HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS INCORPORATING THE CHARTER AND THE CODE

INTERNAL ANALYSIS TOOLKIT

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1. INTRODUCTION

The research institutions and funding organisations participating in the second cohort of the project to test the five step approach for the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) are currently proceeding or are planning to proceed with the internal analysis. The internal analysis is the first step of the implementation of the HRS4R.

This document follows the *ad hoc* meeting "Modernising Human Resources management in public research in Europe" held in Brussels on 2nd of February, 2011, and aims at supporting the members of the group in carrying out the internal analysis, building on the experience of peers who have already completed this step.

This document is intended to be a toolkit where each one will find inspiration, practices, sources of information to prepare the internal analysis. The aim is to present the methodology used by research institutions and funding bodies that have already completed the process and share these best practices. This document also provides an overview of tools that might be useful. It illustrates key techniques that you can deploy in the internal analysis.

All the elements of this toolkit can be used, combined or adapted according to your needs and particular context. It is living document that will evolve with time by integrating new approaches and practices, maybe yours...

2. THE INTERNAL ANALYSIS[1]

Step 1 - The research institution or funding organisation carries out an internal analysis. A standard template grouping all the 40 Charter & Code principles in 4 areas ('Ethical and professional aspects', 'Recruitment', 'Working conditions & social security' and 'Training') is available, but its use it not mandatory.

The internal analysis is an assessment of rules and practices in place vis-a-vis the Charter & Code principles. In order to be transparent, the analysis must involve all key players concerned (i.e. Rector, HR managers, researchers, etc.).

Where other HR initiatives of a similar nature are already in place, the "HR Strategy for Researchers" could be easily embedded in them. Thus, tools other than the suggested standard template for the

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[1] http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/strategy4Researcher

internal analysis may be used, provided that the same type of information is gathered (relevant legislation, current practices, actions required by when and by whom etc).

The use of indicator systems and staff opinion surveys is recommended, as they are important supporting tools to implement the HR strategy according to institutional and national rules and practices.

3. METHODOLOGY – CASE STUDIES

This section presents the approach towards the internal analysis and methodology employed by HRS4R acknowledged institutions. The examples illustrated below are based on the HR Strategy documents that the acknowledged institutions have published on their website. For further information, we refer to the list of acknowledged institutions on the EURAXESS Portal which provides links to the relevant websites.

The examples listed below refer to different types of institutions, as follows:

- Universities:
    - University of Liège (Belgium);
    - Medical University of Graz (Austria);
    - Bern University of Applied Sciences (Switzerland);
    - University of Camerino (Italy); and,
    - University of Palermo (Italy).
- Research institutes (small- and large-size institutes):
    - IMDEA Water (Spain);
    - Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (France).
- Research funder:
    - Research Foundation – Flanders (Belgium).

We would like to draw your attention to the standard template for the internal analysis: http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/hrs4r/templateHRstrategy.rtf

This template will be useful for developing the relevant tools for the internal analysis, including survey questionnaires, workshop/focus group guides, etc.

3.1. EXAMPLE 1 – UNIVERSITY OF LIEGE, BELGIUM

> The institution at a glance[2]

The University of Liege (ULg) is a public university institution of the French Walloon-Brussels community.

With a student body numbering 20,000 and a staff of 4300, 2800 of whom are teachers or researchers, the University of Liège offers enriching and diversified courses of study (38 bachelor's, 193 master's, 68 advanced master's programmes and 50 doctoral programmes). The University is committed to the development of student-centred learning, is intensely involved in international research programmes (especially the European Union's FP6 and FP7 projects) and is in contact with more than 600 institutions throughout the world (250 in Europe). The University of Liège is fully integrated into the greater European education (Bologna) and research (Lisbon) sphere, and more globally, into the main international scientific networks.

> The HRS4R background

In Belgium, the Board of Rectors of the Universities of the French-Speaking Community (CReF) has decided to make the 'Human Resources Strategy for Researchers incorporating the Charter and Code' a priority and to give the Fund for Scientific Research[3] (FRS-FNRS) the task of overseeing the progress of different institutions participating in the process.

In 2005, the University of Liège (via the CReF) decided to sign up to the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. Many initiatives reflecting this decision have since been developed at ULg, even if their link to the Charter & Code is not explicit. The Euraxess Services Centre at the University of Liège has been created in 2005 specifically to welcome and to provide information for incoming and outgoing researchers and to help them complete the administrative formalities for their stay.

> The approach and methodology applied

Main activities
1. Workshops
2. Internal analysis and Human Resources Strategy report

An informal working group was set up in March 2010 at the ULg to formulate a proposal for an HR Strategy for the development of coordinated and structured follow-up initiatives, for the application of the Charter & Code by ULg, and their assessment[4].

The working group consisted of the Vice-Rector responsible for Quality Assessment, the Director of Research at HEC-ULg[5], three researchers, and the Executive Director of Research & Development.

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[2] http://www.ulg.ac.be

[3] The Fund for Scientific Research (FRS-FNRS) is a funding agency for basic or 'fundamental' research, and its mission is to support and develop non-orientated scientific research in the universities of the French-speaking Community of Belgium (FCB).

[4] http://www.ulg.ac.be/upload/docs/application/pdf/2011-01/hsr4r_ulg_en.pdf

All academic disciplines were represented. The group met five times between March and September.

Its aims were:

- to analyse the current status of the application of the Charter & Code at ULg, based on its forty principles;
- to elaborate a proposal for a Human Resources Strategy for presentation to the ULg Board of Directors and subsequently to the European Commission with a request for acknowledgment in December 2010.

Established Working Procedure:

- to examine in detail the forty principles of the Charter and the Code;
- to define the points for analysis;
- to carry out an appraisal, identifying available resources and assessing strengths and weaknesses;
- to identify the types of initiatives to be undertaken and their level of priority;
- to oversee interactions with other concerned or competent parties: institutional working groups, official bodies, ULg administration, external working groups (e.g. Women and Science), projects already underway and their sustainability (e.g. MIRVAL), other Euraxess working groups (e.g. Jobs);
- to write a strategy document HRS4R to be presented to the Rectoral Board;
- and finally to ask the Board of Directors of the University to endorse this document, to make it available to everyone by publishing it on the ULg website and to create a permanent ad hoc assessment group for HR Strategy.

The internal analysis has been based on the standard template. The template has been adapted to specific needs of the university and the topics have been regrouped according to three main levels of actions: Institutional, Management and Individual levels. Group of actions have been initiated following these levels of actions.

The full report on the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers of the ULg can be found here:

http://www.ulg.ac.be/upload/docs/application/pdf/2011-01/hsr4r_ulg_en.pdf

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[5] In 2005, HEC-Liege merged with the Management and Economics departments of the University of Liege to create "HEC-ULg Management School"

3.2.   EXAMPLE 2 – MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF GRAZ, AUSTRIA

> The institution at a glance

The University of Graz was founded in 1585 as one of the first universities in Central Europe. Since 1863, when the Medical Faculty was built up, the University contributes to the flourishing of the "academic-city" Graz. In 2004, the Medical University was outsourced from the Karl-Franzens-University and became an independent university that comprises now 4 research centers, 20 university clinics and 16 institutes, 1,800 employees and about 500 people working in so-called third-party funded projects. About 6,000 students are registered at the Medical University of Graz and the University produces about 400 graduates every years[6].

> The HRS4R background

Human resources management was introduced as a topic only in 2007 and has been continually promoted since then. To undergo an internationally comparable analysis was a challenging and brave step; one that not only reveals strengths, but also fields of action due to the short period of the university's existence. The Medical University of Graz wanted to face up to these points in a transparent way in order to document high-quality and innovative professionalism and development in all its fields of activity.

> The approach and methodology applied

Main activities
1. Workshops with key informants to set up the action plan
2. Questionnaire to key informants to rate the current state of the Medical University of Graz
3. Final Internal analysis and action plan

During two workshops of a full day each, an internal analysis was carried out with regard to the 40 criteria taken from the Charter and the Code.

The selected method incorporated the key players concerned at the Medical University of Graz. It was conducted according to the principles of the so-called key informant approach. A total of 17 people took part in the two workshops, among them five non-academics and 12 academics. The following profiles have participated in the workshops:

- Rectorate
- Professors
- Associate Professors
- Assistant Professors
- Senior Scientists
- Researchers
- Third party-funded projects members

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[6] http://www.medunigraz.at/11968
http://www.meduni-graz.at/images/content/file/studium/international/Medical%20University%20of%20Graz_2007_Mrz_2008.pdf

- Employee from the research management and documentation
- Employee from the legal department
- HR

At the beginning, the content and purpose of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers were presented in detail and unresolved questions were answered.

This was followed by an analysis, based on the standard template for the internal analysis, of the four dimensions of the Charter: **I** Ethical and professional aspects, **II** Recruitment, **III** Working conditions and **IV** Training. For each criterion, the relevant laws/guidelines etc. were investigated and the group discussed existing rules, measures and applications. Subsequently, the group defined the future demand and concrete ideas for implementation together with the project managers and drew up a timetable.

Then they carried out an anonymous rating in the form of a questionnaire on how the current state of the Medical University of Graz could be evaluated. The rating was done on a scale from 0 to 100%. 100% represented the maximum positive result that could be achieved (i.e. there is no further potential for improvement). 0% represented the worst imaginable result, i.e. no measures have been taken yet or there has not been any recognisable result or it has not been useful. 0% ratings can occur since the criteria mentioned above might not apply to the university under certain circumstances, nor are planned for the future (e.g. explicit postdoctoral appointments).

The full report of the internal analysis and corresponding plan of action is available on:

http://www.medunigraz.at/images/content/file/forschung/allgemein/Report_CC_englisch.pdf

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3.3. EXAMPLE 3– BERN UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES, SWITZERLAND

> ➤ The institution at a glance

The Bern University of Applied Sciences (BUAS) is situated in the canton of Bern which hosts the Swiss capital of the same name. The BUAS comprises six departments in various locations in and near Bern. Over 5500 students are enrolled in 28 bachelor degree programmes, 19 master degree programmes and a variety of executive master, diploma and certificate of advanced studies programmes as well as seminars.

In applied research and development, Bern University of Applied Sciences (BUAS) achieves valuable research results in the areas of technology, the arts, business and the social sciences, and channels these into innovations with market or social relevance. They are applicable equally to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), large corporations, public institutions and authorities, and cultural organisations[7].

> ➤ The HRS4R background

The Bern University of Applied Sciences fosters an active internationalisation policy and cooperates with a number of partner institutions in terms of teaching exchanges, research and service delivery. As a matter of course BUAS participated in 2008 in the so called "Sciex Pilot Group". Sciex is an exchange programme for PhD candidates between Switzerland and the EU-12 Member States. Since C&C is an integrated part of this exchange programme the University Executive Board decided in 2009 to fully adhere to and implement the C&C into their institutional policy.

> ➤ The approach and methodology applied

Main activities
1. Gap analysis by different BUAS Committees and HR and R&D representatives.
2. Practice-oriented Strategy Plan with an emphasis on three key issues for development

Different key players participated in the institutional analysis. The C&C were discussed in the BUAS Committee for International Relations and presented at the Conference of the BUAS Research Units 2009. For the gap analysis, the questionnaire was filled out by the HR responsible of the school, the Central Research Committee's Office, different heads of research groups and by the president of the research committee. The results of the analysis provided important indications as to how the working conditions and the terms of employment of the researchers can be improved. In consultation with the Research Committee and the BUAS Committee for International Relations a practice-oriented strategy plan with a clear emphasis on three recent priorities for development (Communication / Training (project management skills) / Job Profile Researcher) has been elaborated. This plan is now part of an ongoing process of quality control and development in BUAS R&D. The three defined goals integrate different sub targets of the C&C. They are of substantial character and have a high potential impact on the working conditions for researchers in general. The internal analysis also pointed to a variety of further fields of action to be addressed in a mid- or long-term perspective. From those multiple perspectives the central points of action were easily inferred. They are concrete and relevant and will be implemented within the next year.

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[7] http://www.bfh.ch/en/startseite.html

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3.4.   EXAMPLE 4 – UNIVERSITY OF CAMERINO, ITALY

> The institution at a glance[8]

More than 10.000 students attend the University of Camerino (UNICAM) distributed among five Faculties (Architecture, Pharmacy, Jurisprudence, Veterinary Medicine, Science and Technology), 13 departments and five campuses (Camerino, Ascoli Piceno, Matelica, Recanati, San Benedetto del Tronto). The university has 613 employees including 175 full and associate professors, 144 assistant professors, 20 post-doctorates, 57 graduate students with fellowship, 170 doctoral candidates and 47 administrative and technical personnel.

> The HRS4R background

The University of Camerino was member of a network of Italian universities that are promoters of the Charter and the Code's principles. Subsequently, the University of Camerino joined the pilot project HRS4R.

> The approach and methodology applied

Main activities
1. Survey
2. Internal analysis and Human Resources Strategy report

The University of Camerino proceeded with the internal analysis by launching a survey to:

- Professors (full, associate, permanent assistant, fixed term assistant);
- Post-Doctorates, Graduate researchers with a fellowship, Doctoral candidates;
- Technicians and administrative personnel.

The analysis was based on four indicators[9] to assess the degree of application of the Charter and the Code's principles:

- Dimension 1 - Open recruitment and portability of grants;
- Dimension 2 - Meeting the social security and supplementary pension needs of mobile researchers;
- Dimension 3 - Attractive employment and working conditions ;
- Dimension 4 - Enhancing training, skills and experience of European researchers.

The University of Camerino proposed 29 statements divided into these four dimensions. The possible answers were: 1= disagree; 2 = moderately disagree; 3 = moderately agree; 4 = agree. Furthermore it was asked to indicate the three most important statements for each dimension[10].

The results of the survey were then analysed to produce the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers at Camerino University.

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[8] http://www.unicam.it/international/welcome/university_eng.asp

[9] These coincide with the four axes of the European Partnership for Researchers (Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament of 23 May 2008 "Better careers and more mobility: a European partnership for researchers" COM(2008) 317 final)

[10] The full version of the questionnaire is available on: http://www.unicam.it/sgq/hrs/Quest_mod.pdf

The full report on the internal analysis and the actions for implementing the Human Resources Strategy is available on: http://www.unicam.it/sgq/hrs/priority_ENG_7aprile.htm

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EXAMPLE 5 – UNIVERSITY OF PALERMO, ITALY

> ≥ The institution at a glance[11]

The University of Palermo is a multidisciplinary public institution having as institutional aims higher education and research. It also includes a large general hospital.

The staff is composed of:

- 1978 professors and researchers with a permanent position;
- 507 fixed-term researchers;
- 1298 PhD candidates;
- over 2000 people in the technical and administrative staff.

The composition is extremely varied and not all the staff, as it is evident, is concerned by research issues.

> ≥ The HRS4R background

In 2008, the University of Palermo joined a network of Italian universities that are promoters of the Charter and Code's principles. Subsequently, in 2009, the University of Palermo joined the European Commission's 'Human Resources Strategy Group'[12].

> ≥ The approach and methodology applied

Main activities
1. Survey
2. Internal analysis and Human Resources Strategy report

The path leading to the identification of measures for the implementation of the principles of the Charter and Code at the University of Palermo started with an internal analysis to identify the main weaknesses compared to the statements of the European Charter and Code. In this context, the University of Palermo decided to carry out a survey among all the education, research and technical staff involved in research issues, made available by the University of Camerino. The survey was made up of 29 questions covering four dimensions. The staff interviewed was composed of teaching and research units both with a permanent position and with a temporary position as well as administrative units. Each participant was required to express his/her own level of agreement with each of the statements, as well as a judgment about the priority of the same statement[13].

The analysis of the survey's results has given the Charter and Code group at the University of Palermo a useful tool to plan a set of actions. Such actions are classified as short/medium and long term actions. Some short term actions specifically concern young researchers[14].

The full report of the internal analysis and the actions to implement the University's Human Resources Strategy for Researchers is available on:

[11] http://portale.unipa.it/export/sites/www/home/ricerca/cartaeuropearicercatori/en/Final_Report_merged_en.pdf
[12] Idem
[13] Idem
[14] http://portale.unipa.it/home/ricerca/cartaeuropearicercatori/?__setlocale=en

http://portale.unipa.it/export/sites/www/home/ricerca/cartaeuropearicercatori/en/Final_Report_merged_en.pdf

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3.5. EXAMPLE 6 – INSTITUT NATIONAL DE LA RECHERCHE AGRONOMIQUE, FRANCE

> The institution at a glance[15]

Founded in 1946, the National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA) is a mission-oriented public research institution under the joint authority of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research and the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries. The research conducted at INRA concerns agriculture, food, nutrition and food safety, environment and land management, with particular emphasis on sustainable development.

The Institute is composed of 1,839 researchers, 2,572 engineers, 4,121 technicians and administrative staff and 1,891 PhD candidates. In 2009, the institute hosted 1,820 foreign researchers and students. The institute is divided into 14 scientific divisions and 19 regional research centres.

> The HRS4R background

INRA has received the official acknowledgement from the European Commission for their progress in the HR Strategy process. INRA is the first French institution to receive this official acknowledgement and to be entitled to use the logo "HR Excellence in Research". As the leading agricultural research agency in Europe, INRA has placed the construction of the European Research Area, and its own attractiveness to young researchers, amongst its highest priorities. For this reason, in 2006 INRA endorsed the Charter & Code. INRA is committed to ensuring the sustained enhancement of its Human Resources policies[16].

> The approach and methodology applied

Main activities
1. Working group
2. Analysis of convergences to and deviations from the Charter and Code principles and existing in-house Charter
3. Action Plan

The Institute has drawn up its own Charter for doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows. As the first concrete evidence of its commitment to the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for their Recruitment, this document is designed to specify the conditions for the hosting and integration of doctoral candidates and postdoctoral fellows within INRA in terms of their recruitment, positioning in host units and training, and the publication and valorisation of research results.

INRA has always tried to inform its practices from the broadest possible standpoint. Its Human Resources Department was the instigator of discussions within an inter-EPST (public scientific and technology establishment) working group (CNRS, INRA, INSERM) which gave rise to a detailed analysis of the convergences and deviations that may exist between the requirements of the Charter & Code and the practices that exist in-house, and which has thus enabled the definition of areas for progress during the next few years, and a plan for their implementation[17].

The full report on the convergences and deviations and the action plan of INRA are available on:

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[15] http://www.international.inra.fr/the_institute/a_brief_overview
[16] http://www.international.inra.fr/join_us/human_resources_strategy_for_researchers
[17] http://www.international.inra.fr/join_us/human_resources_strategy_for_researchers

http://www.international.inra.fr/content/download/2764/52249/version/1/file/principles-requirements_applicable-to-researchers.pdf

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3.6.   EXAMPLE 7 – IMDEA WATER, SPAIN

> The institution at a glance[18]

IMDEA (Instituto Madrileño de Estudios Avanzados – Madrid Institute for Advanced Studies) is the new institutional framework set up by the Madrid Regional Government to combine and increase public and private support effectively, focusing the research in this region on market demands and encouraging the private sector to take part in scientific design. IMDEA comprises a network of eight research institutes of excellence in the highest economic impact areas, among them water (IMDEA Water).

As a recently created institution, IMDEA Water is currently still a very small centre counting 35 employees and 21 associated researchers.

> The HRS4R background

IMDEA Water is currently growing, and although it was set up according to the principles of the Charter and Code, it requires the continuous implementation of a Human Resources policy enabling adaptation to the new needs of the Institute.

To accomplish the implementation, the Working Team C&C of IMDEA Water was constituted.

> The approach and methodology applied

Main activities
1. Working group
2. Workshop
3. Survey

The internal analysis began by organising a meeting to inform all the IMDEA Water members about the content of the centre's participation in the Institutional HR Strategy Group and the importance of the implementation. As a result, initial feedback on the situation and the involvement of all members in the process was obtained.

The internal analysis was based on measurements using indicators evaluating the level of compliance with the 40 principles set forth in the Charter and Code in line with four areas or dimensions:

- I. Ethical and professional responsibility of researchers;
- II. Recruitment;
- III. Working conditions;
- IV. Research career training and development.

The IMDEA Water members taking part in the process anonymously rated questions related to indicators and grouped in accordance with the four abovementioned areas or dimensions. To assess the different items of the Code and Charter, they used the standard template for the internal analysis available on the Euraxess website. To carry out the HR Strategy in a centre with the IMDEA Water features, a minor adaptation of the form was required. Thus, participants rated each item on the

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[18] http://www.imdea.org

standard form from two different points of view. An initial personal rating of the importance or priority of each item for an institution like IMDEA Water, ascribing a priority score (1 meaning low priority and 4 maximum priority). A second approach rated the current adaptation of the centre to each C&C item, assigning an average score from 1 (maximum disagreement) to 4 (maximum agreement).

The personal rating was intended to detect the main aspects to be taken into account when planning improvements. The purpose of this assessment was to provide greater reinforcement for those items where the difference between the personal rating and the centre's score was greatest, especially those where the personal rating was very high and the centre's score was low. Another target of analysis was the employees' attitude towards the Code, as well as finding out if it is necessary to communicate the worth of complying with any item included in the Charter and Code.

For the analysis of the results, IMDEA Water grouped participants who filled in the form in six professional categories as follows: A) Executive, B) Senior Researchers, C) Postdoctoral and Junior Researchers, D) Pre-doctoral Researchers and Senior Support Technicians, E) Laboratory Technicians, and F) Management.

The full report of the internal analysis record and action plan for the period 2010-2012 is available on:

http://www.water.imdea.org/Portals/16/Downloads/C&C-EN.pdf

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3.7. EXAMPLE 8 – RESEARCH FOUNDATION – FLANDERS, BELGIUM

> The institution at a glance[19]

The Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO) is an independent agency that supports fundamental research in all disciplines in Flanders. The FWO provides the necessary funding on the basis of an interuniversity selection, and as such is the Flemish successor to the National Fund for Scientific Research, which was founded in 1928.

> The HRS4R background[20]

As a Member of the European Commission's HR Strategy group, which was set up in order to stimulate the implementation of the principles laid down in the Charter & Code, the FWO has elaborated a strategy for promoting research careers in Flanders.

The FWO can play a decisive role in bringing about change with respect to key issues in research careers, by modelling and designing its programmes and funding modalities according to the Charter & Code. All Flemish universities have now endorsed the Charter & Code. The FWO calls on the universities in particular, but also to all other institutions that are eligible for the FWO funding, to actively implement the Charter & Code in their policies, and collaborates with the HR departments of the universities to accomplish the desired results.

The FWO HR Strategy is coordinated by the FWO research policy department (under supervision of the Secretary General), in close consultation with the HR management, and taking into account feedback from its main stakeholders, the Flemish universities and researchers.

> The approach and methodology applied

Main activities
1. Gap analysis: • Internal working group (Policy department, HR department); • Department of Science and Innovation: screening of existing legislation.
2. Consultation of researchers: • Existing survey of Junior Researchers; • Newly launched survey of Senior Researchers.
3. Matching the priorities with those of the Policy Plan 2008-2012

The HR strategy document resulted from a consultation process both internally (among FWO staff members) and externally (among researchers in Flanders and in particular those funded by the FWO). Following the initial meeting of the HR strategy group of the European Commission, the first step undertaken was a "gap analysis" of the FWO policies and procedures with respect to the 40 points of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. In the meantime, the FWO with the assistance of the Flemish Department of Economy, Science and Innovation (EWI) prepared a comprehensive overview of existing legislation on all of the C&C points, in order to situate the FWO with respect to the global situation in Flanders and Belgium.

As a next step, the FWO joined forces with the Flemish Expertise Centre on R&D Monitoring (ECOOM), who had just analysed a survey for junior researchers, the results of which were published

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[19] cf. http://www.fwo.be/Missie-en-Opdracht.aspx
[20] cf. Giving wings to researchers and their careers – the FWO HR Strategy, 2010-2014 http://www.fwo.be/CMSDownload.aspx?ID=7bd82588-ec96-40e9-87a2-c5d6b6c405a7&L=en

in 2009 and contained a wealth of relevant information on HR issues for researchers in Flanders. ECOOM was at that time also developing a new survey for senior researchers. They agreed to partially reorienting the survey in order to cover C&C topics. Thanks to this survey, launched at the end of June 2010, the FWO was able to get a substantial input from the Flemish research community.

Finally, the results of the gap analysis and the opinions of the researchers themselves were compared with the FWO policy plan 2008-2012, which defines the overall FWO strategy in this period, and which contains many relevant points for the HR strategy. On the basis of this comparison, a number of priority points were identified. Other items were situated in the longer term, and still others were discarded from the FWO strategy, since they were either not applicable to its situation as a funding agency in Flanders, or were not impacted by the FWO.

The result is a synthesis between the ideals of Charter and Code, and the practical and legal imperatives imposed upon the FWO in the Flemish and Belgian situation.

The full report is available on: http://www.fwo.be/CMSDownload.aspx?ID=413db15e-403d-48ad-bed0-b2dfc58557ed&L=nl

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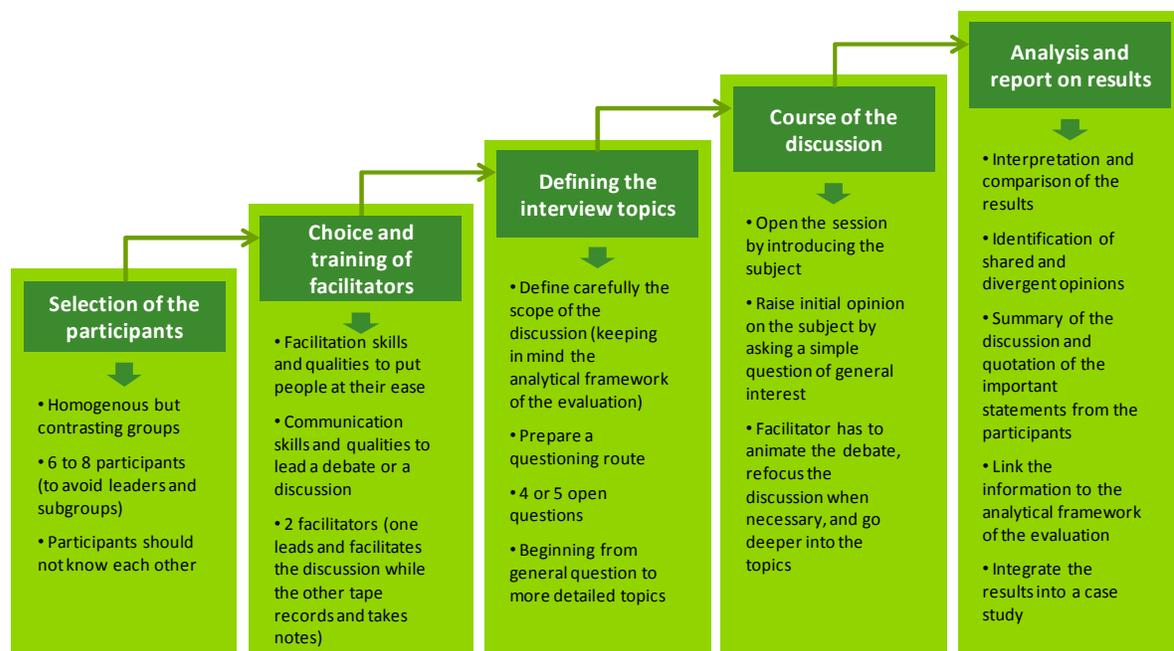
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4. TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS

4.1. FOCUS GROUP – WORKSHOP

The main purpose of focus group research is to draw upon respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way which would not be feasible using other methods, for example, in-depth face-to-face surveys. These attitudes, feelings and beliefs may be partially independent of a group or its social setting, but are more likely to be revealed via the social gathering and the interaction which being in a focus group entails. Compared to individual interviews, which aim to obtain individual attitudes, beliefs and feelings, focus groups elicit a multiplicity of views and emotional processes within a group context. Besides, the time needed for data collection and analysis is shorter than with individual interviews.

The organisation of the focus group involves five steps, as presented below:

Selection of the participants
- Homogenous but contrasting groups
- 6 to 8 participants (to avoid leaders and subgroups)
- Participants should not know each other

Choice and training of facilitators
- Facilitation skills and qualities to put people at their ease
- Communication skills and qualities to lead a debate or a discussion
- 2 facilitators (one leads and facilitates the discussion while the other tape records and takes notes)

Defining the interview topics
- Define carefully the scope of the discussion (keeping in mind the analytical framework of the evaluation)
- Prepare a questioning route
- 4 or 5 open questions
- Beginning from general question to more detailed topics

Course of the discussion
- Open the session by introducing the subject
- Raise initial opinion on the subject by asking a simple question of general interest
- Facilitator has to animate the debate, refocus the discussion when necessary, and go deeper into the topics

Analysis and report on results
- Interpretation and comparison of the results
- Identification of shared and divergent opinions
- Summary of the discussion and quotation of the important statements from the participants
- Link the information to the analytical framework of the evaluation
- Integrate the results into a case study

Usually six to eight persons are invited to participate in an informal discussion on a specific topic. The discussion is led by a facilitator who makes sure that all topics are discussed, that all participants have a chance to express their thoughts and that views are exchanged between all participants.

4.2. INTERVIEW

To gain insights into perceptions and opinions, one can conduct interviews with key actors.

The aim of interviews is to obtain qualitative feedback from the stakeholders most closely involved with the measures, and from observers.

Semi-structured interviews are always favoured as they allow the respondent to express him/herself freely, rather than being confined to a strict template. During the interview, the

respondent is invited to develop the relevant topics in his/her own way. In this context, the interviewer does not ask questions in a fixed order but leads the interview following the way of thinking of the interviewee.

Interviews can be conducted either face-to-face or over the telephone.

Face-to-face interviews enable the interviewer to establish rapport with the respondent, and to observe as well as listen. Face-to-face interviews are an effective method of gathering data when the questionnaire is lengthy and it permits to ask more complex questions than in other types of data collection.

Telephone interviewing is an appropriate data collection tool especially for specific targets, whose professional activities leave them little time to participate in a face-to-face interview, or for a representative sample of decentralised target audiences where a relatively short period of time is required to obtain answers to key questions. In this sense, telephone interviews take less time than face-to-face ones. They also simplify recording of data and they are most effective when the number of questions is relatively small and time available to gather data is short.

4.3.   SURVEY

Online/computer-based surveys are a useful tool for gathering the views and opinions of a larger part of a target population. Online/computer-based surveys consist of predominantly closed questions (to facilitate ratings and comparisons with differentiated sections of the target respondent group) and one or two open questions (to facilitate understanding and interpretation of the responses).

By sending an e-mail to the target population, which can be very large in number, the respondents are invited to complete the questionnaire either by clicking on a hyperlink that refers them to the web-based questionnaire or by opening the survey in attachment (using a relevant computer application such as Excel, Word, etc.).

The questionnaire is usually relatively simple, so that participants can complete it in no more than 15 to 30 minutes. The questions will be concise, giving respondents a choice of standard responses to specific statements (e.g. strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) or providing them with the opportunity (in a few questions) to express their own views in a more detailed, qualitative way.

The advantages of using this distribution and data collection technique are the following:

- a large target population can be reached;

- the respondents can quickly complete and easily submit the questionnaire;

- clear lay-out and a professional presentation of the survey;

- reminders can be sent easily;

- Free on-line tools are available on the web.

After the closure of a survey, the responses are analysed statistically, in order to identify relevant overall patterns, as well as differences across the target audience.

Many (free) survey tools are available on the web:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/

http://infopoll.com/live/surveys.dll/web

http://www.questionpro.com/

http://freeonlinesurveys.com/

http://www.esurveyspro.com/

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