analysis has shown the need of revision of the motivation system for successful research performance. It will be introduced based on the financial capacity.

As the IPG PAS is a small research institute, there is no possibility to have career advice office. 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. Therefore, **access to career advice** principle is always problematic, so we are planning to start cooperation with the Career Advice Office at the University of Life Sciences in Poznan.

Career development is basically shaped by national legal acts. As there is a growing number of foreigners at the Institute and post-docs employed within projects granted, a set of binding legal acts and internal orders will be prepared to provide the newcomers with the adequate information. With the new organizational structure of the Institute, International Doctoral Studies have been created and a Scientific Secretary has been employed. Scientific secretary deals with all the matters related to the International Doctoral Studies and supports Deputy Director for Research in the activities. All PhD candidates prepare their Personal Development Plans that are evaluated on a regular basis. Additionally, young researchers (R1-R2) have the possibility to have mentors who will proactively support them in the career development.

The establishment of the International Doctoral Studies enables academic staff of the Institute **teaching**. Institutes of the Polish Academy of Science are research institutions, but it was always possible for researchers to be employed as an academic teacher outside working time at the Institute after obtaining Director's consent (in accordance with national regulations). Starting 1 October 2018, academic staff of the Institute is also involved in teaching here what is appreciated by the Director.

Complaints and appeals of researchers are addressed in compliance with national rules and regulations. There is a specific committee and an ombudsman dealing with complaints/appeals of researchers. The Institute has nominated an ombudsman, who serves as a confidant for researchers in matters related to suspected academic misconduct or conflicts. There is a specific committee dealing with complaints/appeals of researchers. However, there's a need to keep the academic staff informed about such a body and to provide for clear procedures to deal with complaints/appeals of researchers, including anti-mobbing one.

The Director recognizes the importance of **participation of young researchers** in decision-making **bodies** of the institute, so that meets Young Scientists Council on a regular basis and upon request. Starting on October 2018 representatives of PhD candidates have also the right to participate in the meetings of the Scientific Board of the Institute.

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. Some actions have already been undertaken, but the establishment of International Doctoral Studies introduces a systemic approach regulating **supervision, relations with supervisors or supervision and managerial duties**. Emphasis is put on senior researchers performing multi-faceted roles as supervisors, mentors, career advisors, leaders, project coordinators, managers or science communicators. To enable researchers to perform their multi-faceted role 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 researches at managerial positions for gaining additional knowledge and transferable skills.

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.

This HRS4R strategy serves now as the basis of the three-year plan spanning the years 2019 – 2021.

December 2018