

Internal Analysis and Action Plan for the implementation of the HRS4R

Introduction

IMDEA Materials (Madrid Institute for Advanced Studies of Materials) is a non-profit, independent research institute, promoted by the Regional Government de Madrid (Spain) to carry out research in Materials Science and Engineering. IMDEA Materials Institute is committed to excellence in research by attracting talent from all over the world and to foster technology transfer to the industrial sector in a truly international environment.

As part of its commitment to bring the best researching talent to Madrid, IMDEA Materials Institute endorsed in 2007 the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers that set out the rules and obligations of researchers, their employers and funders, as well as transparent and fair recruitment procedures. Then in 2014 the Institute management decided to start the implementation of the European Commission's Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) to promote the constant improvement of its HR policies and practices.

Approach

The initiative was presented by the Institute's director during one of the staff researcher's meetings. The importance of the initiative and the implications for the Institute were discussed and everybody was encouraged to participate and to involve their teams in the implementation of the HRS4R. The HR manager and the International Project Office manager were appointed as promoters of the HRS4R implementation.

The approach used to do the Internal Analysis and establishing an Action Plan of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers included:

- Establishing a working group
- Regular meetings with working group to perform the GAP analysis

- Presentation of the initiative to all Institute's staff
- Anonymous Staff Opinion Survey based on C&C
- Analysis of survey, definition of priorities and roadmap for action plan

The Institute currently has 16 staff researchers, 3 visiting researchers, 21 post-doctoral researchers and 40 doctoral students from 16 different nationalities that are supported by 6 laboratory technicians and management and administrative staff. The working group included members from the Institute's key players: 2 staff researchers, 2 post-doctoral researchers, 2 doctoral students, 1 laboratory technician, the HR manager and the International Project Office manager. Gender and multiculturalism was also taken into consideration to form the group so that it would reflect the Institute's diversity.

One of the working group's objectives was to assess the current policies and practices against the Charter & Code. On the first stage (GAP analysis) the group considered the principles in their more general sense, considering the existing institutional rules and practices that were in accordance with each of the principles and the administrative and the legislative limitations that the Institute faces to implement some of them.

Once the working group had reviewed all the principles and had a clearer understanding of what the HRS4R implied the initiative was presented to the whole Institute, again everybody was encouraged to participate via the Staff Opinion Survey and informal meetings with the members of the working group.

After the Staff Opinion Survey (based on C&C), those principles that were less well valued were discussed more in-depth by the working group. The group reflected on what they meant for the Institute so that it could then be summed up into specific actions to be translated into the action plan.

The survey rated both the perception of the Institute's fulfilment of the Charter & Code principles and the priority given to those rules and principles.

The Action Plan was presented to all staff in a general meeting.

Main Results

The principles were grouped into four categories: Ethical and professional aspects, Recruitment, Working conditions and Training and development.

During the GAP analysis the relevant legislation was gathered and the existing institutional practices and rules were compared against each of the principles. The working group detected that while most of the principles were tackled in the Institute's policies an effort must be made to communicate those policies.

The Institute's commitment to implement and continually improve its HR policies through the HRS4R and the implications for all was presented in a general meeting where all staff was invited to participate.

The main findings of the working group were that although most of the principles were embedded in the everyday practices of the Institute, the availability of the information could be improved. Also the need for more systematic career development plans for staff researchers was identified.

The results of the survey were aligned with the conclusions reached by the working group. The less well valued principles were: Career development (3,25/5) and Complaints and appeals (2,91/5) with all the other principles scoring well above 3,5 that we had set as our red line. The most voted priorities were: Career development, Complaints and appeals and Working conditions. This last issue was not addressed in the current Action Plan as many aspects are limited by current legislation.

Next steps

The Action Plan main objective is to tackle the priorities detected in the working group and the survey consultation.

- Career development:
 - o New definition of research career structure
 - o Regular evaluation (annual against the criteria defined in the career structure and the annual development plan)

- Establish a career advice and development plan for researchers at all stages of their career.
- More networking with other IMDEAs
- Complains and appeals:
 - Definition of new complaints policy to guarantee confidential and informal assistance to all staff
 - Endorsement of policy by management
 - Communication of new complaints policy
- Communication:
 - Intranet
 - Regular meetings specific to the Institute different categories

Project control:

- Bi-annual review to secure action plan is accomplished according to Schedule
- Full review. Internal assessment to control all principles are covered.
- Mitigation plan: In case any deviation is identified a specific plan will be developed before the 2 years review

The planning of the actions was scheduled as follows:

