

# Action Plan

## Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)

Edition 1

Donostia – San Sebastián, 15 September 2021

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## ACTION PLAN

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NAME ORGANISATION UNDER REVIEW: CIC biomaGUNE

ORGANISATION'S CONTACT DETAILS:

Dr. Anna Llanes Pallàs

allanes@cicbiomagune.es

+34 943005425

WEB LINK TO THE PUBLISHED VERSION OF THE ORGANIZATION'S HR STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN:

<https://www.cicbiomagune.es/careers/human-resources-strategy-researchers-hrs4r>

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## 1. ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

The Center for Cooperative Research in Biomaterials- CIC biomaGUNE, member of the **Basque Research and Technology Alliance (BRTA)**, is a non-profit research organization created to promote scientific research and technological innovation at the highest levels in the Basque Country following the BioBasque policy, in order to create a new business sector based on biosciences.

Located in the Science and Technology Park of Gipuzkoa (Donostia-San Sebastián), the activity of CIC biomaGUNE is conducted by a team of 12 international and dynamic research groups, which develop high-level research at the interface between chemistry, physics and biology, with particular emphasis on the properties and applications of nanostructures at the biomolecular level. The final aim of CIC biomaGUNE's research is to

contribute to understanding the way in which biological systems interact with nanometer- sized materials, at the molecular level.

The main research lines deal with the design, preparation and characterization of biofunctional nanostructures and their in vitro and in vivo biological evaluation, to be used in the study of biological processes and the development of biomedical tools such as theranostic or multitherapeutic platforms.

To carry out this ambitious program of research, the Center counts with a unique research infrastructure equipped with the most advanced nanoscience, biochemistry and molecular imaging facilities, including fully equipped research laboratories, Technological Platforms and the Molecular Imaging Facility, one of the biggest preclinical imaging research infrastructures in Europe.

CIC biomaGUNE started its activity in December 2006. In the course of these fourteen years, with an average critical mass of around 120 researchers, the Center has obtained national and international recognition as a scientific leader and knowledge builder in the field of biomaterials. Among other achievements, our activity has resulted in the generation of knowledge (publications, patents, PhD theses) the internationalization of research through collaboration with international bodies and institutions, as well as opening our facilities to the scientific community and the industrial sector.

In 2018 CIC biomaGUNE earned the accreditation as a “María de Maeztu Unit of Excellence”- the highest recognition of scientific excellence in Spain awarded by the Spanish State Research Agency (AEI) - which further confirms this recognition.

STAFF & STUDENTS	FTE
<i>Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research</i>	102.22
<i>Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)</i>	33.95
<i>Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation)</i>	64.19
<i>Of whom are women</i>	55.38
<i>Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor.</i>	14.59
<i>Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level</i>	19.41
<i>Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level</i>	34.12

<i>Total number of students (if relevant)</i>	
<i>Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff)</i>	123.7
<b>RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)</b>	€
<i>Total annual organisational budget</i>	10,124,162
<i>Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)</i>	3,337,318
<i>Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)</i>	4,526,626
<i>Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research</i>	2,220,219
<b>ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE (a very brief description of your organisation, max. 100 words)</b>	
<p>CIC biomaGUNE, is a non-profit research organization created to promote scientific research and technological innovation, in order to create a new business sector based on biosciences.</p> <p>The activity of CIC biomaGUNE is conducted by a team of 12 international and dynamic research groups, which develop high- level research at the interface between chemistry, physics and biology, with particular emphasis on the properties and applications of nanostructures at the biomolecular level. The final aim of CIC biomaGUNE’s research is to contribute to understanding the way in which biological systems interact with nanometer- sized materials, at the molecular level.</p>	

## 2. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE CURRENT PRACTICE

An overview of the organisation in terms of the current strengths and weaknesses of the current practice under the four thematic headings of the Charter and Code at CIC biomaGUNE is provided below:

Thematic heading of the Charter and Code	STRENGTHS and WEAKNESSES
<b>Ethical and professional aspects</b>	<p>The average satisfaction rating we have obtained through questionnaires on this thematic is: 7.61 out of 10. It is the thematic with the best score, being considered as one of our greatest strengths</p> <p>The highest-rated principles were Research freedom, Ethical principles and Professional responsibility with 8.52 out of 10 (the highest score out of the 40 principles). On the other hand, the lowest rated aspects were Evaluation/appraisal systems with 6.28 out of 10, Public Engagement with a score of 6.47 out of 10 and Contractual and legal obligations with 6.57 out of</p>

	<p>10.</p> <p>Taking into account the comments from the focus groups on the lowest rated factors, we highlight the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evaluation/appraisal systems: Evaluations are done differently depending on the rank or professional group. Some levels have an established procedure yet in others the evaluation procedure does not apply or it is up to the manager of that group to decide whether and how these evaluations are done.</li> <li>- Public engagement: Researchers consider that several activities related to this principle are carried out at CIC biomaGUNE. However, the development and implementation of these actions is conducted on a voluntary and personal basis. Researchers miss a more active leadership in the promotion of these activities by CIC biomaGUNE.</li> <li>- Contractual and legal obligations: Researchers convey the perception that the contractual and legal obligations are made clear when accepting these conditions, but this is an aspect that they do not keep in mind on a day-to-day basis. It would be interesting to have this information more accessible.</li> </ul> <p>Regarding to the strengths, the results obtained in Research freedom, Ethical principles and Professional responsibility mean that there is freedom for research development, under ethical principles and practices, including the contractual obligations of confidentiality and the recognition of budgetary limitations. The perception is also that researchers focus their work on relevant social issues and avoid plagiarism and other non-ethical practises.</p>
<p><b>Recruitment and selection</b></p>	<p>This thematic is in the third position in terms of satisfaction from the results obtained in the questionnaire with 6.72 out of 10.</p> <p>The principle with the lowest score in this area was Postdoctoral appointments with a score of 5.19 out of 10. While the other principles obtained a score of 6.89 out of 10.</p> <p>The main comments received about Postdoctoral appointment are that researchers miss initiatives from the centre to improve their soft-skills or transversal skills that will help them to achieve additional professional opportunities towards a long-term professional career. Researchers are satisfied with the technical training they receive related to their postdoc topic, but initiatives that allow them to develop more transversal skills would be</p>

	<p>desirable.</p> <p>Regarding the remaining principles, researchers consider that the Open, Transparent and Merit Based criteria are complied with in the vacancy publication phase, although they do not know the criteria and weighing of each criterion for being selected. They would like to know the value of each requirement for being selected before they apply for the selection process.</p>
<p><b>Working conditions</b></p>	<p>The average satisfaction rating we have obtained through questionnaires on this thematic is: 6.27 out of 10. It is the thematic with the lowest score.</p> <p>The highest-rated principles were Research Environment with 7.83 out of 10 and Intellectual Property Rights with 7.58 out of 10 (the second and third highest scores of the 40 principles, respectively). On the other hand, the lowest rated aspects were Access to career advice with 3.34 out of 10 (the lowest score of the 40 principles), Career Development with 4.40 out of 10, and Stability and permanence of employment with 4.57 out of 10, (the second and the third lowest scores of the 40 principles, respectively).</p> <p>Taking into account the comments from the focus groups on the lowest rated factors, we highlight the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access to career advice: this is one of the areas of greatest concern to all participants. The only advice researchers receive is from some of the Principal Researchers and in an informal way. They miss some initiative led by the centre, with a common methodology and reference figures to whom they can ask for advice.</li> <li>- Career Development: The assessment and comments on this principle are very similar to those of the previous principle. Researchers miss a well-defined procedure or counselling service offered by the Center.</li> <li>- Stability and permanence of employment: In the comments from the focus groups, researchers recognise the difficulty of the Center to offer stability and permanence of employment due to the nature of the organization (non-profit). They consider that their assessment of this principle could be improved by promoting initiatives to improve career advice and career development.</li> <li>- Teaching: Researchers convey the development of teaching activities is carried out on a voluntary and personal basis. They miss a more active leadership in the promotion of these activities by CIC biomaGUNE. It is a dissemination activity that is interesting for the researchers and for the Center,</li> </ul>

	<p>so taking on these functions on a voluntary basis requires an effort that is not taken into account when evaluating performance.</p> <p>- Complaints / appeals: The comments received could be summarized in the following two main ideas. On the one hand, there is a lack of awareness of the existence of the conflict resolution committee. On the other hand, the small size of the Center raises doubts about the confidentiality and trustworthiness of the committee members.</p> <p>- Participation in decision making bodies: The perception is similar to the one obtained on the previous principle. Comments are based on the lack of knowledge of the existing working groups or committees, as well as the topics dealt with in each working group or committee.</p>
<p><b>Training and Development</b></p>	<p>The average satisfaction rating we have obtained through questionnaires on this thematic is: 7.26 out of 10. It is the second thematic with the best score.</p> <p>The highest-rated principles were Continuing Professional Development with 7.77 out of 10, Relation with supervisor with 7.27 out of 10 and Supervision with 7.24 out of 10. The lowest rated aspect was Supervision and managerial duties with 6.92 out of 10. Even the lowest score of the thematic, is above the overall average of the 40 principles (6.88 out of 10), so it can be concluded that Training and Development is a strength of CIC biomaGUNE.</p> <p>Based on the results obtained, we can conclude that there is a structured and regular relationship with supervisors and researchers clearly identify whom they can consult on issues related to the performance of their professional duties.</p> <p>They also perceive that supervisors have sufficient experience in supervising research work, and have the time, knowledge, expertise, technical skills and dedication to provide adequate support.</p>



## 3. ACTIONS

Proposed ACTIONS	GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
<b>A1. Career Advisory Program:</b> Definition and development of a specific mentorship program for researchers.	25, 28, 30	2Q2022	Direction and Training Committee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Program development &amp; dissemination.</li> <li>2. Implementation of a e-tool to allow coordination and control</li> <li>3. Number of participants &amp; participants feedback</li> </ol>
<b>A2. Soft Skills program:</b> Definition and development of a specific soft skills program to improve employability after the end of their stage at CIC biomaGUNE.	21, 25,28,30	1Q2022	Direction and Training Committee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Program development and dissemination</li> <li>2. Number of trainings offered</li> <li>3. Number of participants of feedback</li> </ol>
<b>A3. CIC biomaGUNE Internal Communication Guide:</b> Definition and implementation of an Internal Communication Guide that helps CIC biomaGUNE researchers and staff to be aware of internal policies and procedures.	5, 26, 34, 35, 32	4Q2021	General Management, Human Resources, Biosafety, IT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Document elaboration &amp; dissemination</li> <li>2. Number of new incorporations to the Center users of the guide.</li> <li>3. Number of downloads</li> </ol>
<b>A4. Conflict resolution and complains/appeals:</b> Train researchers on conflict resolution, equality and prevention of sexual	27, 34	4Q2021	Direction, General Management, Human Resources, Equality and Conflict resolution committee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Document elaboration &amp; dissemination</li> <li>2. Number of people trained.</li> <li>3. Elaboration of a complain/appeals</li> </ol>

harassment				tool.
<b>A5. Performance Appraisal system:</b> establish a methodology for performance evaluation that ensures equity. Enhance the capacity of managers and Principal Researchers as supervisors in the career development of PhD students and postdocs.	11	1Q2022	Direction and Human Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Document elaboration: development evaluation templates for each professional category.</li> <li>2. Implementation of a software to coordinate and control the evaluation procedure.</li> <li>3. Number of evaluations</li> </ol>
<b>A6. Outreach program:</b> Identify actions and create a timetable for the development of dissemination activities that integrate all the research groups of the centre. Provide dissemination participants with the necessary tools.	9, 33	1Q2022	Outreach Committee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Timetable elaboration</li> <li>2. Number of activities organized</li> <li>3. Number of participants</li> </ol>
<b>A7. Development of a tool to create a community of alumni</b>	27, 28, 30, 38	2Q2022	Direction, General Management, Human Resources, Equality and Training Committees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. E-tool development</li> <li>2. Number of alumni registered.</li> </ol>
<b>A8. Design a Recruitment Policy and Recruitment Guide</b> aligned with the Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers toolkit	OTMR, 13, 14, 15, 16, 27	1Q2022	Direction, General Management, and Human Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Document elaboration.</li> <li>2. Internal dissemination to recruiting managers</li> <li>3. External dissemination on website</li> <li>4. Implementation of the OTMR policy.</li> </ol>

<b>A9. Development of an e-recruitment tool</b> to monitor the whole recruitment process	OTMR, 13, 14, 15, 16, 27	2Q2022	Direction, General Management, and Human Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. E-tool development</li> <li>2. Dissemination</li> <li>3. % of usage</li> </ol>
<b>A10. Selection Committees:</b> Redefine the criteria for the creation of selection committees to ensure adequate diversity and publish these criteria. Provide OTMR training for selection committee members before starting the selection process.	OTMR, 14, 27	3Q2022	Direction, General Management, and Human Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Guidelines elaboration &amp; dissemination</li> <li>2. Adequately diverse selection committees / selection processes</li> </ol>
<b>A11. Feedback to candidates:</b> Provide feedback to applicants that have been invited for an interview in a selection process involving an evaluation panel, and that have been finally not selected (if requested by the applicants)	OTMR, 15	3Q2022	Direction, General Management, and Human Resources	Number of notifications of end of selection process to all participants / selection processes

## Open Recruitment Policy

The establishment of an Open Recruitment Policy is a key element in the HRS4R strategy. The main action to establish an Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment policy will be to redefine the selection section of our HR procedure, based on the document "The toolkit: a step-by-step guide to better OTM-R practices".

Among the corrections and updates to be made, we will prioritise the aspects that we have identified as weaknesses in the OTM-R checklist.

The team responsible for developing these adaptations will be composed by the Direction, General manager and the HR Manager.

All the phases and actions of the selection process have been identified and analysed in the OTM-R expert report, yet we provide a short commentary demonstrating the implementations to be conducted:

### 3.1 Advertising and application phase

In line with the principles "Recruitment" and "Transparency" of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, a job offer template will have to be completed by the recruiting unit. The template shall include information on :

- Description of the organization and recruiting unit/laboratory
- Job title, specifications and starting date
- Researcher career profile with the respective 'required' and 'desirable' qualifications and competencies
- Description of the vacant position, the amount of vacancies, and the related tasks.
- Working conditions related to the job offer (type of contract and duration) as well as the desirable starting date.
- Period for receiving applications.
- Offer code
- Information on how the application procedure. Given the confidentiality of the information and in order to ensure compliance with the data protection policy, all applicants must apply through an e-tool.
- A reference to the institution's equal opportunities and OTM-R policies

Job offers will be reviewed by the HR and management department before being published.

All vacancies will be posted on CIC biomaGUNE website (<https://www.cicbiomagune.es/job-offers>) following the criteria of an open and transparent recruiting policy.

Job offers will also be advertised on Euraxess, sciencecareers.eus and other relevant portals and announced on our social networks (twitter, facebook, LinkedIn) among others.

Job offers will always be presented in English, in order to ensure the potential participation of international candidates.

The request for supporting documents will be strictly limited to those which are really needed in order to make a fair, transparent and merit-based selection of the applicants.

All applicants will receive an (automated) e-mail acknowledging that their application has been received and providing them with further information on the recruitment process.

### **3.2 Evaluation and selection phase**

The selection phase begins with the screening and evaluation of the applications received. 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 or face-to-face interviews.

In line with the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, the criteria for selecting researchers will focus on both the candidates' past performance and their future potential, always according to the profile of the post.

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.

The selection process shall be conducted by a selection committee aware of the principles of the OTM-R policy.

### **3.3 Appointment phase**

Once the selection process is completed, the person responsible from the recruiting unit/laboratory must notify the HR department. An "Employment Proposal" form will be completed and after verifying compliance with the necessary administrative requirements, the document will be validated by both the Scientific Director and the General Manager.

Once the previous validation has been carried out, a pre-agreement letter will be sent to the selected candidate specifying the terms of employment.

In line with the principle "Transparency" of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, once the candidate accepts the offer, all applicants will be informed about the result of the selection process. All applicants are entitled to further feedback upon request.

## 4. IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of this Action Plan aims to adequate internal workflows with that of the Charter and Code. The plan will be carried out over the next 2 years.

In order to properly prioritize, actions related to the lowest scored principles will be the first ones to be implemented.

The implementation of the C&C principles is understood as a dynamic and constant process; hence, other principles that achieved a better score will be addressed as far as the most urgent ones are improved.

Some principles have been regrouped in the framework of one single action in the Action Plan.

This Action Plan covers the period 2021-2022 and includes the actions planned for the final list of C&C principles defined by the process previously described.

CIC biomaGUNE's HR Strategy and action plan has been published at the institutional website.

The development and implementation of the Action Plan will be monitored internally. A self-assessment will be conducted every two years and will result on a progress report updating the Action Plan for the subsequent period. An external progress assessment will be carried out by an organization or professional designed and/or authorized by the European Commission.

The monitoring procedure includes quarterly based meetings of the C&C Team, in order to evaluate the progress of the design and implementation of each action.

In February 2023, an internal audit will be held in order to verify the total implementation of each action. Also, the same questionnaire will be launch and a Focus Group will be organized.

The implementation process is further detailed in the checklist below:

Checklist	*Detailed description and duly justification
How will the implementation committee and/or steering group regularly oversee progress?	<p>Quarterly meetings will be established to follow up the implementation of the action plan.</p> <p>In these meetings, the person in charge of each action</p>

	<p>will report the degree of progress of each action and, in case corrective actions are required, will propose possible solutions so that the C&amp;C Team can validate the best solution for the deviation in the planning in a consensual manner.</p>
<p>How do you intend to involve the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?</p>	<p>The objective of carrying out a participatory process based on obtaining quantitative answers through a questionnaire and qualitative answers through focus groups was to find out in detail the shortcomings identified by the stakeholders.</p> <p>Once identified the gaps and the dissatisfaction that these gaps generate among stakeholders, we will use this information to involve them on the implementation of the planned actions.</p> <p>It is important to mention in this respect that the Charter &amp; Code Team will be composed of members of all CIC biomaGUNE stakeholders groups, so we believe that being a participatory initiative will increase their interest and involvement.</p>
<p>How do you proceed with the alignment of organisational policies with the HRS4R? Make sure the HRS4R is recognized in the organisation's research strategy, as the overarching HR policy.</p>	<p>CIC biomaGUNE's HR Strategy and action plan will be published at the institutional website.</p> <p>The identified improvement actions will help to create new versions of existing HR procedures, integrating the improvements in a natural way.</p>
<p>How will you ensure that the proposed actions are implemented?</p>	<p>The HRS4R is a firm commitment by the Direction and the Management Team of CIC biomaGUNE.</p> <p>As previously mentioned, a responsible person and a deadline for the execution of each action has been established.</p> <p>The C&amp;C Team will hold quarterly meetings to follow up the implementation of the Action Plan, where the execution of the Action Plan will be reviewed, and</p>

	corrective actions will be decided if necessary.
How will you monitor progress (timeline)?	The C&C Team will meet quarterly to review the actions developed in the previous quarter.
How will you measure progress (indicators) in view of the next assessment?	An indicator or target has been identified for each action. In the C&C Team meetings, in addition to monitoring the implementation of the actions, the established indicators will be reviewed to know if the impact of the developed actions is as expected.