

ERA-SGHRM Working Group
on
"Human Resources issues, including the HRS4R¹ and other
examples of good practice not directly linked to the Charter &
Code"

Final Report

adopted by the
ERA Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility
at its plenary meeting on 23 May 2012

¹ A description of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) can be found in Annex 3

**ERA-SGHRM Working Group on
"Human Resources issues, including the HRS4R² and other examples of good practice
not directly linked to the Charter & Code"**

Report of the Working Group – 15 May 2011

1. Introduction

The Working Group on "*Human Resources issues, including the HRS4R and other examples of good practice not directly linked to the Charter & Code*" was set up in late 2011 as one of a wave of four new SGHRM working groups. The choice of topics for this new wave was triggered by the Council Conclusions of the Competitiveness Council of 31 May 2011 inviting the SGHRM to support the implementation and monitoring of the relevant Innovation Union (IU) commitments, including the development of the ERA framework announced in IU commitment #4: "*In 2012, the Commission will propose a European Research Area framework and supporting measures to remove obstacles to mobility and cross-border co-operation, aiming for them to be in force by end 2014.*"

The operational objective of the group was "*to provide an inventory of concrete initiatives and actions that have been introduced in Member States (MS) and Associated Countries (AC) to support the uptake of the Charter & Code principles by the relevant actors (researchers and their representative bodies, their employers and funders) and to assess the impact those measures have had or can reasonably be expected to have. [...] Based on examples of best practice, the Working Group should identify possible approaches to increase the effectiveness of the "Human Resources Strategy for Researchers" (HRS4R) process, with the ultimate aim of formulating recommendations addressed to the different stakeholders involved*"³.

In reflecting on the remit of the group and the complexity of the task, but also keeping in mind the fact that only three meetings were foreseen, the group decided to focus on the second objective, i.e. *to identify possible approaches to increase the effectiveness of the HRS4R process and to formulate recommendations to the different stakeholders*: **The main outcome of this report is therefore a set of targeted recommendations to the key stakeholders involved.** Producing a comprehensive inventory of all the major initiatives and actions in place and assessing their impact could (and probably should) be the topic of a dedicated study, but realistically is beyond the scope of a voluntary working group.

The group (including five SGHRM members and fourteen experts)⁴ greatly benefitted from the contributions by its members describing the initiatives they or their organisations are or have been involved in, and the challenges encountered. This report and its recommendations are therefore based on a diverse range of experiences by different actors operating in different national and institutional contexts.

2. Key stakeholders involved in implementing change and producing impact at European scale

Key Stakeholders

The topic of the Working Group is of relevance to a large number of different actors, with different needs and perspectives (see box).

² A description of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) can be found in Annex 3

³ The full text of the mandate can be found in Annex 2.

⁴ See Annex 1 for the full list of members of the working group

- **Researchers and their representative bodies** (such as associations, professional bodies, or learned societies) clearly are important stakeholders in the process of creating an attractive working environment and of setting up open, transparent and merit-based recruitment procedures. This includes both early-career and more senior researchers⁵.
- **Universities and research institutions** carry a key responsibility for implementing institutional change where necessary, and for developing appropriate human resources strategies for their researchers. While each institution will have to act on their own behalf, umbrella organisations representing universities or groups of research organisations at European or national level can encourage their member organisations to sign up to the HRS4R process and provide support, guidance and links with the broader European or national policy context.
- **Funding providers**⁶ (regardless whether they act at regional, national, European or even international level) can play a decisive role in the process of creating a more attractive and open research environment for the researchers they fund, by requiring beneficiary institutions to fulfil certain minimum standards.
- **Regional or national authorities** (such as ministries) influence the process in various different ways - on the one hand they may act as funders themselves, on the other they play an important role as policy makers. As such they can ensure that the policy framework supports rather than hinders institutions and funders in their endeavours.
- **The European Commission** is playing a similar role at European level. With the Lisbon Treaty the achievement of the European Research Area (for which the provision of more attractive working conditions for researchers is a key ingredient) has become an explicit objective of the EU.
- **Legislators at all levels** (regional, national and European) are instrumental in removing legal barriers to implementing good practice and institutional reform, and can even enforce such reform where necessary.
- **Industry and private enterprises** are important employers of researchers. As the initiatives currently in place to support the implementation of the principles underlying the Charter & Code are mainly concerned with the public sector, the Working Group also concentrated mostly on it. However, the private sector should not be ignored and could in some cases provide interesting good practice examples.
- **Trade unions** (and their national or European umbrella organisations) can also play an important role in the process, especially in some countries where trade unions specifically for the research sector exist, or where large national trade unions have dedicated chapters for researchers and other employees in the research sector.
- **Supporting actors** such as the national and European EURAXESS networks help raise awareness of the issues at stake, provide crucial information to researchers, their employers and funders, and help promote good practice through their extensive networks.

This list of actors, which does not claim to be exhaustive, shows the broad range of different actors involved and already gives an impression of the complexity of implementing change and producing impact at European scale. It is clear that no single actor can succeed alone - a

⁵ Note a framework describing four broad profiles of career stages has previously been adopted by the SGHRM http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research_policies/Towards_a_European_Framework_for_Research_Careers_final.pdf

⁶ particularly, but not exclusively, from the public sector

joint effort is needed, fully supported by all stakeholders involved. While working in concert, different actors will have different roles to play, according to their specific remit, area of responsibility and specific interest.

Impact at the European level

It is also clear that to have a real impact, creating a critical mass is of the essence. This applies at the level of regions or countries, where umbrella organisations (such as Rectors' Conferences) can play an important role in raising awareness amongst their members of the benefits of engaging in this institutional reform process. But it also applies at the European level, where the degree of implementation of the principles underlying the Charter & Code is not homogeneous across MS and AC.

In this context it is noteworthy that 50 of the 83 "HR Excellence in Research" logos awarded by the Commission so far have gone to institutions in a single country (the UK), while the remainder is distributed between organisations in only eight other MS and four AC, and one European organisation. In particular, 18 MS and 10 AC are either not involved at all in the Commission's HRS4R initiative, or the participating organisations from these countries have not yet reached the stage at which they could be rewarded with the 'HR Excellence in Research' logo. To make the HRS4R initiative a success, it is vital that it becomes a truly European process, fully supported by all MS and AC.

One important overarching aspect here is the recognition that the overall objective is to increase the attractiveness of research careers in Europe, through more attractive working conditions and more open, more transparent and more merit-based recruitment processes. Communication (especially at the level of the Commission and by national authorities) should be open and acknowledge the fact that these objectives can be (successfully) pursued through different approaches - including (but not restricted to) the Commission's HRS4R initiative. Sufficient visibility should be given to other initiatives and institutional approaches⁷, and to the experiences and outcomes related to these approaches.

3. Summary of key recommendations

The Working group has found evidence for many positive developments concerning the adoption and implementation of the principles underlying the Charter & Code by stakeholders across Europe. However, it has also identified a number of weaknesses in the implementation process which may hinder the full realisation of its potential. In line with its remit, the Working group therefore has formulated the following ten recommendations addressed to the different stakeholders involved, which will be explained in more detail in the text. Taken together these recommendations should enhance the Charter & Code aim to develop an attractive, open and sustainable European labour market for researchers. The Working Group members are confident that by taking on board those recommendations, the European Commission, MS and AC, the researchers themselves, institutions, funders and other stakeholders can significantly increase the effectiveness of the process.

⁷ Some selected initiatives and projects related to the Charter & Code are included in Annex 5 and the UK Concordat is covered in Annex 4

(1) The European Commission should set out a **long-term, coherent and integrated strategy** for the role of the "Human Resources Strategy for Researchers incorporating the Charter & Code" in delivering the ERA vision.

(2) The European Commission should ensure that the principles underlying the **Charter & Code and the "Human Resources Strategy for Researchers"** are **appropriately embedded in all Commission activities in support of the ERA, particularly in Horizon 2020**.

(3) Member States and Associated Countries should take a **leading role in transposing** the principles of the Charter & Code **within their national contexts** and create an **enabling framework** for the implementation of the "Human Resources Strategy for Researchers".

Collective labour agreements should integrate the Charter & Code principles where relevant.

(4) Funders should explore meaningful ways to integrate the principles underlying the Charter & Code in the **evaluation criteria and grant agreements** of their funding schemes, taking into account the national policy context and the nature of the schemes concerned.

Performance agreements and **national evaluations** of research institutions should equally consider Charter & Code related issues and initiatives.

(5) Umbrella organisations and membership organisations should engage their members in an **active dialogue** on the HRS4R. Where appropriate, they should assume a **coordinating role** for national level activities related to the implementation of the Charter & Code principles, including for the performance of a **national gap analysis**.

Member States and Associated Countries should provide **practical and financial support** for such coordination activities at national level.

(6) The European Commission should identify ways of encouraging **more organisations to participate** in the "Human Resources Strategy for Researchers" process based on the experience of organisations already involved.

(7) Both the European Commission and Member States / Associated Countries) should recognize the **scale of the challenge** in delivering and monitoring **real sustainable change** in researchers' working conditions.

Appropriate resources (human, financial and organisational) need to be made available both at the level of the Commission and Member States / Associated Countries. These resources need to be applied in synergy with one another.

(8) To establish a reliable baseline, the Commission should consider a **systematic study of the degree of implementation** of the Charter & Code principles by employers and funders across Europe,

In cooperation between the Commission and MS/AC an effective mechanism should be put in place to **monitor further progress** in the implementation process and **assess its impact** at the level of individual institutions and national or regional research systems. For this purpose, realistic and meaningful **indicators and targets** need to be developed.

(9) Institutions should embrace the **"Human Resources Strategy for Researchers" as an effective way of delivering their research and people strategies** and of increasing their national and international attractiveness to researchers.

(10) The representative bodies of researchers should work together with institutions to **raise the level of awareness of the Charter & Code** and their underlying principles in the scientific community. It is crucial that researchers **take ownership of these principles** and actively engage in their own career development.

4. The recommendations in detail

4.1. Need for a long-term, coherent and strategic approach

The Commission Recommendation on the Charter & Code foresees that it "*will be reviewed periodically by the Commission in the context of the Open Method of Coordination*"⁸. Seven years after its adoption it is time to carry out such a review, taking into account the changes in the research and policy landscape that have since taken place across Europe. The Working Group discussed the question whether a formal review would be beneficial at the present time. Although the group agreed that such a review, which should be embedded in a long-term strategy and not be considered as a one-off exercise, could be helpful to refocus the document in light of developments that have taken place since the Recommendation was adopted, it felt that this might distract the attention from implementation activities.

The Working Group recommends that guidance should be developed on how the different items of the Charter & Code should be interpreted in different settings, based on the large amount of feedback that both the Commission and MS/AC have gathered from stakeholders on the applicability of the Charter & Code in different contexts. In some cases a clarification of the wording could also be useful, as might be a regrouping of the different items to facilitate priority setting and adaptation to the national or local situation by MS and AC as well as individual stakeholders or their representative bodies.

The process of raising awareness of the value of good institutional HR management, which was initiated with the adoption of the Charter & Code in 2005, has been much enhanced by the launch of the HRS4R initiative in 2008, both at the level of individual institutions and at broader level, among other relevant stakeholders (including national authorities).

The pilot "Institutional HR Strategy Group"⁹, which brings together more than 150 institutions from across Europe in three cohorts, has given the implementation process a very useful boost. Participation in the group allows individual institutions to benefit from valuable peer support and guidance by the Commission in implementing the five steps of the HRS4R. However, as the Working Group member representing the Commission pointed out, it is clear that this approach is very resource intensive on the side of the Commission. Useful as it was to trigger a speedy uptake of the HRS4R by a sufficiently large number of institutions to produce a certain dynamic, it is not fit (and has not been designed) to continue indefinitely. At some point the Commission will have to take a step back and hand over the mentoring and coaching of individual institutions to the national level. This step will have to be prepared – the Commission would be well advised to launch at an early stage the necessary discussions with MS and AC to identify suitable organisations at national level that could take on this function on a sustainable basis.

Concerning the HRS4R as such, it is not at all clear what the long-term strategic vision of the Commission is concerning the future of the initiative, and how it will develop (and possibly change) in the future. Is the aim to get as many institutions involved as possible (both leading institutions of international renown and institutions of regional or local importance), or should successful participation in the process be achievable only by a smaller number of outstanding institutions that will benefit from the added visibility and exclusiveness?

The dilemma here is caused at least partly by the fact that there are two aspects that are closely related but different. On the one hand, there is the continuous improvement process that institutions participating in the five steps of the HRS4R process are undergoing, and the acknowledgement of the progress they are making in implementing the Charter & Code

⁸ Recommendation 13 of the Commission Recommendation on the Charter & Code

⁹ A short description of the working method of the "Institutional HR Strategy Group" is included in Annex 3.

principles. On the other hand there is the identification and recognition of good HR practices in institutions, which could be in place or achieved independently of any participation in the HRS4R initiative. The working group felt that the Commission is currently not very clear where it is putting the focus, and to some extent is mixing both through the award of the "HR Excellence in Research" logo as soon as the institution has passed the first two steps of the process (an internal gap analysis and the publication of an institutional HR strategy and action plan in response to the gap analysis).

The Working Group has been informed that the Commission is now examining the feasibility of setting up a European accreditation facility for good "Charter & Code based" HR management in public research institutions. According to the Commission, the idea behind such an accreditation mechanism would be to allow for the objective assessment of good HR practices within an institution independently from the participation in the HRS4R process, combining clear quality standards with flexibility as to how they have been achieved.

The group took note of the development but due to the limited information available did not have the opportunity to discuss the issue in any depth. During the short discussion that took place, some group members expressed the opinion that the idea of separating the support of the continuous improvement process (HRS4R) from the assessment of the quality of the HR practices in place (accreditation) may warrant further discussion, while other group members raised the question of the value of the "HR Excellence in Research" logo in this new context and how the "accreditation" would relate to the long-term strategy for the HRS4R.

Although the Working Group decided not to make any comments or recommendations on the proposed new Commission approach at this point, it would like to do so once more information about the concrete plans of the Commission become available.

The Commission should urgently clarify how it sees the future (beyond the next two or three years) of the HRS4R initiative in general and the logo in particular, and how both will fit within the Innovation Union commitment to improve the attractiveness of European universities and research institutions.

Recommendation 1:

The European Commission should set out a **long-term, coherent and integrated strategy** for the role of the "Human Resources Strategy for Researchers incorporating the Charter & Code" in delivering the ERA vision.

4.2. Embedding Charter & Code in EU frameworks for researchers

Increasing the attractiveness of European research careers has been at the heart of EU research policy for a number of years. The Innovation Union Flagship initiative proposes an ERA framework and supporting measures, to ensure through a common approach high quality doctoral training, attractive employment conditions and gender balance in research careers. The mobility of researchers across countries and sectors clearly requires open recruitment procedures in (public) research institutions and comparable research career structures and could be facilitated through the creation of pan-European supplementary pension funds.

The Communication "Supporting growth and jobs - an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems"¹⁰ of September 2011 lists the encouragement of institutions "to modernise their human resource management and obtain the HR Excellence in Research logo and to implement the recommendations of the Helsinki Group on Women in

¹⁰ COM(2011) 567 final

Science" among the list of "key policy issues for Member States and higher education institutions".

The Commission Recommendation on the Charter & Code proposes that MS regard the general principles and requirements of the Charter & Code as a means for establishing funding criteria for national/regional funding schemes, as well as adopt them for the auditing, monitoring and evaluation processes of public bodies¹¹. A similar approach should be taken at European level and would demonstrate to MS and institutions that the EC is committed to implementation. To this end, the Commission should lead by example and carry out a critical review of its own funding policies and programmes, including the current 7th Research Framework programme, the forthcoming Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, and the rules applying to Structural Funds where relevant.

In particular, the Commission should use the Charter & Code in a systematic way as a reference guide for its research funding instruments. The FP7 People Programme has integrated the Charter & Code as a key reference at the level of the Work Programme, including in the evaluation criteria for the different Marie Curie Actions, and issues such as employment status, social protection and career development are addressed in the Marie Curie Model Grant Agreements. This example of good practice should be extended to all other relevant areas of the Framework Programme.

To arrive at a coherent and integrated approach it is however equally important that the Charter & Code (and the associated HRS4R initiative, where appropriate) are embedded in all other relevant EU policy initiatives and related activities, such as the monitoring of the European Partnership for Researchers, the implementation of relevant Innovation Union Commitments or the setting-up of transparency tools like U-Multirank, while respecting their voluntary nature. Moreover it is crucial that the Commission improves its communication on these topics - setting up a clear communication strategy on the Charter & Code, the HRS4R and related policy initiatives that is fully embraced by all relevant Commission services would significantly increase its own credibility, both towards MS/AC and the other stakeholders involved.

Recommendation 2:

The European Commission should ensure that the principles underlying the **Charter & Code and the "Human Resources Strategy for Researchers"** are **appropriately embedded in all Commission activities in support of the ERA, particularly in Horizon 2020.**

4.3. Linking the HRS4R process and other similar initiatives to the national (or regional) policy level

Just as it is important to ensure that the HRS4R initiative is meaningfully linked to all relevant European policy processes, it is crucial that the same is happening at national level. In order to achieve a high level of acceptance and support of the initiative by national actors, it will be imperative to embed it into national strategies as has been achieved for example in the UK and the French-speaking Community of Belgium. To this end, national authorities should take a leading role in transposing the HRS4R into their own national context, taking into account the specificities of the national research system. Supported by national level stakeholder organisations, they should explain and promote its relevance for other national policy initiatives.

¹¹ Recommendation 5 of the Commission Recommendation on the Charter & Code

Some items of the Charter & Code are already covered by other European initiatives and charters; others have been integrated in national legislation across the Union. Where relevant, links to the Charter & Code as a reference framework could be introduced to key policy frameworks and documents (including legislative acts) to further enhance the integration of the principles underlying the Charter & Code in all relevant national initiatives. Examples for such an approach include the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers¹², the Wallonia-Brussels Partnership for Researchers¹³, the Norwegian White Paper on Research¹⁴, the new Spanish Science Law¹⁵ and the Italian University Reform Law¹⁶.

Performance agreements are one way in which national authorities can incentivise the effective implementation of the HRS4R (or its national adaptation) by publicly funded institutions. Austria has implemented performance agreements within the public university sector that make explicit reference to the Charter & Code¹⁷.

National (or regional) funders also play a key role as catalysers of the process. Even though they will usually not be acting as employers of researchers themselves, they can have a strong structuring impact by integrating the principles underlying Charter & Code in their evaluation criteria and grant agreements (similarly to the FP7 Marie Curie Actions). The way and extent to which this can be done will strongly depend on the degree to which institutions have already put good HR management practices in place, on the overall national policy context and on national longer-term strategies and priorities. In this context the role of national funding bodies as policy advisors will also be crucial and ensure the coherence of the approach.

Finally, collective labour agreements should integrate the Charter & Code principles where relevant, to ensure that researchers enjoy attractive working conditions. This is currently the case for example in the Netherlands.

Recommendation 3:

Member States and Associated Countries should take a **leading role in transposing** the principles of the Charter & Code **within their national contexts** and create an **enabling framework** for the implementation of the "Human Resources Strategy for Researchers".

Collective labour agreements should integrate the Charter & Code principles where relevant.

Recommendation 4:

Funders should explore meaningful ways to integrate the principles underlying the Charter & Code in the **evaluation criteria and grant agreements** of their funding schemes, taking into account the national policy context and the nature of the schemes concerned.

¹² <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/concordat>

¹³ http://www.euraxess-cfwb.be/doc/SPW_DG06_Parteneriat_FWB_UK_BD.pdf

¹⁴ Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, White Paper: Climate for Research - Report to the Storting No. 30 (2008-2009)

¹⁵ Law on Science, Technology and Innovation (Law 14/2011)

¹⁶ Rules on organization of universities, academic staff and recruitment, as well as delegation to the Government to enhance the quality and efficiency of the university system (Law n. 240/2010)

¹⁷ Essentially, these can be seen as contracts between Austrian universities and the Federal Ministry of Science and Research. Being publicly funded to a very high degree, universities are committed to achieve certain aims in teaching, research, human resources development, internationalization and mobility of students and researchers. For the period 2010-2012 the universities have committed to endorsing the Charter & Code and to implementing those points they consider as most important and crucial factors matching their own development plans.

Performance agreements and national evaluations of research institutions should equally consider Charter & Code related issues and initiatives.

4.4. Supporting the HR Strategy for Researchers initiative at national or sectoral level

As mentioned before, umbrella organisations at national level have an important role to play in ensuring a strong participation in the HRS4R process (or in similar initiatives) and can provide crucial support to the individual institutions involved.

In particular, membership organisations and other entities bringing together a whole sector (such as the higher education sector, the public research sector outside higher education) can prepare the ground by carrying out a national or sectoral gap analysis. By identifying those factors that equally affect all institutions (legal issues, common practices of other actors) such national or sectoral gap analyses allow the institutions to concentrate in their own gap analysis on those factors that are specific to them and that they can effectively tackle through intra-institutional approaches. It is important that in the elaboration of national or sectoral gap analyses all the different actors involved should be integrated, including relevant ministries and other policy makers.

Carrying out a sectoral or national gap analysis could also be a good opportunity to reorganise, regroup or rephrase some of the items covered by the Charter & Code in the specific national or sectoral context, thus making it easier for individual institutions to engage in the HRS4R process which foresees a gap analysis at institutional level against the 40 items of the Charter & Code.

A national gap analysis was carried out in 2005 for Ireland (by a consultancy contracted by the Conference of Heads of Irish Universities, now Irish Universities Association). In 2006 a UK higher education sector working group, coordinated by Universities UK and Research Councils UK, undertook a national gap analysis which then fed into the development of the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. In 2008 the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions, following a request by the Ministry for Education and Research, performed a national gap analysis for Norway. Currently the Slovak Rectors' Conference is considering launching a gap analysis for the Slovak Higher Education sector, and similar intentions have been expressed by other (mostly smaller) countries. In those cases where such national gap analyses have been carried out they proved to be very useful to facilitate the engagement of individual institutions in the process. Such initiatives should therefore be supported by the national authorities, both through practical support and possibly also through financial support to cover the associated costs.

Another way in which umbrella organisations (in particular national Rectors' Conferences or similar entities) can provide support and guidance in the implementation of the principles underlying the Charter & Code by their member organisations is by setting up a dedicated working group, bringing together representatives from different member organisations, to discuss the process and the different steps involved. If no experience with the HRS4R process exists among the member organisations, representatives from other institutions that are already involved could be invited to provide an "insider perspective" on the topic. Such an approach would allow member organisations to decide in a well-informed manner whether they want to join the process and how, without interfering in the members' autonomy of decision making. For those who decide to get involved such a working group would provide a national level platform for the exchange of experiences with their peers, which should then be linked to the "Institutional HR Strategy Group" that exists at European level. It would help to streamline the process and reduce the workload for individual member organisations, while taking into account the diversity among individual institutions.

The discussion above shows that the active engagement of membership organisations and umbrella organisations with the whole topic area of Charter & Code, HRS4R and related initiatives is very important to raise awareness and to provide individual institutions with the guidance, support and background information that they need to decide on their participation. At the same time the importance of an active and open exchange of views between the individual member institutions and the leadership level of the umbrella organisation should be stressed. If these steps are taken then both individual institutions and sector bodies will be beneficially included in the process.

Recommendation 5:

Umbrella organisations and membership organisations should engage their members in an **active dialogue** on the HRS4R. Where appropriate, they should assume a **coordinating role** for national level activities related to the implementation of the Charter & Code principles, including for the performance of a **national gap analysis**.

Member States and Associated Countries should provide **practical and financial support** for such coordination activities at national level.

4.5. Breaking down barriers to an active participation in the HRS4R initiative

One of the most important questions for any organisation considering joining the HRS4R initiative is about the actual and potential benefits such an engagement could bring to the organisation. The Working group members felt that institutions may not see the benefits of participation in the HRS4R initiative. In this context it would be very helpful if the Commission could produce a concise document clearly spelling out in a convincing manner what benefits different types of organisations could realistically expect to gain if they join the process. This would be useful not only for the institutions already engaged (to keep the momentum) and for potential participants, but also for multipliers and umbrella organisations that are trying to encourage their member organisations to participate.

To support the identification of such benefits a survey should be carried out among the member organisations of the "Institutional HR Strategy Group" that have already passed the first three steps of the process, i.e. that have been awarded the "HR Excellence in Research" logo and are at the stage of implementing the institutional HR strategy and action plan that they have drawn up. This could be informed by and supplement the review, already carried out for the working group, of UK institutions¹⁸ on the benefits of the award. Although it will be too early to identify any longer-term impacts at this stage, this should at least allow the Commission to identify some concrete success stories where tangible benefits have been observed by the participants. Potential benefits could be related to different factors and should be identified as such (for example improved intra-institutional processes leading to better communication and efficiency gains, ability to attract high quality researchers leading to enhanced reputation and research output, greater international visibility through the active use of the logo, etc.).

In this context the added value of receiving the "HR Excellence in Research" logo should also be considered. It would be helpful to know what the logo means to different audiences - internal and external researchers and their representative bodies (staff associations, professional societies), national funders (including national ministries), and society at large - to better understand the benefit that is associated to receiving the logo. In particular, it would be interesting to know whether the award of the logo as such can be beneficial and make the

¹⁸ Annex 4 includes a summary of the perceived benefits of the HRS4R to UK institutions.

acquisition of funding more likely, be it core funding from national sources or competitive funding from national or European programmes.

It is also important to be realistic about the workload and costs associated with the implementation of the HRS4R (or other related initiatives). In this context it is important to stress that the corresponding activities should be integrated into already existing management tools and firmly linked to overarching institutional strategies. In this way it can be made sure that the process supports what is already underway rather than introducing additional burden. This will be particularly important in times of budget cuts and personnel shortages. To show how this can effectively be done in different organisational contexts case studies should be prepared by the Commission or relevant national bodies, drawing on the experience gained through the HRS4R process.

Research institutions and funders operate within a given national (or sometimes regional) legal framework, which can be supportive (e.g. equality legislation) but can also present constraints or even obstacles to the implementation of certain Charter & Code principles. This can be the case in particular with regard to employment legislation, or legislation prescribing the way in which recruitment procedures have to be organised. These issues need to be tackled at political level. Organisations such as national Rectors' Conferences, national Research Councils or other relevant organisations involved in the policy making process can play an important role here to raise awareness and propose legislative changes. On the other hand, individual institutions that have no influence on the issues at stake and have to cope with the constraints imposed on them should not be penalised for this in terms of their participation in the HRS4R process. In particular, the Commission should take such obstacles into account when assessing the institutional HR strategy and action plan put forward by such organisations.

4.6. Importance of effective communication strategies to facilitate stronger participation in the process

Effective communication at all levels is crucial for the successful implementation of the HRS4R initiative, or of any other initiative to enhance the level of uptake of the principles underlying the Charter & Code by employers and funders.

Communication at the level of both the Commission and MS/AC urgently has to be stepped up, made more coherent and more effective. For example, the information content on both the European and the national EURAXESS Portals should be significantly improved, extended and streamlined, and regularly enhanced with relevant news, information on related policy developments, links to relevant publications, statistics and success stories, especially those emanating from the "Institutional HR Strategy Group".

National level supporting organisations and umbrella organisations should equally intensify their efforts to provide their stakeholders with relevant, targeted information in an appropriate form. Umbrella organisations, Rectors' Conferences and other multipliers should ensure that all their members or clients are aware of the process and receive the most essential information, including where to find more details.

At the same time, communication and awareness raising at the level of the individual universities, research institutions and funding agencies also has to be enhanced, including all key institutional stakeholders (researchers, HR department, strategy department, career centre, research office, grants office etc.). To ensure consistency, information within the institutions should be coordinated by one lead department in the context of an overarching communication strategy.

It is important to recognise that different stakeholder groups play different roles in the HRS4R process. As a consequence, different approaches should be used depending on the target audience, concerning both the method and form of communication (including some meta-communication about how the information and principles of the Charter & Code should be interpreted and put in context) and the content to focus on. This applies as much to the communication by the Commission and by national authorities as it does to the awareness raising activities by multipliers and intra-institutional communication. Depending on the target group, communication should focus on or prioritise different principles of the Charter & Code depending on what is most important to that group.

The “Vitae briefings on the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers” provide a good practice example. Vitae has developed a series of briefings for higher education professionals involved in implementing the principles of the 2008 Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. The series contains targeted briefings for senior managers, human resources specialists, staff developers, careers specialists, managers of researchers and research staff¹⁹.

Recommendation 6:

The European Commission should identify ways of encouraging **more organisations to participate** in the "Human Resources Strategy for Researchers" process based on the experience of organisations already involved.

4.7. Need for appropriate resources for implementation

From the discussion above it is clear that an effective implementation of the principles underlying the Charter & Code, supported for example through the HRS4R initiative, requires coordinated action at various different levels. It is crucial that both the Commission and MS/AC recognize the scale of the challenge and the importance and urgency of allocating the necessary resources to it. This applies to human, financial and organisational resources.

Concretely, to support institutions in the implementation of the principles underlying the Charter & Code, the Commission should foresee adequate (earmarked) funding in all funding schemes involved in the innovation cycle, in particular Horizon 2020, but also the Structural Funds, where relevant. This could take the form of dedicated support actions or, in a more integrated way, be provided as part of project funding if the project involves the recruitment or employment of researchers. The Commission should also continue to provide a European platform for the exchange of experiences between institutions from across Europe. To date, the Commission's approach has been based on different "cohorts" implementing the 5 steps of the formal HRS4R process, with a very close follow-up of the individual institutions in the different cohorts. To reach a broader audience in the future the Commission should offer Mutual Learning Seminars, training programmes and information events on a more general basis, rather than focusing on coaching individual institutions.

Similarly, MS should consider launching national support initiatives to stimulate a higher participation rate in the HRS4R process. By setting up and supporting national working groups involving the different actors at national level they could greatly facilitate the structured exchange of good practice and peer support²⁰. If adequately linked to the European platform to be supported by the Commission, these national working groups would provide an

¹⁹ <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/518821/Vitae-briefings-on-the-Concordat-to-Support-the-Career-Development-of-Researchers.html>

²⁰ For example, the Irish Universities Association (IUA) is planning to set up such a national working group.

effective way of transferring European good practice and experiences gathered in other countries to the national level.

Mechanisms supporting national benchmarking exercises concerning human resources management in research should be put in place and adequately supported to allow institutions to position themselves vis-à-vis their national peers. This would provide concrete incentives for institutions to join the process and to implement better HR management policies and practices at institutional level. The implementation process for the UK "Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers" is an example where this has been done in a very successful way as described in the "Three-year Review of the Implementation of the Concordat..."²¹.

Recommendation 7:

Both the European Commission and Member States / Associated Countries should recognize the **scale of the challenge** in delivering and monitoring real sustainable change in researchers' working conditions.

Appropriate resources (human, financial and organisational) need to be made available both at the level of the Commission and Member States / Associated Countries. These resources need to be applied in synergy with one another.

4.8. Understanding the current situation²² and implementing effective monitoring mechanisms

The Recommendation on the Charter & Code proposes²³ that "*Member States put in place the necessary monitoring structures to review this Recommendation regularly, as well as to measure the extent to which employers, funders and researchers have applied*" it. While initially MS and AC provided regular updates on activities and good practice examples in the context of the preparation of the "Implementation Reports" by the SGHRM, it appears that in the vast majority of countries no formalised monitoring structures have been put in place. As a result there is currently no comprehensive (quantitative and qualitative) information available as to the actual level of implementation of the principles underlying the Charter & Code by employers and funders (including such crucial parameters as open recruitment or portability of grants which are currently being discussed in great detail in the context of the preparations of the ERA framework).

In order to get a better understanding of the actual situation, the challenges faced by organisations in the implementation of the Charter & Code principles (through the HRS4R process or otherwise) a systematic monitoring mechanism should be put in place in cooperation between the Commission and MS/AC. This mechanism should assess the current situation and identify realistic and meaningful indicators and targets. It should propose a roadmap and milestones, taking into account the overall research system in the different countries (baseline), the legal system and other country specific factors. As such it should be closely linked to other on-going policy and monitoring activities such as the Annual Researchers Report that is being prepared in the context of the monitoring of the European Partnership for Researchers and the Innovation Union flagship initiative.

²¹Three-year review of the Implementation of the Concordat <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/Vitae-Concordat-three-year-review-report-April-2012.pdf.532311.download>

²² Note Annex 6 contains a short summary of further research which is urgently needed.

²³ Recommendation 8 of the Commission Recommendation on the Charter & Code

As a first step an analysis could be carried out regarding the correlation between the "endorsement" of the Charter & Code by employers and funders and any follow-up actions by the organisations concerned. In other words, is the act of endorsing the Charter & Code just a formal exercise without any concrete commitment (perhaps in some cases triggered through external pressures such as the linking of the endorsement with national funding), or is it really the first step towards improvements in the HR management of the research institution (or, in the case of funders, of the integration of Charter & Code principles in the funding schemes)? Participation in the HRS4R initiative (and the award of the "HR Excellence in Research" logo) could be one possible indicator for a more serious engagement, but should not be considered to be the only way in which organisations can take action. In fact a broader analysis is important to understand whether institutions in countries that are not well represented in the HRS4R initiative are really lagging behind in the modernization of their HR policies, or whether they simply prefer to choose different mechanisms for doing so, or are already very well placed.

Such an analysis should also take into account the nature, size and other characteristics of the organisations concerned to provide information as to which kind of organisations are more likely to fully embrace the process as an opportunity to modernize their HR management structures, and which are more likely not to engage at all or only in a formal way (endorsement without follow-up).

Robust evidence is urgently needed concerning the actual impact of improved HR management. The "Careers in research online survey"²⁴(CROS) in the UK provides some evidence that researchers at institutions participating in the Concordat implementation process do perceive improvements in key areas of concern to them. CROS has been running since 2002 and gathers anonymous data about working conditions, career aspirations and career development opportunities for research staff in UK higher education. As such it provides valuable feedback on the impact of national policy developments on researchers and their careers. However, there seem to be no comparable systematic feedback mechanisms in place in other countries.

One of the motivations for institutions to get involved in the HRS4R process (and probably for many the most important one) is the assumption that by making improvements in their HR policies and practices, institutions will be in a better position to attract excellent researchers, boosting the reputation and the research output of the institution and ultimately generating income (through grant acquisition or performance-based national funding). While this argument appears to "make sense", the evidence base could usefully be strengthened and communicated. A dedicated analysis of the presumed causality (and whether it applies equally to different types of institutions) would be extremely useful for policy makers in general, but in particular also to convince more organisations to get involved in the HRS4R process.

Recommendation 8:

To establish a reliable baseline, the Commission should consider a **systematic study of the degree of implementation** of the Charter & Code principles by employers and funders across Europe,

In cooperation between the Commission and MS/AC an effective mechanism should be put in place to **monitor further progress** in the implementation and **assess its impact** at the level of individual institutions and national or regional research systems. For this purpose, realistic and meaningful **indicators and targets** need to be developed.

²⁴ <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/143071/Careers-in-Research-Online-Survey-CROS.html>

4.9. Engaging researchers in the HRS4R process and promoting the Charter & Code

Effective implementation of the Charter & Code principles also requires active participation from researchers. Here, awareness of the Charter & Code constitutes a fundamental first step towards any engagement. While we do not have a comprehensive overview concerning the level of awareness of the Charter & Code among researchers, existing data suggests that it is very low. For instance, in a survey of early stage researchers in twelve European countries, only 23.4% of the Spanish respondents have ever heard of the Charter & Code.²⁵ This figure must be compared with even lower awareness rates in France (13.6%), the Netherlands (6.4%), Germany (5.2%) and Finland (3%). A promotional campaign as part of a coherent communication strategy must be launched. In this context the representative bodies of researchers (associations, learned societies, or professional bodies) are well-positioned to communicate and promote the principles underlying the Charter & Code to the scientific community.

Finally, while this report has elaborated on the roles of European, national, regional and institutional actors in the HRS4R process, researchers have an equally crucial role in the successful implementation of the Charter & Code principles. Indeed, twelve items of the Charter & Code (ranging from public engagement to continuous professional development) explicitly address researchers. It follows that researchers must take ownership of the relevant principles in order for the Charter & Code to have the positive effects envisaged.

Recommendation 9:

Institutions should embrace the **"Human Resources Strategy for Researchers"** as an **effective way of delivering their research and people strategies** and of increasing their national and international attractiveness to researchers.

Recommendation 10:

The representative bodies of researchers should work together with institutions to **raise the level of awareness of the Charter & Code** and their underlying principles in the scientific community. It is crucial that researchers **take ownership of these principles** and actively engage in their own career development.

²⁵ EURODOC Survey I: The First EURODOC Survey on Doctoral Candidates in Twelve European Countries, Descriptive Report, Germany: The European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers, 2011, page 23

**ERA-SGHRM Working Group on
"Human Resources issues, including the HRS4R and other examples of good practice
not directly linked to the Charter & Code"**

Report - Annexes

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A.1 Working Group members

SGHRM members:

Chair: Iain Cameron (UK)

Secretariat: Dagmar Meyer (EC)

Members: Marc Vanholsbeeck (BE)

Fulvio Esposito (IT)

Radojka Vercko (SI)

Experts nominated by SGHRM members from MS/AC:

Christoph Hahn (AT - Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research)

Anja Schwarz (DE – German Rectors' Conference)

Claus Durck Hovej (DK – Copenhagen Business School)

Manuel Fernández Esquinas (ES – CSIC / Institute for Advanced Social Studies)

Virginie Choay (FR – Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique)

Justin Synnott (IE – Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology / from 30 March 2012: University College Dublin)

Jennifer Brennan (IE, alternate – Irish Universities Association)

Elin Kollerud (NO – Research Council Norway)

Ellen Pearce (UK – VITAE)

Experts nominated by COM

Johan Huysse (Association of Universities of the Netherlands)

Anne-Sylvie Catherin (CERN)

Seamus Hegarty (CERN, alternate)

Denisa Voskárová (Slovak Rectors' Conference)

Meng-Hsuan Chou (individual expert, ARENA - Centre for European Studies at the University of Oslo – from 2 March 2012)

A.2 Mandate of the Working Group

The document "Third Cycle of the SGHRM Working Groups - objectives, outcomes and profiles" (SGHRM/280911/05) defines the mandate of the Working group as follows:

WG 1: Human Resources issues, including the HRS4R and other examples of good practice not directly linked to the Charter & Code – [IU Commitment: 1, 4 and 30]

Concrete Deliverable(s):

1) An inventory of initiatives taken thus far to implement the C&C principles as well as other examples of good practice not directly linked to C&C. This should also include the challenges faced and "what does not work".

2) Recommendations to relevant stakeholders on how to increase the effectiveness of the HRS4R process.

Focus/Goal is to assess the effectiveness of the initiatives and activities that have been launched so far to support the implementation of the key Charter & Code (C&C) principles by the relevant actors in MS/AC. Other models and examples of good practice not directly linked to the C&C will also be assessed. This preparatory work will enable the WG to identify approaches to increase the effectiveness of the HRS4R process in close coordination with the Commission.

Operational Objective is to provide an **inventory of concrete initiatives and actions** that have been introduced in MS/AC to support the uptake of the C&C principles by the relevant actors (researchers and their representative bodies, their employers and funders) and to assess the **impact** those measures have had or can reasonably be expected to have. Other models

and examples of good practice not directly linked to the C&C will also be assessed. In doing so, the WG should focus on a number of key C&C principles, keeping in mind that the effect (seriousness) of non-compliance will vary between different principles. Building on these preparations and based on examples of best practice, the WG should identify possible approaches to increase the effectiveness of the HRS4R process, with the ultimate aim of formulating **recommendations** addressed to the different stakeholders involved. Special attention should be paid to the assessment of national / sectoral approaches – national authorities, representative bodies such as rectors' conferences, organisations like VITAE etc. have an important role to play.

Members²⁶ and Stakeholders Profile would include countries that have national structured approaches in place to support the uptake of C&C (e.g. through incentives or performance agreements, coordination support etc.) and could include experts from Ministries in charge of Employment or Higher Education and Research. Stakeholders to invite would include representatives of social partners, of associations of universities or research institutions, of funding bodies, and of researcher associations. **The participation of HR Strategy Group representatives would be highly desirable.** Participation by representatives from the ERC Executive Agency (Support to the Scientific Council) and DG EAC (Marie Curie) could be envisaged. Other DGs could be invited on an *ad hoc* basis.

A.3 The Human Resources Strategy for Researchers and the institutional HR Strategy Group

The *Human Resources Strategy for Researchers incorporating Charter & Code* was launched in 2008 at the Rennes French Presidency Conference on Young Researchers. The HR Strategy for Researchers provides support to employers and funders of researchers in the **practical implementation** of the Charter & Code principles. This step by step process enables organisations to truly integrate the principles in their own Human Resources policy, thereby promoting the organisation as a stimulating and favourable work place, or as a funder that promotes the provision of such a favourable environment through their funding rules.

The *Human Resources Strategy* is easy to apply and flexible in its validation:

- It is implemented by individual institutions on a voluntary basis
- It is based on an institution's internal analysis of Charter & Code principles vis-à-vis its rules and practices on HR management
- It is simple and light, non-bureaucratic and flexible, recognizing the variety of situations across institutions
- It is a sign of transparency and provides easy, publicly accessible information on the actions by institutions to implement the Charter & Code principles

Concretely, the *Human Resources Strategy* consists of the following five steps:

1. an **internal analysis** in order to assess how far the organisation already operates in alignment with the Charter & Code;
2. the publication of an institutional **HR Strategy for Researchers and Action Plan** addressing the most important gaps identified, through concrete actions;

²⁶ In addition to SGHRM delegates who should be part of each WG

3. the award of the right to use the "**HR Excellence in Research**" logo by the European Commission, provided that certain requirements are fulfilled;
4. a **self-assessment** of the implementation of the Action Plan after two years;
5. an **external evaluation** after four years which could lead either to the renewal or the withdrawal of the right to use the logo.



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

So far (May 2012) **83 organisations** have received the "HR Excellence in Research" logo, a further nine are about to be announced. The full list can be found on the EURAXESS Rights website (<http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/rights>).

In September 2009 the Commission set up the *Institutional HR Strategy Group*, bringing together research institutions, funding providers, umbrella organisations and multipliers from across Europe, in order to provide a platform for the exchange of experiences and best practice related to the HR Strategy process. The group currently has about **150 member organisations**, in three cohorts of approximate 50 organisations each. It is foreseen to launch a fourth cohort towards the end of 2012.

Besides many universities and research organisations, the group also includes various funding agencies as well as European and intergovernmental organisations (e.g. CERN, EMBL, ESF). Various Rectors' Conferences participate as multipliers; the EUA participates as an observer. Organisations representing researchers (such as EURODOC and the Marie Curie Fellows Association) or research managers and administrators (EARMA) also participate.

A.4 The UK Concordat to support the career development of researchers

A.4.1 UK mechanism for the implementation of the European Charter and Code via the HR Excellence in Research process

In 2005 the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for their Recruitment was launched and was the subject of a conference in London as part of the UK Presidency. Since its launch, the EC and Member States have been seeking to support the implementation of the Charter and Code. A UK-level gap analysis was undertaken in 2006 which mapped UK legislation, policy and practice against the Charter and Code.

In 2008 the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers²⁷ was launched as an agreement between funders and employers of researchers in the UK. This, combined with the Quality Assurance Agency audit of doctoral programmes, effectively transposes the Charter and Code principles into the UK context.

In 2010, Vitae agreed with the EC a UK-wide process which enables UK HEIs to gain the European Commission's HR Excellence in Research Award. This acknowledges institutions' alignment with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for their Recruitment. The UK process incorporates both the 'QAA Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes'²⁸ and the 'Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers' to enable institutions that have published Concordat implementation plans to

²⁷ www.vitae.ac.uk/concordat

²⁸ Currently being updated

gain the HR Excellence in Research Award. The UK approach includes ongoing national evaluation and benchmarking.

Since 2010 Vitae has been managing the process for UK institutions to gain the HR Excellence in Research award and set up a UK panel which has reviewed submissions for the award. The panel includes a Commission representative. There are three submission deadlines a year for UK organisations.

The high-level Concordat Strategy Group has provided annual reports to the Funders Forum on progress in the implementation of the Concordat principles and a major three year review of progress has just been published²⁹. Resources for implementation have been made available by the Research Councils and UK higher education funding bodies. Vitae has invested significant resource in supporting the Concordat implementation and enabling UK institutions to gain the HR Excellence in Research badge.

At April 2012, the UK has 50 institutions with the award. The latest tranche of 8 organisations are due to be announced in May.

A.4.2 Review of perceived benefits of the HR Excellence in Research Award to UK organisations

The UK currently has the highest number of institutions with the award of all Member States. As part of the work of the SGHRM working group on Human Resource issues, an initial review was undertaken by Vitae based on the publicly available information from four institutions (and a funding body committed to gaining the award), outlining the benefits of gaining the award. These views were supplemented with additional information from two further institutions in an open call for further feedback by email in February. Six major themes emerged as a result.

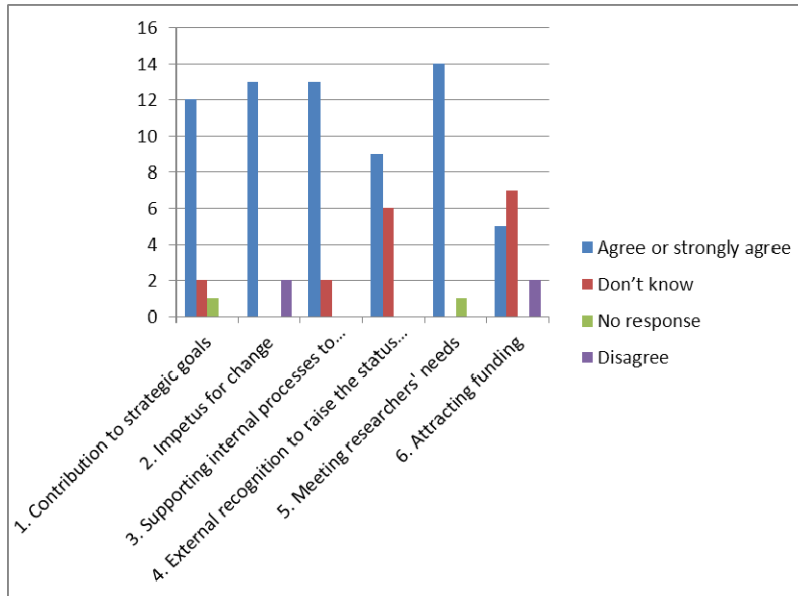
- Contribution to strategic goals
- Impetus for change
- Supporting internal processes
- Raising the status of researcher development
- Meeting researchers' needs
- Attracting funding

Vitae were interested to explore whether these perceived benefits identified were common across the wider group of institutions with the award. Therefore all 50 UK institutions with the award were asked to provide feedback as to whether they agreed with the benefits identified and to provide examples and additional information.

There were 15 responses to the survey (which included two responses from one institution, one relating to the Concordat and one relating to the "HR Excellence in Research" badge). The responses included six Russell Group and two 1994 Group institutions. Institutions were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with six major themes.

Responses are below:

²⁹ <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/Vitae-Concordat-three-year-review-report-April-2012.pdf>



At least 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that gaining the HR Excellence in Research Award had:

- **Contributed to strategic goals**, including improving the quality and impact of research, contributing to institutional strategies to appoint, develop and retain the best staff to pursue research excellence, and the preparation of researchers for wide employability and economic contribution

'Preparing our submission gave us a further opportunity to check that we were 'joining up' related initiatives'

- **Provided an impetus for change**, including driving the set-up of steering and implementation groups, supporting culture change internally, and 'concentrating minds' at senior level

'...the particular benefit was in re-affirming the progress already made, rather than in initiating new activity. It is essential, within the UK, that the UK Concordat and EC HR work continue to be dovetailed'

- **Supported internal processes to embed and enhance researcher development**, including the focus on developing an action plan which led to useful conversations about process, implementation, representation, timescales and evaluation. It also included an opportunity to recognise what is done well, identify good practice and refine, enhance and improve existing provision across the university

'... this has affected practice in all areas across the university and will be embedded in processes such as appraisals and staff development'

- **Met researchers' needs**, including delivering what 'younger' researchers have asked for and improving researchers abilities to supervise, make funding bids, manage budgets and research groups etc.

‘...the EC HR kite-mark acknowledges progress made in implementing the Concordat’

Nine out of fourteen institutions (65%) reported that there was a benefit of **‘external recognition to raise the status of researcher development**, including external recognition which raised the profile of the work internally, status and kudos for the work, and a perception that this marked the institution out as being 'one of the best'".

‘Our institution is already known as world leading. For us, the particular value of the kite-mark is in strengthening the European Research Area.’

A third of responses highlighted the award was beneficial in **‘attracting funding**, including being perceived as useful in applications for funding (particularly on a European level)’. However almost 50% of respondents said they didn’t know if this was a benefit, or highlighted that there was not currently sufficient evidence of this.

‘I do not have any evidence of this yet though it might be happening and I will explore this angle.’

A.5 Selected other initiatives and projects related to the Charter & Code

The purpose of this annex is to provide a snapshot of some recent or on-going initiatives and projects related to the implementation of the Charter & Code principles, in some cases with financial support by the European Commission. Unless indicated otherwise, the examples relate to initiatives in which Working Group members have been or are involved.

A.5.1 EURAXESS T.O.P.II project (based on a contribution by Jacqueline McCarthy, British Council, EURAXESS Bridgehead Organisation for the UK)

Within the framework of the EURAXESS T.O.P. II project, Euraxess UK has outlined a series of activities and objectives in order to help Euraxess members to promote the Charter & Code, and demonstrate ways in which it is implemented across Europe.

Aims and Objectives

Euraxess UK aims to gain a clearer picture on the Charter & Code’s progress to date; by exploring how much the Charter & Code is being recognised and implemented by institutions and researchers; looking at the interface between Euraxess Service centres and Euraxess Rights (Charter & Code, "HR Excellence in Research" badge); and building training materials for Euraxess members to promote the "HR Excellence in Research" badge and the principles that lie behind it.

Activities

In May 2012 a baseline analysis is foreseen to check all the Euraxess national portals and assess the presence and level of information about the Charter & Code and "HR Excellence in Research" badge. An online survey will be launched, targeted at researchers to understand their level of awareness of the Charter & Code and the "HR Excellence in Research" badge also. Subsequently a template text on the "HR Excellence in Research" badge for Bridgehead Organisations (BHOs) will be prepared, for use on the national portals. In an effort to heighten the awareness of the initiative, suggestions for promotion strategies will also be provided to them.

Euraxess UK will ask targeted BHOs (from DE, EL, HR, and NO) to identify situations where the HR Strategy process has been successful. Selected case studies will be written up and disseminated to share best practice.

In early 2013, Euraxess UK plans to create a slide pack for Euraxess partners to promote the Charter & Code and the "HR Excellence in Research" badge. This will have two tailored modules: one targeting research administrators and managers, the other targeting researchers and researcher associations. These slides and other material will be made to the leader of the training work package of the T.O.P.II project, to be incorporated into the Euraxess training sessions at the Euraxess conference in April 2013, where also a presentation is foreseen.

In 2014, the measures from the baseline analysis will be repeated to assess the progress of the Euraxess portals in promoting the Charter & Code and the "HR Excellence in Research" badge.

Expected impact

The impact expected to result from this activity is that Euraxess Services members will better understand the principles behind the Charter & Code, and will therefore be able to better promote the HR Strategy process, both within their own organisations and externally. It is also hoped to bring two strands of Euraxess (Rights and Services) closer together on a national level.

A.5.2 "PeopleNetwork" - Network of National Contact Points (NCPs) for the FP7 "People" Programme (based on a contribution by Marianna Gritzala, National Hellenic Research Foundation - NHRF)

In the framework of the EU funded project "PeopleNetwork" (August 2008 – December 2011), NHRF in its capacity as Work Package Leader and Leader of Task 4.5 was entrusted with the promotion of the *European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers* as a key EU policy tool for the enhancement of the human resources in the ERA. The objectives of the Task were to increase the stakeholders' awareness to the Charter & Code and to support the collaboration among experienced and newly appointed NCPs through the exchange of good practices and experiences. The following three main activities were carried out:

- Three study tours in countries considered to be "good examples" regarding the adoption and implementation of the Charter & Code. The aim was the exchange of experiences and the collection of good practices which could be relayed to countries with low level of awareness. The countries visited were IT, UK and NO, selected on the basis of the number of institutions endorsing and implementing the Charter & Code at the time of selection, the degree of advancement in the 5-step process for the implementation of the Charter & Code, and the reliability of the methodology applied.
- Promotion of the Charter & Code during NCP events or other events of scientific/policy nature concerning the career development of researchers in three countries where the level of awareness of Charter & Code was less advanced at the time of selection. The countries visited were BG, HR, and RU.
- Organization of a specific training/workshop in order to increase the awareness of the NCPs of the Charter & Code by presenting the good practices and outcomes of the study tours.

It is worthwhile mentioning that for the implementation of this Task, guidance and assistance was provided by the Commission's "Institutional HR Strategy Group".

Lessons learned from the study tours in countries considered to be good examples

- The importance of national initiatives such as:
 - A national C& C gap analysis comparing national legislation and institutional practices (NO)
 - The establishment of a national group mirroring the Commission's "Institutional HR Strategy Group" to discuss and exchange experiences and practices regarding the Charter & Code implementation (NO)
 - The establishment of a national network of Universities widening the participation in the Charter & Code implementation process (IT)
 - The active involvement of the National Rectors' Conference (IT)
 - The adaptation of the Charter & Code to the national context (UK Concordat)
 - The importance of facilitating-multiplying tools like the VITAE programme (UK)
- The importance of national instigators for the implementation of the Charter & Code at national level:
 - Research Council Norway (NO), University of Camerino (IT)
- The importance of a "model HR Strategy plan" to serve as an example for other organisations:
 - The University of Camerino's action plan (IT)

Major obstacles for the implementation of the Charter & Code in countries with low level of awareness

At the time when the workshops were organized in the above countries, the major barriers to the implementation of the Charter and Code were identified to be mainly of a legal nature. Good working conditions, social security and pension rights as well as entry requirements (for mobile researchers especially in the case of Russia and Croatia as non-MS) were the main common difficulties encountered since since these issues are largely dependent on national laws.

Furthermore, the fear of administrative burdens (extra work as a result of the monitoring mechanisms needed to be developed for the successful implementation of the Charter & Code) as well as the lack of awareness were also identified as reasons for the low level of endorsement of the Charter & Code. Other specific issues identified during the workshops were the difficulty for international researchers to access Russian research institutions and language barriers (for the case of RU), as well as the discrepancy in the definitions of "researcher" and "scientist" which appear in legal documents (for the case of BG).

A.5.3 genSET – gender in science

Another initiative that is closely related to the Charter and Code principles is the genSET project (<http://www.genderinscience.org>). Its recommendations highlight the importance of the gender dimension in research as well as gender inequalities when it comes to participation in research.

genSET is a "Coordination and Support Action" project funded by the Science in Society Programme of the European Commission's 7th Framework programme. It was running from September 2009 – February 2012. Through a series of seminars, workshops, and symposia genSET has created a forum of sustainable dialogue between European science leaders, science stakeholder institutions, gender experts, and science strategy decision-makers. The

aim was to agree on the gender dimension in science in order to produce practical guidelines for implementing gender action plans within existing institutional mechanisms.

Focus is set on five key areas where gender inequalities and biases disadvantage women's participation in science:

1. Science knowledge-making;
2. Research process;
3. Recruitment and retention;
4. Assessment of women's work; and
5. Science excellence value system

genSET has resulted in consensus recommendations within four priority areas of the gender dimension in science: 1) science knowledge making, 2) deployment of human capital, 3) institutional practices and processes, and 4) regulation and compliance with gender-related processes and practices.

All of these recommendations are meant to be included within an overall institutional science strategy and should thus be taken into consideration when implementing the Charter & Code, in order to take coherent actions. Both initiatives also take the same approach in terms of addressing already existing institutional processes and practices.

More details can be found in "The genSET Consensus Report: Recommendations for Action on the Gender Dimension in Science" (2010), accessible at <http://bit.ly/dRLaOb>.

A.5.4 CERN's Code of Conduct

CERN's Code of Conduct (www.cern.ch/codeofconduct) came about as part of the Human Resources Strategy and a global reflection on CERN values and common standards of behaviour; it is also in response to requests from various internal bodies and ultimately was developed following an extensive collaboration and consultation process during 2009 and 2010. CERN's first Code of Conduct has been applicable since 1 July 2010.

What the Code is

The Code is intended as a guide to help everyone on the CERN site to understand how to conduct themselves, treat others and expect to be treated. It is based around CERN's five core values: integrity, commitment, professionalism, creativity and diversity. Everyone is encouraged to become familiar with it and to try to incorporate it into daily life at CERN.

It is published both in paper and on-line, in English and in French (the two official languages at CERN) and is prefaced with an introduction by the Director-General.

Why a Code is necessary

The purpose of the Code is to enhance transparency, objectivity and clarity, to prepare for increased public scrutiny and to address recurrent issues in a positive and preventive manner. When the study was launched, the benefits of well-adapted Codes were already widely recognized, so it was considered appropriate for CERN to have its own. The goal is not to impose strict rules of behaviour but to promote conduct that is acceptable and agreeable to everyone and respects individual differences.

When the Director-General talked about the Code in his annual talk to the staff, he highlighted its significance and showed unfailing support for it at the highest level in the Organization.

Examples of situations

The Code itself is a short document, and intentionally so. To increase understanding of how the Code applies to practical situations, a list of examples as well as Frequently Asked Questions have been compiled and made available on the CERN web site from the home page.

Support mechanisms

Should anyone be unsure about any aspect of the Code, a number of resources are available: hierarchy, the Ombuds Office, the Human Resources Advisors and Internal Audit. A special e-mail address was also created for specific questions.

A.5.5 EuroTrans project: ‘Ideas and the European Research Area’

The project ‘Ideas and the European Research Area’³⁰ is a sub-project of EuroTrans (‘The Transformation and Sustainability of the European Political Order’) funded by the Norwegian Research Council and based at ARENA, University of Oslo.. It explores how the ‘cultural-cognitive dimension’ of the European political order is evolving.

The overarching research questions are:

- How can we account for the emergence and evolution of the ERA?
- How has the ERA taken shape, been sustained and what are the effects of its emergence on the existing national scientific systems?

The implementation of the Charter & Code through the HRS4R is one of several cases in this study. The following findings can be highlighted. First, the Charter & Code is an instance of successful layering through the sectoral strategy (i.e. intensifying coordinative efforts in the research policy domain). Institutional change through layering, which refers to the adoption of new rules and their co-existence with old rules, could trigger transformation. However, this process of transformation, if it occurs, is an incremental one and relies on the mechanism of differential growth. Second, the conditions enabling institutions to participate in the HRS4R process are a function of the types of incentives that actors have and the particular institutional environments affecting such incentives. Here, the preliminary findings point to whether such incentives resonate with the logic(s) of action (of appropriateness, expected consequences or both) guiding actor behaviour, and the particular administrative capacity (of that country and institution) to engage in the HRS4R process.

A.6 Summary of the urgent need for more research

The HRS4R Working Group report emphasizes the urgent need for more research in the field of human resources management and institutional communication, which takes into account the socio-professional and cultural specificities of academia and other research institutions. Indeed, the recent study of science has mainly focused its attention on the best way to measure and evaluate scientific output and performance (the so-called scientometrics) but not that much on the diversity of processes by which research is actually performed and leads to more or less valuable output. To put it in other words, the focus has been mainly on the excellence of the output rather than on the quality of the research staff’s daily work (incl. leadership, team organisation, recruitment and training, etc.).

³⁰ A more detailed summary can be found at <http://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/people/aca/menghsuc/index.html>

In order to foster more evidence-based policies and to promote empirically truly validated good practices (as well as to possibly dismiss some less relevant routines), further research is needed at those different levels, including:

- *An analysis of the state of the literature* to identify the research gaps and disseminate better the findings from existing research (e.g. relating to mobility or gender issues);
- *Research on Institutional communication* to contribute to:
 - better identification of the information needs of the different stakeholders inside and outside of academia/research institutions;
 - highlighting the best ways to provide them with efficient and targeted communication;
 - better understanding of the meaning of the “HR Excellence in Research” logo for the different stakeholders, etc.
- *Research on Human resources management* can contribute to:
 - better understanding of the researchers’ and other stakeholders’ views and attitudes towards human resources strategy (in terms of and opportunities, specific constraints or resistance with regard to some C&C aspects, perceived improvements, etc.) via qualitative case studies, (inter)national quantitative surveys and/or systematic comparative approaches;
 - the development of suitable indicators which take the diversity of institutional and national contexts into account in order to monitor the implementation of the HRS4R and the principles underlying the Charter & Code at a national level, and eventually benchmark human resources strategies and management at an (inter)national level;
 - evaluating the actual impact of an improved HR management on the practices and, more specifically, testing the hypothesis of a causal relationship between an improved HR strategy on the one hand and, on the other hand, the attraction of excellent researchers, improvement of reputation and research output and, ultimately, extra income generated through grant acquisition.