

REPORT

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STEERING GROUP OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
under the EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA

on

Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers

OTM-R

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Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By ensuring that the best person for the job is recruited, open, transparent and merit-based recruitment of researchers (OTM-R) improves the effectiveness of national research systems, guarantees equality, especially for under-represented groups, and boosts trans- and international co-operation. This in turn promotes optimal circulation of scientific knowledge.

Individual researchers, research performing organizations, research funders, and ultimately the whole European Research Area (ERA), benefit from OTM-R, which represents the main pillar of the European Charter for Researchers and, obviously, the Code of Conduct for their recruitment.

The EU Member States, when asked in 2015 how to achieve an open labour market for researchers within the ERA, identified **“Using open, transparent and merit-based recruitment practices with regard to research positions”** as the top action priority. In fact, a lack of open recruitment is recognised as hindering mobility, the matching of talent to opportunities and gender equality, thereby preventing the ERA from reaching its full potential.

For this reason, national governments and relevant stakeholders (in particular research funders) have been invited, within the framework of the ERA Roadmap recently adopted by the Council of Ministers, to consider how the rules for national funding schemes could better promote the uptake and effective implementation by RPOs of the principles of OTM-R as articulated in the Charter and Code. The aim is to also encourage RPOs to participate in the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers and to review their current recruitment processes in a reflective and self-critical way, amending them where necessary to improve their openness and transparency as benchmarked against the Charter and Code.

In this connection, the ERA Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility established an *ad hoc* working group in 2014, with the aim to develop an **“OTM-R Package”** to assist RPOs to carry out, on a voluntary basis, a review of their current recruitment policy and practices and revise these, where needed.

The working group counted on the participation of representatives from several Member States and Associated Countries, as well as stakeholder organizations including the Voice of Researchers, the European Universities Association, the League of European Research Universities and the Conference of European Schools for Advanced Engineering Education and Research. Based on existing tools, primarily the Charter and Code and the European Framework for Research Careers, but also the national legislation in place, the working group developed an OTM-R Package, of which the core instrument is the **‘toolkit’**: a step-by-step guide to improve the RPOs’ recruitment procedures and practices.

The first tool is a **checklist**, through which RPOs can easily perform a review of their current procedures and practices. All the building blocks of the recruitment process, from the

advertising phase to the appointment phase, should be scrutinized, in a simple and straightforward way, using the checklist 'questions' as a basis.

The resulting revised recruitment process has to be made public, both internally and externally. Moreover, all personnel involved in the recruitment process must be appropriately trained on the 'new' procedures. This in turn should be embedded in the existing quality assurance system of the organization, without any unnecessary administrative and/or bureaucratic burden.

The working group has accomplished its mandate in a spirit of unlimited collaboration and cohesion and expresses the confident hope that, despite the well-known and unavoidable heterogeneity of the 'starting points' throughout the ERA, all RPOs can find something useful in the 'package' to maintain and even improve the attractiveness of Europe as an ideal place for research professionals to live and work. In this connection, it is important to consider that the whole set of 'employment conditions' being offered to applicants (for example, the type and duration of contracts, the salary and benefits, etc.) represents a key element of attractiveness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Open, transparent and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R) brings benefits to researchers, institutions, a country's research system, contributes to the full implementation of the European Research Area (ERA) and to an increase in the cost-effectiveness of investments in research. More specifically, **OTM-R ensures that the best person for the job is recruited**, guarantees equal opportunities and access for all, facilitates developing an international portfolio (cooperation, competition, mobility) and makes research careers more attractive. Evidence shows that there is a discrepancy between the perception of national authorities or institutions, who, for the most part, believe their recruitment process to be OTM, and researchers in many countries, who argue that this is not the case¹.

In September 2014, the ERA Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility (ERA SG HRM) adopted the mandate for a new Working Group on open, transparent and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R). The WG started its work in November 2014 with the objective to produce a “toolkit” on implementing OTM-R practices.

The main result of the Working Group is a comprehensive “**OTM-R Package**” for assisting Research Performing Organisations (RPOs)² to implement open, transparent and merit-based recruitment practices. It allows RPOs to review their current recruitment policy and practices and revise these, where needed.

The OTM-R “Package” for RPOs includes a set of practical and useful tools for implementing open, transparent and merit-based recruitment practices – built on existing tools and based on good practices.

The “**OTM-R Package**” includes:

- **The rationale: why is open, transparent and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R) essential?**
- **The principles and guidelines: what a good OTM-R system should look like?**
- **A checklist for institutions as a self-assessment tool: how do the current practices rate?**
- **The toolkit: a step by step guide to improve the OTM-R practices**
- **Examples of good practice**

2. BACKGROUND

The ERA Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility (SG HRM) has taken a number of initiatives to promote the OTM-R issue since 2003. Now, OTM-R is a top priority of the European Research Area.

¹ MORE2 Study on Mobility Patterns and Career Paths of Researchers, 2013:

http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research_policies/Researchers%20Report%202014_FINAL%20REPORT.pdf;
Technopolis Study on the Open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment of researchers, 2014:
http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research_policies/OTM%20Final%20Report.pdf

² This includes universities, public research organisations and the private sector

OTM-R is one of the pillars of the **European Charter for Researchers** and in particular of the **Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers**, launched in 2005.

The Charter and the Code (C&C) contain, among other crucial issues related to professional aspects of a researcher's life, a set of principles and requirements that should be followed by employers and/or funders when appointing or recruiting researchers, first of all *"employers and/or funders should establish recruitment procedures which are open, efficient, transparent, supportive and internationally comparable, as well as tailored to the type of positions advertised"*. Furthermore, OTM-R is an important component of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) which supports research institutions and funding organisations to put the policies and principles of the Charter & Code into practice. The HRS4R is a 5-step process, by which RPOs can align their human resources policy with the principles set out in the Charter & Code. The European Commission awards the RPOs accomplishing the process with a 'logo' testifying their achievements.

The **ERA Communication 2012**³ called on Member States (MS) to *remove legal and other barriers to the application of open, transparent and merit based recruitment of researchers*" and on Stakeholder Organizations (SHO) to *"advertise all vacancies on the EURAXESS Jobs portal using the common profiles established in the European Framework for Research Careers"* and to *"fill research positions according to open, transparent and merit based recruitment procedures proportionate to the level of the position in line with the basic principles of the Charter & Code and including non-EU nationals."*

The **Council Conclusions of 11 December 2012**⁴ repeated the need for action as follows: *"The Council NOTES that one of the most important remaining challenges across the EU is the realization of transparent, open and merit-based recruitment where this is not available, which would make research careers more attractive and foster mobility and ultimately research quality"*.

The **Commission Expert Group on the Research Professions in 2012** and the **Expert Group on ERA Implementation in 2013** gave strong backing to the need for action on open recruitment.

The **2013 ERA Progress Report** noted that *"A co-ordinated effort is needed by Member States and institutions to ensure that all research positions are subject to open, transparent and merit-based recruitment practices"*. The **2014 ERA Progress Report** suggests, on the basis of data from the Innovation Union Scoreboard 2014, that openness and innovation go hand in hand, i.e. countries with open and attractive research systems are strong performers in terms of innovation, and this was confirmed by the findings of the latest **Innovation Union Scoreboard 2015**⁵.

³ A Reinforced European Research Area partnership for excellence and Growth, COM(2012) 392 final

⁴ Council Conclusions on 'A reinforced European research area partnership for excellence and growth'

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/innovation/facts-figures/scoreboards/files/ius-2015_en.pdf

The **Council Conclusions of 21 February 2014**⁶ reinforced the demand to take the necessary steps by CALLING ON the Member States *“to take fully into account the ERA implementation when developing national strategies taking into account using open, transparent and merit-based recruitment practices with regard to research positions”*.

There is a broad consensus among stakeholders and researchers that the lack OTM-R is one of the main barriers towards the achievement of an open labour market for researchers and that action is required⁷.

In March 2014, the **European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC)** organized a Mutual Learning Workshop on OTM-R of researchers. It concluded with the recommendation on institutions to review and, where appropriate, modify their current recruitment practices, as well as to develop a “practitioners’ toolkit” regarding OTM-R practices.

The Technopolis study on OTM-R⁸ in March 2014 also recommended the development of a modular OTM-R toolkit, including good practice examples, to draft OTM-R policies and operational guidelines, templates for application forms, job descriptions, appointment of panels, and other material useful for the HR practitioners as well as the RPOs’ management to demonstrate the feasibility and use of OTM-R procedures.

Pursuing the ERA priority to realise “An open labour market for researchers”, the Member State consultation identified *Using open, transparent and merit-based recruitment practices with regard to research positions* as the top action priority within the **ERA Roadmap**⁹, in order to attract the best researchers and to make research careers more attractive. This action contributes to the full implementation of the ERA, as open recruitment promotes mobility, the matching of talent to opportunities, and gender equality.

As a matter of fact, OTM-R implies gender awareness throughout the recruitment process within an institution, including (but not limited to) the promotion of gender balance within the respective committees.

Approving the ERA Roadmap, the Council of Ministers at its meeting of 29th May 2015, affirmed that “lack of open recruitment hinders mobility, the matching of talent to opportunities, and gender equality, thereby impeding achievement of the ERA’s full potential”.

⁶ Council Conclusions on “Progress in the European Research Area”.

⁷ Key stakeholders, such as the European Universities Association (EUA) and the League of European Research Universities (LERU), committed themselves through the ERA Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2012 to take action on open recruitment. More recently, on the 23 June 2015, the Stakeholders' organisations members of the ERA Platform have reasserted their commitment by signing a Joint Statement according to which they have decided to continue working together in partnership, on the key priorities identified in the ERA Communication of 17 July 2012.

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research_policies/OTM%20Final%20Report.pdf

⁹ ERA Roadmap, 2015: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-1208-2015-INIT/en/pdf>

3. WORKING METHOD

As reported above, in September 2014, the ERA SGHRM established a working group (WG) on OTM-R and approved its mandate. The WG started its work in November 2014 and met 4 times, with the objective to produce a “toolkit” on implementing open, transparent and merit-based recruitment practices.

Among the members of the WG were representatives from 15 different Members States and Associated Countries, the European Commission (EC), the Voice of the Researchers (VoR)¹⁰, the European Research Council (ERC), stakeholder organisations including the European Universities Association (EUA), the League of European Research Universities (LERU), the Conference of European Schools for Advanced Engineering Education and Research (CESAER). A full list of the members can be found in Annex.

To structure the activity of the WG, 3 subgroups were established and each addressed one of the ‘functional blocks’ of the recruitment system: i) the preparatory block (advertising positions, assembling panels, etc.), ii) the evaluation/selection block (defining 'merit' and designing the procedures accordingly), iii) the 'OTM routine' block (training staff, briefing panels, limiting bureaucracy to the minimum) – making always reference to the 3 keywords: open, transparent, merit-based.

A joint meeting with the Expert Group on the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) took place in May 2015 in order to exchange views on the OTM-R topic, as this is an integral component of the C&C and, therefore, of the HRS4R.

Existing tools, best practices as well as examples of national legislation regarding OTM-R were used by members of the WG to assemble the toolkit. Furthermore, the definitions of recruitment, transparency and merit given in the C&C were taken on board and served as a basis throughout the work of the group.

Relevant pan-European initiatives, such as the portal “EURAXESS – Researchers in Motion”, (particularly the sections EURAXESS Rights and the EURAXESS Jobs), were taken into account. The **European Framework for Research Careers**, with its four professional profiles (R1-R4), was duly considered as a main reference point on which to build a fully functional OTM-R.

Several Member States¹¹ have introduced national legislation stipulating that vacancies in universities and other public research organisations have to be published internationally, for example via 'EURAXESS Jobs'¹². Other countries have put measures in place regarding recruitment system and transparency. Examples can be found in Annex.

¹⁰ Voice of the Researchers (VoR) <http://voice.euraxess.org/>, since 2012, aims to act as a bridge between researchers and policy-makers, bringing together researchers into a network and enabling them to take an active role in shaping the European Research Area.

¹¹ e.g. Austria, Croatia, Italy and Poland

¹² According to Communication on research and innovation as sources of renewed growth COM(2014) 339 final

4. OTM-R PACKAGE for RPOs

The Working Group produced a comprehensive package for assisting RPOs to implement OTM-R practices. It allows RPOs to review their current recruitment policy and improve it, if/when needed. The package includes principles and guidelines on what an OTM-R system should look like, a checklist for institutions as a self-assessment tool to benchmark their current practices on the principles and the toolkit: a step-by-step guide to improve (if, when and where needed) the organisation's OTM-R practices.

4.1. Why is open, transparent and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R) essential? The rationale

Open, transparent and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R) brings benefits to researchers, institutions and a country's research system. More specifically, OTM-R makes research careers more attractive, ensures equal opportunities for all candidates and facilitates mobility. Overall, it may contribute to an increase in the cost-effectiveness of investments in research.

Evidence shows that there is a discrepancy between the perception of national institutions and authorities (who for the most part believe their recruitment process to be OTM) and researchers in many countries who argue that this is not the case^{13..}

An OTM-R policy is often mentioned in conjunction with other human resource strategies/policies to improve the working conditions of researchers and attract researchers from abroad. All these policies should be complementary and form part of an institution's overall policy to increase its level of quality, improve its reputation (and therefore attractiveness) and pursuit of excellence as well as enhance researchers' careers and mobility.

The focus of an OTM-R system should therefore be on ensuring that institutions always aim at recruiting the best person for the job and that all recruitment procedures are based on principles of equal opportunities for all candidates (including internal and external). As a rule, recruitment should always be open¹⁴. Reasons for recurring to other procedures should be made explicit and well justified.

It is important to stress that OTM-R principles refer to 'recruitment', i.e. the procedures for filling a vacant position, and not to career progression, for which the procedures need anyway to be transparent and merit-based.

¹³ [Researchers' Report 2014](#) based largely on data from the MORE2 Survey 2012

¹⁴ *It is important to distinguish 'academic nepotism', (i.e. informal practices which end up favoring incumbent candidates in selection procedures and may be detrimental to scientific productivity and a significant disincentive to many of those considering whether to enter or remain in a research career in Europe) and recruitment procedures which, although not open, may nevertheless well be transparent and merit-based.*

Implementing the basic principles of OTM-R should not come at a great expense, e.g., the cost of posting job advertisements on EURAXESS is negligible. Certain elements such as paying for international experts, training staff, dealing with large numbers of applicants, setting up an e-recruitment tool, advertising in English additionally to the national language imply a higher cost. However, the costs for setting up a well-functioning OTM-R system are likely to prove to be value for money, at least in the medium-term, particularly when considering the cost caused by recruiting a candidate who is not the best person to carry out the job.

It is recognised that institutions are subject to national legislation that may limit their scope to change their OTM-R practices. While examples of legislation have been identified, none prevent the establishment of an OTM-R system.

4.2. What should an OTM-R system look like? The principles

4.2.1 Review current OTM-R policy, practices and procedures

Research Performing Organisations are encouraged to carry out an initial review of the current system. A list of questions (see 'checklist' in chapter 4.3) and a step-by-step guide (see toolkit in chapter 4.4) are provided. Research Performing Organisations may decide to use these instruments as such, or to review and design their OTM-R system drawing inspiration from the material provided.

4.2.2 Develop and put in place a revised OTM-R policy

It is strongly recommended to develop and implement an OTM-R policy that encourages, in particular, external applicants by:

- a) providing clear and transparent information on the whole selection process, including selection criteria and an indicative timetable;
- b) posting a clear and concise job advertisement with links to detailed information on, for example, required competencies and duties, working conditions, entitlements, training opportunities, career development, gender equality policies, etc.;
- c) ensuring that the levels of qualifications and competencies required are in line with the needs of the position and not set as a barrier to entry, e.g., too restrictive and/or requiring unnecessary qualifications;
- d) considering the inclusion of explicit pro-active elements for underrepresented groups;
- e) keeping the administrative burden for the candidate (proof of qualifications, translations, number of copies required, etc.) to a minimum;
- f) reviewing, where appropriate, the institutional policy on languages¹⁵.

¹⁵ A range of issues may be considered. For example, is knowledge of the national language a requirement or an asset for a particular position? Or will such knowledge become a requirement within a certain time period after recruitment? If so, is the provision of language training foreseen? If jobs are advertised in English or the interview is conducted in English, do staff and/or members of selection committees have the language competencies to adequately deal with this?

- g) The step-by-step guide in the toolkit provides more detailed information on the above elements.

Each institution should identify measurements (i.e. indicators and respective targets) of the effectiveness of its OTM-R policy which should be reviewed on a regular basis and, where necessary, adapted accordingly.

4.2.3 Publishing the OTM-R policy

The OTM-R policy should be published in an easily accessible place on the institution's website and should address a minimum set of requirements [*to be developed in relation to points a-f above*] while respecting institutional autonomy and diversity. For those institutions implementing the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)¹⁶, this is a requirement.

4.2.4 Quality control system

It is recommended to establish a quality control mechanism, including supervision of the whole recruitment process, to be administered by the HR department or designated staff. This should be combined with a periodical, external review by an independent observer, e.g., within the peer review exercise of the HRS4R. To monitor and assess the extent to which the OTM-R system is being implemented, it is also recommended to adopt some form of internal reporting for all phases of a recruitment process, e.g., a standard, reporting template that contains basic, important information but is not overly burdensome.

4.2.5 Establish or adapt an internal OTM-R guide

It is strongly recommended to establish an internal guide setting out clear and explicit rules and procedures for the recruitment of all researcher positions. In this regard, it is recommended to use the European Framework for Research Careers¹⁷ which identifies four broad career profiles for researchers:

- R1 First Stage Researcher (up to the completion of PhD)**
- R2 Recognised Researcher (PhD holders or equivalent who are not yet fully independent)**
- R3 Established Researcher (researchers who have developed a level of independence)**
- R4 Leading Researcher (researchers leading their research area or field)**

While the basic principles of openness, transparency and merit should apply to all positions, it is common practice to adapt the procedures according to the level, nature and type of position. The key point is to ensure that the various procedures or derogations are clear, objectively justified and transparent. See examples in Annex.

The guide should in principle address all the issues in the toolkit which sets out, in chronological order, the whole recruitment process, from the job advertising/application phase through to the appointment phase.

¹⁶ <http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/strategy4Researcher>

¹⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research_policies/Towards_a_European_Framework_for_Research_Careers_final.pdf

In line with the principle "Recognition of qualifications" of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers¹⁸, the guide needs to provide for appropriate assessment and evaluation of the academic and professional qualifications, including non-formal qualifications, skills and competences of all researchers, as well as international and professional mobility.

4.2.6 Training and awareness raising within the institution

The institution should ensure that appropriate training is provided to all those who are involved in the recruitment process. This should include training on how to brief members of the selection committees.

If the job advertisement is published in English, this implies that staff need to be trained to deal with processing and evaluating applicants and conducting interviews in English.

Use of the OTM-R guide should be promoted throughout the institution.

4.2.7 E-recruitment

In order to avoid discriminating against candidates based on their geographical location and/or financial means, it is strongly recommended to consider using "e-recruitment", drawing on the experience of existing platforms and tools. See Annex.

4.3. How does your OTM-R system rate? A checklist for institutions

Institutions are encouraged to use this checklist as a self-assessment tool to determine the degree to which their current practices are OTM compliant and identify where improvements could be made

¹⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/brochure_rights/am509774CEE_EN_E4.pdf

OTM-R Checklist for institutions					
	Open	Transparent	Merit-based	Answer: Yes <i>completely</i>/Yes <i>substantially</i>/ Yes <i>partially</i>/No	Suggested indicators (or form of measurement)
OTM-R system					
1. Have we published a version of our OTM-R policy online (in the national language and in English)?	x	x	x		[weblink]
2. Do we have an internal guide setting out clear OTM-R procedures and practices for all types of positions?	x	x	x		[Date of latest update; ensure that it is sent to all staff]
3. Is everyone involved in the process sufficiently trained in the area of OTM-R?	x	x	x		- Existence of training programmes for OTM-R - Number of staff following training in OTM-R
4. Do we make (sufficient) use of e-recruitment tools?	x	x			Web-based tool for (all) the stages in the recruitment process
5. Do we have a quality control system for OTM-R in place?	x	x	x		
6. Does our current OTM-R policy encourage external candidates to apply?	x	x	x		Trend in the share of applicants from outside the institution
7. Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to attract researchers from abroad?	x	x	x		Trend in the share of applicants from abroad
8. Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to attract underrepresented groups?	x	x	x		Trend in the share of applicants among underrepresented groups (frequently women)
9. Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to provide attractive working conditions for researchers?	x	x	x		Trend in the share of applicants from outside the institution
10. Do we have means to monitor whether the most suitable researchers apply?					

Advertising and application phase					
11. Do we have clear guidelines or templates (e.g., EURAXESS) for advertising positions?	x	x			
12. Do we include in the job advertisement references/links to all the elements foreseen in the relevant section of the toolkit? [see Chapter 4.4.1 a)]	x	x			
13. Do we make full use of EURAXESS to ensure our research vacancies reach a wider audience?	x	x			- The share of job adverts posted on EURAXESS; - Trend in the share of applicants recruited from outside the institution/abroad
14. Do we make use of other job advertising tools?	x	x			
15. Do we keep the administrative burden to a minimum for the candidate? [see Chapter 4.4.1 b)]	x				
Selection and evaluation phase					
16. Do we have clear rules governing the appointment of selection committees? [see Chapter 4.4.2 a)]		x	x		Statistics on the composition of panels
17. Do we have clear rules concerning the composition of selection committees?		x	x		Written guidelines
18. Are the committees sufficiently gender-balanced?		x	x		
19. Do we have clear guidelines for selection committees which help to judge 'merit' in a way that leads to the best candidate being selected?			x		Written guidelines
Appointment phase					
20. Do we inform all applicants at the end of the selection process?		x			
21. Do we provide adequate feedback to interviewees?		x			

22. Do we have an appropriate complaints mechanism in place?		x			Statistics on complaints
Overall assessment					
23. Do we have a system in place to assess whether OTM-R delivers on its objectives?					

4.4. Need help to establish an OTM-R system compliant with the principles?

The toolkit: a step-by-step guide to better OTM-R practices

This guide sets out, in chronological order, the various steps of the recruitment process, from the job advertising/application phase through to the appointment phase. It aims to build on the principles of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers¹⁹, providing more detailed information, practical solutions and includes examples of good practice.

Three phases have been identified:

- Advertising and application phase
- Evaluation and selection phase
- Appointment phase

4.4.1 Advertising and application phase

a) Advertising the post

In line with the principles "Recruitment" and "Transparency" of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, it is recommended to keep the job advertisement and description of requirements as concise as possible and include links to more detailed information online. Applicants should be able to find information on:

- organisation and recruiting unit
- job title, specifications and starting date
- researcher career profiles (R1-R4) with the respective 'required' and 'desirable' competencies
- selection criteria (and possibly their respective 'weight'), including knowledge and professional experience (distinguishing the 'required' and 'desirable')
- number of available positions
- working conditions, workplace, entitlements (salary, other benefits, etc.), type of contract
- professional development opportunities
- career development prospects

It should also include:

- the application procedure and deadline, which should, as a general rule, be at least two months from the publication date and take account of holiday periods
- a reference to the institution's OTM-R policy
- a reference to the institution's equal opportunities policy (e.g., positive discrimination, dual careers, etc.)
- contact details

¹⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/brochure_rights/am509774CEE_EN_E4.pdf

All vacancies should be published on EURAXESS. This implies that the advert should be published at least in the national language and in English.

Although possible, any exception to the above should be duly justified in the recruitment procedure.

b) Keeping the administrative burden to a minimum

The request for supporting documents should be strictly limited to those which are really needed in order to make a fair, transparent and merit-based selection of the applicants. Moreover, in cases where certain documents are legally required, applicants should be allowed to make a declaration in which they engage to provide the proof after the selection process is concluded. For example, applicants should not have to provide original or translated certificates related to qualifications with their initial application.

It is strongly recommended to allow the transmission of supporting documents by electronic means and possibly to develop an e-recruitment tool.

c) Acknowledging receipt and providing additional information

All applicants should receive an (automated) e-mail acknowledging that their application has been received and providing them with further information on the recruitment process, indicating the next steps and including an indicative timetable (shortlisting or not, interview period, appointment date). Care should be taken to allow sufficient time before the interview for external candidates to make the necessary travel arrangements and prepare properly for the interview. If there are subsequently significant changes or delays to this process, all applicants should be duly and timely informed by (a standard) e-mail.

4.4.2 Evaluation and selection phase

a) Setting up selection committees

In line with the principle "Selection" of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, selection committees should be established for all profiles (R1-R4), though the size and composition of the committees may differ according to the profile and type of contract. The process to nominate and appoint the selection committee should be transparent and made public.

The selection committees should be independent, members should not have any conflict of interest and the decisions must be objective and evidence-based rather than based on personal preference. The committee should make best use of the expertise of external members. The composition of the committee should be appropriately diverse. In order to achieve this, the following elements should be considered:

- a minimum of 3 members;
- gender balance, e.g., not less than one third of one gender in the committee;
- inclusion of external expert(s) in all committees (external meaning outside the institution);

- inclusion of (or contribution from) international experts, who should be proficient in the language(s) in which the process will be conducted;
- inclusion of experts from different sectors (public, private, academic, non-academic), where appropriate and feasible;
- -the committee as a whole should have all the relevant experience, qualifications and competencies to assess the candidate.

Any derogation for certain positions, types of contract or indeed for specific disciplines should be clearly set out.

b) Screening and interviewing

All applications should be screened. Depending largely on the number of applicants as well as the internal human resources available, the process may involve one or more steps, e.g., pre-screening to check eligibility, shortlisting of candidates for interviews, remote interviews by telephone or skype, face-to-face interviews. While remote interviews may often be appropriate, in particular at the first interview stage, they should not altogether replace face-to-face interviews in cases where these are being conducted for internal candidates. All candidates should be treated equally and in the same way.

It is recommended that the same selection committee is involved in all steps, although it is recognised that this may not always be feasible and that, for example, one committee may do the initial screening and another may conduct the interviews. Accordingly, it is strongly recommended that the process itself is transparent and made known to the applicants, including the various steps.

In case of face-to-face interviews, the institution should cover the (international) travel and accommodation expenses of the interviewees.

c) Assessing merit and future potential

The criteria for selecting researchers should focus on both the candidates' past performance and their future potential. The emphasis is likely to change according to the profile of the post, e.g., when recruiting an R1 researcher, future potential is likely to outweigh past performance.

In line with the principles "Judging merit", "Variations in the order of CVs", "Recognition of mobility" and "Seniority" of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, the evaluation criteria should be consistent with the requirements of the position as regards research, supervision or, for example, teaching competencies.

Merit should be judged qualitatively as well as quantitatively, focusing on results within a diversified career path, taking into account career breaks, lifelong professional development and the added value of non-research experience.

A wide range of evaluation criteria should be used and balanced, according to the position being advertised. Depending on the specific profile of the post, this may include (in alphabetical and not hierarchical order):

- acquisition of funding;
- generation of societal impact;
- international portfolio (including mobility);
- knowledge transfer and exchange;
- management of research and innovation;
- organizational skills/experience;
- outreach/public awareness activities;
- research performance;
- supervision and mentoring;
- teaching;
- teamwork

It is strongly recommended to make use of the European Framework for Research Careers²⁰, which identifies both necessary and desirable competences for each of the four broad profiles for researchers (R1 to R4).

4.4.3 Appointment phase

a) Feedback

In line with the principle "Transparency" of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, all applicants should receive written or electronic notice at the end of the selection process, indicatively within one month and without any unnecessary delays.

It is strongly recommended to inform all applicants who were admitted to the interview about the strengths and weaknesses of their application. Other applicants, who did not make it to the final stages, should receive a standard mail informing them of the outcome. All applicants must be entitled to further feedback upon request.

b) Complaints mechanism

The institution should establish a procedure to deal with complaints made by applicants who believe that they have been treated negligently, unfairly or incorrectly. This procedure should be transparent and made public. It should include an indication of the timeframe within which a complainant will receive a response, which should in principle be no longer than one month.

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research_policies/Towards_a_European_Framework_for_Research_Careers_final.pdf

5. Annex

5.1. Examples of good practice²¹

OTM-R guides

In **Norway**, government regulations are in place for the recruitment of researchers at universities with requirements and guidelines for applicants and panels, some of which are available in English. https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/kd/vedlegg/uh/forskrifter/regulation_concerning_appointment_promotion_teaching_research_posts.pdf

The various national “faculty meetings”, UHR/Rector’s Conference have drawn up requirements guidelines for the various research disciplines (for applicants as well as the panel) – some of which are available in English. <http://www.uhr.no/ressurser/veiledninger/opprykkssordninger>

For recruitment at PhD level, the Norwegian University of Sciences and Technology (NTNU) provides a Handbook for PhD Education, including standards, recruitment, admission, completion etc., in English: https://www.ntnu.edu/documents/1263185004/0/phd_haandbok_eng_web.pdf/5bb0beac-3554-4bad-a3e8-2d468121e905

The **Dutch Association for Personnel Management and Organisation Development** (NVP) is the Dutch network for human resource professionals engaged in such issues as HR strategy, employment relations, recruitment and selection, rewards systems, conditions of employment and training plans. The NVP has established a recruitment code to provide a norm for a transparent and fair recruitment and selection procedure. According to the Collective Labour Agreement, Dutch Universities should act in accordance with the NVP Recruitment Code: <http://www.nvp-plaza.nl/documents/doc/sollicitatiecode/nvp-recruitment-code.pdf>

The **University of California, Santa Cruz** has set out various recruitment options which vary according to the level of the position and the type of contract. It attributes pros and cons to each option. See pages 61-62 http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research_policies/OTM%20Final%20Report.pdf

The **University of Amsterdam** (NL) has drawn up a set of guidelines providing supportive, not compulsory, information to anyone involved in the recruitment process. The document distinguishes the various phases from vacancy to interview and feedback, including guidelines for CV-scanning, proposals for well-structured interviews, competency-related interview questions, etc. (available only in Dutch): <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:mZPg3m6eVuMJ:https://medewerker.uva.nl/binaries/content/assets/medewerkersites/ac/uva-medewerkers/werving-en-selectie/handreiking-werving-en-selectie-pdf.pdf+&cd=3&hl=it&ct=clnk&gl=us&client=firefox>

The **University of Freiburg** (DE) established a standardised procedure of governing appointments to professorships (www.zuv.uni-freiburg.de/formulare/berufungsleitfaden-en.pdf) An innovative focus is put on the proactive search for female candidates who are eligible for the nomination list. Nomination lists without documentation of a proactive search for suitable female candidates are returned by the Rectorate.

²¹ Additional examples of good practice were provided for internal use only. They have not been included in this report as the documentation is not publicly available.

Examples of derogations

Derogations may include measures such as retention, re-deployment or re-integration, as well as measures related to positive action/discrimination. When handled in a transparent and carefully justified manner subject to scrutiny and specific parameters, these measures may still be merit-based and do not, in themselves, compromise the transparency principle.

Where existing researchers are coming to the end of a fixed-term contract, employers have a duty of care to minimize the risk of redundancy and will usually implement a range of redeployment actions. The practice of re-deployment in the UK is a case in point. Re-deployment is a particular policy negotiated between the relevant social partners and specifically to protect the large number of researchers employed on fixed term (temporary) contracts usually for no other reason than the funding streams (i.e. not based on the merits of the individual). The University of Liverpool's policy²² quite clearly states that the re-deployment process should occur before a position is advertised externally: 'Where there is a match with a member of staff on the formal redeployment register, a preferential interview will be expected to take place before any other means of filling the post is pursued'. However, the process retains core elements of fair and merit-based recruitment, including job descriptions, formal applications and interview panels.

Similarly, temporary positions (R1 or R2 level) can be first advertised within the institution, to offer graduates a career development perspective. This habit is also rather common in industry or public services where positions are first internally advertised, and only if no adequate candidate is found, it is advertised externally. But it is important that the process is transparent and merit-based.

Research positions funded by re-integration grants such as those under Marie-Curie - which seek to attract researchers from abroad back to their home country - are another example of a possible, justifiable derogation. While the recruitment process for such positions may not be fully 'open', it should nevertheless be transparent and merit-based.

Where successful grant applications name specific post-doctoral researchers, employers will generally accept that the peer-review process associated with the grant application is a sufficient test and will move directly to issue a fixed-term contract for the duration of the grant. This is a common occurrence, applying to a significant proportion of all post-doctoral appointments.

For the most senior positions, some employers may use a more strategic recruitment strategy to proactively look for suitable candidates, possibly using recruitment consultants. While this can remain an entirely merit based approach, it should also be open to other candidates and be transparent.

²² <https://www.liv.ac.uk/media/livacuk/hr-migrated/policies/redeployment-procedure.doc>

Training and raising awareness

The **University of Cambridge** (UK) provides face-to-face one day training on recruitment in the University. In addition, the HR Division often provides bespoke presentations/briefings on recruitment to meet specific departmental recruitment training needs. Additional training is available for users of recruitment-related IT systems.

Hasselt University (BE) has organized training for members of the advisory committees, focusing on competency based interviewing.

The **University of Zurich** (CH), Science Faculty, has established standards in recruitment professorships in order to counteract subconscious gender bias in the recruiting process of professors. The guidelines outline the professorial hiring process step by step and provide for each step theoretical background information as well as checklists for the committee members and all other persons involved: http://www.mnf.uzh.ch/fileadmin/DATA_Autoren/Bilder/Inhalte/IV_ueber_uns/ProfAppointmentFlowChart.pdf

E-recruitment

ETH Zurich and the **University of Fribourg** (CH), **Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences** (HiOA, NO) and **Lund University** (SE) are three illustrations of institutions who have introduced an electronic hiring tool, greatly facilitating the entire recruitment process and the work of all stakeholders involved. <http://www.lunduniversity.lu.se/about/work-at-lund-university/applying-for-jobs>

The **Dutch e-recruitment platform AcademicTransfer** (<https://www.academictransfer.com>) supplies all academic job openings at non-profit research institutes, universities and university medical centers in the Netherlands.

The **UNICAM School of Advanced Studies in Italy** has developed an e-tool for applicants in doctoral courses. There are special guidelines how to obtain a login and to fill in the application form available online <http://www.unicam.it/laureati/dottorato/call.asp>

Job advertisements

EURAXESS Jobs advertisement template (currently under review and available as of January 2016)

The **KU Leuven** (BE) has developed a web-based job vacancy system and an online application form. In the new advertisement and application system each local supervisor can create her or his job vacancies. All vacancies go through a predefined process, with all the necessary steps of approval included, until publication of the job on the KU Leuven jobsite and other job boards. The applications process is also managed in this system: <https://icts.kuleuven.be/apps/jobsite/vacatures/?lang=en>

The **Medical University of Graz** (AT) has an English version of a job advertisement template for a Scientific Assistant: <http://www.medunigraz.at/themen-mitarbeiten/personalentwicklung-und-betriebliches-gesundheitsmanagement/leistungsangebot/mitarbeiterinnenaufnahme/stellenausschreibungen/>

In **France**, all permanent research positions are published once per year in a Galaxie portal: https://www.galaxie.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/ensup/cand_recrutement.htm

The **Université Pierre et Marie Curie** (FR), among others, also publishes them on EURAXESS. The recruitment process is nationally synchronised and follows an overall schedule fixed by the Ministry. The whole recruitment process up to the assignment of researchers to positions is run via the Galaxie portal and is fully transparent.

Selection committees

All universities in Flanders were obliged by the Government to draw up an equal opportunities plan with concrete actions and targets, a condition in order to continue receiving block research grants. At **Ghent University**, this plan included the regulation that from October 2012 all selection committees and promotion committees must be gender balanced, i.e. maximum 2/3 of the panel members can be of the same gender: <http://www.ugent.be/diversiteitengender/nl/gender> (information in Dutch).

The Institute of Science and Technology in Austria includes useful information on Selection and Evaluation Committees <http://ist.ac.at/research/postdoctoral-research/selection-and-evaluation/>

The **University of Freiburg** (DE) includes useful information on committees in a document entitled "Procedure Governing Appointments to Professorships": www.zuv.uni-freiburg.de/formulare/berufungsleitfaden-en.pdf

The University of Connecticut (US) provides guidelines for the search committee, its composition and its responsibilities. Moreover, the guidelines list good practices to counterbalance the effects of inherent bias in evaluations: <http://ode.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/833/2015/02/Search-Committee-Guidelines.pdf>

In Norway, the National Faculty Meeting of Sciences and National Council for Technological Education, the UHR/Rectors' Conference established guidelines and procedures for promotion to full professor (Norwegian University of Science and Technology, University of Bergen, University of Oslo, University of Tromsø), which are freely available and useful to the applicants as well as to the expert committee. http://www.uhr.no/documents/KVALITETSKRAV_FOR_OPPRYKK_TIL_PROFESSOR_2012_engelsk_version_SC.pdf

Also in **Norway**, government regulations specify at least 3 members and only one member/expert from inside the institution, i.e. always at least 2 external. In the renewed government regulations, the internal member cannot be the leader of the committee.

On October 6 2014 the Board of **the University of Copenhagen** (DK) decided on an Action Plan "Career, Gender and Quality – More Women in Research and Management", with a broad approach to qualifying recruitment processes using the problems with the leaking pipelines as the entrance to the work of recruiting and retaining all talents regardless of gender:

http://mangfoldighed.ku.dk/english/pdf/ACTION_PLAN_FOR_CAREERS_GENDER_AND_QUALITY_.pdf

For general information on women in research and management at the University of Copenhagen: http://mangfoldighed.ku.dk/english/women_research_management/

In France, selection committees in all universities have to obey strict rules on the composition of the members. This concerns the distribution between internal and external experts (50%/50%), of gender (generally no less than 40% of any of the two genders), of status (maître de conférences/lecturer and professor) and the inclusion of specialists in the respective discipline.

Interviews

The **University of Fribourg in Switzerland** provides a list of sample interview questions ("Interviewleitfaden") to assess certain competences. These can be a useful basis for the selection interview. These are available in German on the university website: http://www.unifr.ch/sp/assets/files/Documents%20site/Cadres/1.Mise%20au%20concours%20d_un%20poste/Interviewleitfaden%20uni_d_new.pdf

Merit

The **San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)** includes a set of principles which helps institutions to limit their reliance on bibliometric criteria when evaluating research performance (<http://ar.ascb.org/sfdora.html>). The DORA principles fully support OTM-R; e.g., principles 1, 4, 5 and 15:

“General Recommendation: 1. Do not use journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an individual scientist's contributions, or in hiring, promotion, or funding decisions.

For institutions: 4. Be explicit about the criteria used to reach hiring, tenure, and promotion decisions, clearly highlighting, especially for early-stage investigators, that the scientific content of a paper is much more important than publication metrics or the identity of the journal in which it was published.

For the purposes of research assessment: 5. Consider the value and impact of all research outputs (including datasets and software) in addition to research publications, and consider a broad range of impact measures including qualitative indicators of research impact, such as influence on policy and practice.

For Researchers: 15. When involved in committees making decisions about funding, hiring, tenure, or promotion, make assessments based on scientific content rather than publication metrics.”

Feedback

In 2013, the **University of Liege** (ULg, BE) launched the FP7-MSCA-COFUND project “Be International Postdoc” (BeIPD-COFUND) which enabled the ULg to welcome 100 incoming postdoctoral fellows that are selected following a transparent evaluation process that is supervised by the ULg Research Council. Regardless of the final result, all the applicants receive a feedback report that is written and agreed upon by 4 experts in their respective research area: 2 ULg experts and 2 international experts perform individual evaluations of the application file and following the suggestion of one of the experts who has been appointed as “reporter”, they all agree upon a final set of feedback report contents. The feedback is a valuable instrument for young scientists who are striving to become senior, independent researchers. ULg is happy to contribute to the definition of their future career pathway by giving them detailed and funded feedback regarding their scientific skills, their research profile as well as the research environment in which they will evolve. <http://www.ulg.ac.be/cofund>

The **Medical University of Graz** (AT) has a feedback form for the handling of job advertisements (in German only): <http://www.medunigraz.at/themen-mitarbeiten/personalentwicklung-und-betriebliches-gesundheitsmanagement/leistungsangebot/mitarbeiterinnenaufnahme/stellenausschreibungen/>

In Norway, the short-listed applicants receive information about strengths and weaknesses open to all of them.

5.2 Member State legislation examples

Austria: Following an amendment to the Universities Act, Austrian Universities must advertise research job vacancies (for scientific and research staff) internationally, at least EU-wide. University institutions decide autonomously on the instrument for advertising vacancies internationally. The Ministry of Science, Research and Economy actively promotes the EURAXESS Jobs portal via brochures, flyers, and newspaper advertisements in order to raise awareness of the European job database among universities and public research organisations.

Croatia: Under the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education (Article 40), an appointment to a research position within public scientific research organisations must be based on a public competition, published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Croatia, on the official internet website of the scientific research organisation as well as on the official Internet website for job vacancies of the European Research Area (i.e. the EURAXESS Jobs portal). The deadline for submission of applications has since Croatian accession to the EU been 30 days. Prior to Croatian accession, the period was eight days and it was at that time, but no longer is, legal to restrict recruitment to Croatian candidates.

Italy: Law 240/2010 promotes an open and transparent recruitment system. Law 240/2010 states that all (fixed-term) positions should be made publicly available on the national and EU websites. This obligation also includes PhD fellowships.

Even before adoption of this law, some Italian universities and research institutions were publishing their vacancies on the EURAXESS Jobs section on a voluntary basis. The vacancies are also available on a national database (run by the relevant Ministry). In addition, universities and public research organisations are requested to publish their research grant offers on the EURAXESS Jobs portal.

Poland: A provision in the amended Law on Higher Education states that all scientific posts in higher education institutions must be filled via competition (Article 118a). This facilitates scientists' careers and enables young scientists to have better access to grants (from the National Science Centre (NCN) and the National Centre for Research and Development) through open competitions. Experts from national and foreign science centres are able to participate in the competitions. Finally, an online advertisement page with information on vacancies at Polish higher education institutions has been created. Institutions are required to publish information on all ongoing and scheduled competitions. Higher education institutions are obliged to publish job vacancies on the website of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (dedicated database). The Law on Higher Education of 2011 requires Polish higher education institutions to publish job vacancies on the EURAXESS portal. Job vacancies published on the database of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education must also be published in English.

Spain: Transparency in recruitment is governed by Law 19/2013 "on transparency, access to public information and good governance". This law applies to public universities, independent organisations and state agencies belonging to the general, regional or local administration. Any organisation receiving public subsidies of more than EUR 100,000, or for whom public subsidies represent more than 40% of their annual income, are required to make their procedures public (active dissemination of information) and ensure free access to the related information. This is designed to support the open recruitment of researchers in publicly funded organisations

5.3 Sources of information

- The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (2005)
- Jobs Strategy 2012 (SGHRM Working Group on Jobs)
- ERA Communication 2012 “A Reinforced European Research Area partnership for excellence and Growth” COM(2012) 392 final
- 2012 Council Conclusions on 'A reinforced European research area partnership for excellence and growth'
- MORE2 Study
- European Commission Expert Group on the Research Profession in 2012
- European Commission Expert Group on ERA Implementation in 2013
- Technopolis study on OTM recruitment of researchers 2014
- CESAER paper July 2014 commenting on Expert Group report 2013
- VITAE review 2013 of HR Excellence in Research Award implementation across Europe
- European Framework for Research Careers (R1-R4)
- CESAER Task Force Human Resources “Adapting Hiring Procedures to the Challenges of the Future (2014)”
- 2014 Council Conclusions on progress in the European Research Area
- ERA Progress Report 2014,
- Researchers Report 2014, country profiles
- ERAC Mutual Learning Workshop in March 2014
- Innovation Union Scoreboard 2015

Links:

EURAXESS Jobs <http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/jobs/index>

EURAXESS Rights <http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/index>

