'Strengthened' Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)

Action Plan

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1. HR STRATEGY - ACTION PLAN

Name Organization under review: CIC nanoGUNE

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Web link to the published version of the organization's HR Strategy and Action Plan: www.nanogune.eu

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a. Organizational Information

Advances in nanoscience and nanotechnology are nowadays at the heart of the technological development of our society. Our current ability to observe and control matter at the atomic and molecular scale (the nanoscale) will allow, in the next few decades, the design of new objects and the development of more efficient and less expensive manufacturing processes in a great variety of industry sectors.

At nanoGUNE, it is our mission to carry out world-class nanoscience research, thus contributing to the creation of the necessary conditions for the society to benefit from a wide range of nanotechnologies: confronting new scientific challenges through cooperation with other research and technological agents in the Basque Country and worldwide, building bridges that fill the gap between fundamental science and technology, as well as promoting high-level training and outreach activities.

With the objective of placing the Basque Country at the forefront of nanoscience research, we have been successful in putting together a state-of-the-art infrastructure and incorporating highly-qualified researchers that have been making outstanding contributions in various fields of nanoscience and nanotechnology. We have succeded in transferring our knowledge into the market through the creation of new nanotechnology-based companies and also working directly with the existing industry.

Being a small center in a small country, we will keep developing close scientific partnerships with the best research laboratories around the world, with the expectation that we will always find the niche for us to offer something different. This is the big challenge of the small.

Structure and Governance

NanoGUNE was legally set up as a private non-profit making association in 28 February 2006. A state-of-the-art building was inaugurated in January 2009. The Association is currently formed by the following partners:

- DIPC: Donostia Interntional Physics Center

- TECNALIA

- IK4

- UPV/EHU: University of the Basque Country

- GFA: Gipuzkoako Foru Aldundia

- CAF

- PETRONOR

- IKOR

Organizational Chart

The global management and organization of nanoGUNE are carried out along the lines displayed in the chart below, which shows the key roles of the center.

Research fields

NanoGUNE focuses its research activities on the following three major strategic areas:

- Spin-Dependent Phenomena and Magnetism.

- Nanoscale Biomaterials.

- Nanoscale Optics.

The research program is implemented in the framework of 10 research groups.

STAFF & PhD STUDENTS	FTE
Total researchers = staff, fellows, bursary holders, and PhD students either full-time or part-time involved in research	68.80
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)	29.59
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organization is the host organization)	53.45
Of whom are women	31.96
Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor	18.90
Of whom are stage R2 = in most organizations corresponding with a postdoctoral level	22.40
Of whom are stage R1 = in most organizations corresponding with a doctoral level	27.50
Total number of students (if relevant)	-
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching, and research staff)	93.14
RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)	€
Total annual organizational budget	6,453,964
Annual organizational direct government funding (designated for research)	3,298,240
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organizations – including EU funding)	2,249,634
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	476,546
ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE	

NannoGUNE is a Basque research center created with the mission of carrying out world-class nanoscience research for the competitive growth of the Basque Country. The organization is composed of 96 employees coming from 25 countries worldwide. The aim is to place the Basque Country at the forefront of nanoscience research, helping to create the necessary conditions for the society to benefit from a wide range of nanotechnologies, increasing the business competitiveness and the economic growth of the Basque Country.

NanoGUNE decides to initiate the process of implementation of the HRS4R policies in order to orient the organization in the right direction in the field of human resources. To this end, a process is initiated whereby all nanoGUNE employees are consulted, thus being able to determine individual perceptions on issues related to the 40 principles contained in the four blocks Working Conditions and Social Security, Training, Recruitment, and Ethical and Professional Aspects.

After collecting the answers to a questionnaire, and with a quantitative response, we proceed to assess the qualitative aspect of the impressions of nanoGUNE's employees, with all the groups and positions represented (PhD students, Post-docs, Research Fellows, Senior Scientists, and Staff).

In the framework of this process, nanoGUNE has identified various strengths and weaknesses, which here we identify in order to develop pertinent actions to improve on the most relevant issues. We will focus the analysis on the four blocks presented.

In general terms, it is observed that all the blocks were evaluated positively. The lowest result is observed in relation to Working Conditions and Social Security. Analyzing the principles one by one, we observe that the highest and the lowest scores are in this block. The Research Environment is perceived as the greatest strength of the center.

We have observed that the research environment provides adequate equipment and resources, opportunities for collaboration in international environments, as well as compliance with regulations related to health and risk prevention. It is also a general perception that nanoGUNE employees value these issues positively.

The principle of co-authorship is also seen as a strength of the Center; in other words, the Center guarantees the visibility of the contributions of researchers, especially in the case of those who are at the beginning of their career, through co-authorships in publications, patents, or others.

The lowest scores are also in this section, specifically in the following principles: Participation in decision making bodies, Career Development, Access to Career Advice and Stability, and Permanence of Employment. As for the Permanence of Employment, we would like to note that a significant number of nanoGUNE employees are PhD students who are given the opportunity to do first-rate research but whose employment is naturally limited to the accomplishment and completion of a PhD degree.

Regarding the other low scores, we note that formal procedures for career development are only established for PhD students. Concerning the Participation in Decision Making Bodies, researchers at nanoGUNE do not feel consulted or properly represented.

Strengths are also identified in other blocks, such as Research Freedom, Ethical Principles, and Professional Responsibility. The results obtained in these principles mean that there is freedom for research development, under ethical principles and practices, including the contractual obligations of confidentiality and the recognition of budgetary limitations. The perception is also that researchers focus their work on relevant social issues and do not plagiarize.

Other principles such as Accountability, Continuing Professional Development, Public Engagement, Relation with Supervisors, Value of Mobility, Supervision, Professional Attitude, and all those related to recruitment also exhibit a high and positive perception.

On the other hand, nanoGUNE employees do not have a clear perception processes related to complaints and appeals, not because they disagree with the current system but because no formal procedure has been established. Other weak points to be improved are related to (i) salaries (while the post-doc salary is perceived to be adequate, the remuneration of PhD students is perceived to be low) and (ii) the principle of Non Discrimination. Although the Center clearly discourages all kinds of discrimination, it is a fact that all senior scientists are men.

After this analysis, an action plan will be developed in order to improve on those issues that were identified as weaknesses.

c. Actions

The implementation of this Action Plan aims to adequate internal workflows with that of the Charter and Code (C&C). The plan will be carried out over the next 24 months. Each action will be assigned to specific group in order to be executed properly.

Action	Extended Description	Addressed principles (Gap Analysis)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
A1. Creation of a Gender Equality Committee	A Gender Equality Committee is being launched. The objectives, functions, and responsibilities are being defined.	10	2S2018	Gender Equality Committee	Career development Representation Welfare
A2. Supervision by Senior Scientists	Reinforcement of the advisory role of senior scientists towards PhD students and post-docs for their career development as well as the role of senior scientists towards having their researchers well informed about decisions that might impact their research activity.	21, 25, 26, 30, 35	1Q2019	Research Director	Reinforced senior scientists / 12
A3. Soft-skills training	Broadening to all research personnel the access to soft-skills training.	28	2019 – 2020	Outreach Manager	N. trainings per year / 3
A4. Grievance and Complaint handling	Implementation of a protocol for the handling of Grievance and Complaints in the framework of the 2019 Health and Safety Plan.	34	1Q2019	Finance Director	Protocol in place / 1

Establishing an open recruitment policy is a fundamental issue for the HRS4R strategy. The objective is to establish the basis of an open, transparent and merit-based recruitment policy that also excludes any type of discrimination.

In this part, we will give a global and complete view of this policy as well as the principles related to it. All the phases and actions of the selection process identified in the OTM-R expert report are analyzed:

1- Advertising and application phase

2- Evaluation and selection phase

3- Appointment phase

1. Advertising and application phase

As a first step, all vacancies will be posted on the website (www.nanogune.eu/careers) by following the criteria of an open and transparent recruiting policy. In addition to this, the existing offers will also be published at other job-search portals, i.e. www.infojobs.net, and at social networks such as Linkedin or Twitter. Vacancies will also be published at EURAXESS, with the aim of opening the participation in our selection processes to international candidates.

The content of the offers will always include questions such as:

- Description of the organization.

- Description of the vacant position, the amount of vacancies, and related tasks.

- Working conditions related to the job offer as well as the desirable starting date.

- Minimum and desirable requirements for the candidates.

- Professional development opportunities.

Job offers will be presented in English, in order to ensure the potential participation of international candidates. These conditions are applicable to everyone registered and participating in the selection process.

The website is also prepared to invite potential candidates to apply even if the absence of vacancies, with the aim of creating an accessible pool of candidates.

2. Evaluation and selection phase

Various employees might take part in the selection process, depending on the open position. These employees will always be aware of the principles of the OTM-R policy and will always apply this policy in the whole recruitment process.

The first filter is done in view of the minimum and desirable requirements published in the offer. Candidates not fulfilling these requirements will be excluded and will be informed by email. In a second stage, a few selected candidates will be called for an interview. This interview could be face-to-face or remote, depending on the localization or situation of the candidate. This first conversation will cover the background and experience of the candidate, as well as their future prospection. Other issues as mobility and/or seniority will be considered as well.

In order to evaluate the experience of the candidate, interviewers might take into account the following issues, depending on the position to be covered:

- Acquisition of funding

- Generation of societal impact

- International experience

- Knowledge transfer and exchange

- Management of research and innovation

- Organizational skills/experience

- Outreach and/or public-awareness activities

- Research performance

- Supervision and mentoring

- Teaching

- Teamwork

Once these first interviews are finished, interviewers will decide which candidates will pass to the next stage, on the basis of the criteria listed above. For this decision, personal private information will not be taken into account. The excluded candidates will be notified and, upon request, would be given feedback about their strengths and weaknesses.

A second interview might be conducted, if necessary, with the selected candidates, in order to go in depth in those aspects that were not left clear and that could show differences between the candidates.

In order to take an objective decision, interviewers will fill a template comparing and contrasting the professional strengths and weaknesses of the candidates. For this decision, personal private information will not be taken into account Thus, we can ensure that the recruitment process is merit based.

3. Appointment phase

After analyzing the information collected in the templates, a candidate will be chosen for the position. Then, an offer will be made and once the candidate accepts the offer the remaining candidates will be informed about the result of the selection process.

d. Organization, Implementation, and Follow-Up Action Plan

The implementation of this Action Plan aims to adequate internal workflows with that of the Charter and Code. The plan will be carried out over the next 2 years. In order to properly prioritize, four actions will be implement with the aim of improving the principles scored under 6.

The implementation of the C&C principles are understood as a dynamic and constant process; hence, other principles scored over 6 will be addressed as far as the most urgent ones are improved. Some principles have been regrouped in the framework of one single action in the Action Plan.

This Action Plan covers the period 2018-2020 and includes the actions planned for the final list of C&C principles defined by the process previously described.

NanoGUNE's HR Strategy and action plan will be published at the institutional website.

The development and implementation of the Action Plan will be monitored internally. A self-assessment will be conducted every two years and will result on a progress report updating the Action Plan for the subsequent period. An external progress assessment will be carried out by an organization or professional designed and/or authorized by the European Commission. The monitoring procedure includes meetings of the C&C Team every 2 months, in order to evaluate the progress of the design and implementation of each action.

In June 2020, an internal audit will be held in order to verify the total implementation of each action. Also, the same questionnaire will be launch and a Focus Group will be organized.

e. Conclusions

This process enables organizations to identify HR aspects to be improve, but also those that are already ongoing but not perceived by the organization.

Four high-impact actions have been identified for their implementation, establishing in particular a new figure in the organization: the Gender Equality Committee. Other actions are related to the reinforcement of the role of senior

scientists as key figures to help PhD students and post-docs in the development of their careers, as well as the role of senior scientists towards having their researchers well informed about decisions that might impact their research activity.

Other formal procedures as a Griveance and Complaint Protocol will be design and implemented, as well as a wider accessibility to the training of soft skills, as requested by our researchers.

We enjoy a very good working environment already; but we are committed, nonetheless, to a continuous improvement. Once the principles with the lowest scores (under 6) are improved, other principles will be addressed as well.

We truly believe this will be a very practical and useful guide in order to achieve the satisfaction of our employees and to guarantee our attractiveness for other researchers worldwide.