The Human Resources Strategy for Researchers incorporating the
European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

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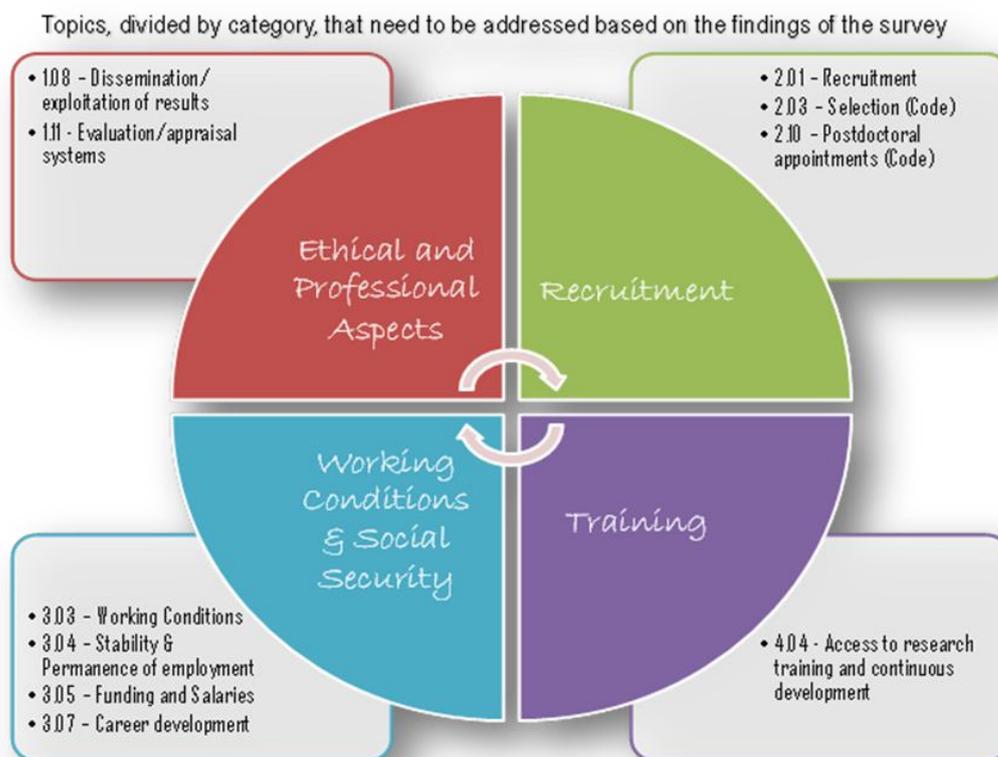# Executive Summary

The Centre for Research and Technology Hellas (CERTH), as BHO of the Greek EURAXESS Service Network, has been engaged to the Charter & Code (C&C) since its conception. It was one of the first Greek organisations that endorsed its principles, member of the European Charter and Code promoters networks and member of the Institutional Human Resources Strategy Group (1st Cohort).

CERTH initiated the internal analysis in late 2009 but the measures tackling the identified weak points were only possible to be decided in 2012 due to governmental and institutional changes in the meantime.

The internal analysis which was performed based on the results of a survey revealed that, according to CERTH's researchers, some procedures of the organisation need improvement in order to cope with the principles of the C&C. Specifically, researchers feel that CERTH should improve its procedures in the following topics as divided in the four categories of the C&C:

Topics, divided by category, that need to be addressed based on the findings of the survey

- 1.08 – Dissemination/exploitation of results
- 1.11 - Evaluation/appraisal systems

Ethical and Professional Aspects

- 2.01 – Recruitment
- 2.03 – Selection (Code)
- 2.10 – Postdoctoral appointments (Code)

Recruitment

- 3.03 – Working Conditions
- 3.04 – Stability & Permanence of employment
- 3.05 – Funding and Salaries
- 3.07 – Career development

Working Conditions & Social Security

- 4.04 - Access to research training and continuous development

Training

The report proposes specific actions in order to tackle as many of the aforementioned issues as possible. Every effort is given so as the proposed actions take under consideration the national and global financial crisis and burden the least CERTH's budget. In addition, the proposed action plan endeavours to overcome the national legislative barriers, deriving from the austerity measures, and EC rules that leave little space for flexible actions and narrow down much of CERTH's willingness to tackle part of the findings of the survey. In cases that deeper investigation in terms of legal and regulatory issues, as well as in feasibility issues, is needed then relevant working groups are proposed to be formed so as to report back to CERTH's BoD about the optimum method to improve CERTH's procedures.

It is important to note that a significant period of time has elapsed since the realization of the survey and its outcomes, CERTH has decided to proceed with the implementation of the proposed action plan but also to repeat the internal analysis in a reasonable period of time

so as to appraise employee's reaction to the changes made and acquire an updated picture of researchers' opinion about CERTH's working environment.

In summary, the proposed actions may be seen in the table below:

Action Plan for adopting the C&C principles				
C&C Article Addressed	Action	Who	To Whom/Target group	When
Category 1: Ethical and professional aspects				
Dissemination of results	Publication of E-Newsletter	Liaison Office	Productive fabric and general public	Ongoing
Dissemination of results	Presence in social media and in Wikipedia	Liaison Office	Productive fabric and general public	Active accounts on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn by mid 2012 Wikipedia entries (Greek and English Version) by mid 2012
Dissemination of results	Participations in exhibitions	Liaison Office	Productive fabric and general public	Participation in at least two exhibitions annually
Dissemination of results	Open Days	Liaison Office	Productive fabric and general public	Organisation of Open Days events for at least two different CERTH's institutes every year
Dissemination of results	Database of internal experts who will be available to answer media's questions	Press Office	Media	By mid 2012
Dissemination of results	CERTH's science blog which will offer the ins and outs of research in CERTH	Press Office	Media and General public	By the end of September 2012
Evaluation/appraisal systems	Establishment of a WG responsible of investigating the need for implementing evaluation/appraisal systems and proposing to the BoD the most suitable evaluation method	i) BoD ii) Working Group	i) Working Group ii) BoD	The BoD will decide on the members of the WG by the end of 2012 whereas the WG will have its report submitted to the BoD by mid 2013
Category 2: Recruitment				
Recruitment	Obligatory announcement of all research vacancies in the EURAXESS Jobs Portal	CERTH's Board of Directors	All internal potential employers	CERTH's BoD will decide on the obligatory announcement of all research vacancies by October 2012
Recruitment	Training on using the EURAXESS Jobs Portal	Horizontal Projects Implementation Unit	All internal potential employers	Ongoing
Category 3: Working conditions and social security				
Working Conditions	Technical Services Unit will verify the unlimited access of disabled group to CERTH's premises	Technical Services Unit	CERTH's researchers/visitors	The action will be completed by September 2012. In case there are areas which needs reconstruction, the whole action will be finalised by mid 2013
Working Conditions	Flexible Working hours	Legal department	BoD	The Legal department shall submit a report with recommendation on the introduction of new flexible working arrangments by the end of 2012
Working Conditions	Establishment of Ombudsman Office	CERTH's Central Directorate	CERTH's researchers	The office should be fully operational by end 2012
Funding/salaries	Maintain and improve favorable wages policy	Central Directorate	BoD	The Central Directorate (Personnel's office and Legal department) should update the BoD for any new developments in the national legislation that permit improvements to CERTH's wages policy. The process is ongoing
Career development	Set up of a mentoring program	Horizontal Project Implementation Unit	CERTH's researchers	The program will be put into action by October 2012
Category 4: Training				
Access to research training and continuous development	Database of internal experts and organisation of internal training	Horizontal Project Implementation Unit		Ongoing

Introduction

Charter & Code (C&C)

The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for their recruitment has been adopted by the European Commission in the form of recommendation and is regarded as the main policy document on the topic of the management of Human Resources in Science and Research.

The European Charter for Researchers is a set of general principles and requirements which specifies the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers as well as of employers and/or funders of researchers. The aim of the Charter is to ensure that the nature of the relationship between researchers and employers or funders is conducive to successful performance in generating transferring, sharing and disseminating knowledge and technological development, and to the career development of researchers. The Charter also recognizes the value of all forms of mobility as a means for enhancing the professional development of researchers.

The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers consists of a set of general principles and requirements that should be followed by employers and/or funders when appointing or recruiting researchers. These principles and requirements should ensure observance of values such as transparency of the recruitment process and equal treatment of all applicants, in particular with regard to the development of an attractive, open and sustainable European labour market for researchers, and are complementary to those outlined in the European Charter for Researchers

Human Resources Strategy for Researchers Incorporating the Charter & Code

The Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) incorporating the Charter & Code is a five step "implementation process" which was formulated by the Commission in an effort to assist those research institutions that would like to incorporate the C&C in their human resources strategy. These five steps are:

Internal Analysis → Publication of HR Strategy → Acknowledgement of the European Commission → Implementation of the HR Strategy and self-assessment → External Evaluation

Internal Analysis

The Charter & Code undersigning Research Institution (R.I.) makes an internal analysis, according for instance to a standard template 'grouping' all the 40 C&C principles in 4 areas (Ethical and professional aspects", "Recruitment", "Working conditions & social security", and "Training")

Publication of HR Strategy

The institution publishes on its website and on the European EURAXESS Rights web-page its "Human Resources Strategy for Researchers, incorporating the Charter & Code principles". The publication is expected to summarise the main results of the internal

analysis and to present any corrective actions the institution intends to carry out in order to fully integrate the C&C principles.

<u>Acknowledgement of the European Commission</u>

Provided that the above steps are formally respected, the European Commission "acknowledges" that the undersigning institution has adopted a "Human Resources Strategy for Researchers incorporating the Charter & Code".

<u>Implementation of the HR Strategy and self-assessment</u>

The research institution implements its HR strategy and conducts a self-assessment within the context of its existing internal Quality Assurance mechanisms, with regular periodicity, and in any case at least every 2nd year. Based on the self-assessment, the HR Strategy for Researchers is updated as necessary and published on the institution's website and the European EURAXESS Rights Webpage.

<u>External Evaluation</u>

Every 4 years, the institution drafts a short (max 4 pages) report, showing the progress made towards the objectives of its HR Strategy for Researchers. The report is evaluated either by a panel of external reviewers or through national QA mechanisms, such as National Evaluation Agencies, peer reviews, etc. If the evaluation is positive, the EC's acknowledgment is confirmed. If there are reservations from the evaluators regarding actual progress, recommendations for improvements within a reasonable timeframe are given to the RI. If, at the successive evaluation round, it emerges that no adequate actions to implement the recommendations are undertaken, the acknowledgment by the EC is withdrawn.

The Centre for Research and Technology Hellas (CERTH) and the C&C

CERTH is one of the first Greek research institutions that were involved in the C&C initiative. The Board of Directors of CERTH in its meeting on 31.08.2008 welcomed the initiative of the European Commission and undersigned the 40 principles of the C&C.
Afterwards, CERTH was invited in the "Charter and Code promoters" group which ran between October 2008 and April 2009. Its objective was to raise awareness on the C&C at institutional and national level. This group was succeeded by the "Institutional Human Resources Strategy Group" which advanced EC's implementation strategy from improving awareness to sharing strategies, practice and approaches. This latest group consisted of 44 research institutions (CERTH was among them) from 17 European countries.
In accordance with the guidelines of the EC, CERTH developed a questionnaire in order to assess its rules and practices vis-à-vis the Charter & Code principles. The findings of the survey were later discussed with CERTH's employers' association and with CERTH's President and Chairman of the Board of Directors. Both proposed corrective actions which are used as the basis of the updated Human Resource Strategy respecting the C&C principles.

Internal Analysis

CERTH, taking into account the experience gained from the "'Institutional Human Resources Strategy Group'", decided to follow the successful examples of other European research institutions[1] which assessed their HR rules and principles through a survey.

Background data of the survey

The survey was conducted from 1/11/2009 to 15/12/2009 with the use of questionnaire which was disseminated to all CERTH's institutes. Researchers of all ranks and types were asked to participate in the survey along with selected administrative staff related to human resources. The aim of the survey was to gather the opinion of CERTH's researchers regarding the Centre's human resources practices and to find out any deviations from the C&C principles.

The questionnaire was filled in by 97 employees who belong in any of the research personnel categories as mentioned in the presidential decree for CERTH's foundation. In detail, the questionnaire was filled in by:

Personnel Category	Total CERTH's personnel/category	Total answers/category	Percentage
Directors	6	1	16,67%
Researchers (Grade A')	7	3	42,86%
Researchers (Grade B')	8	5	62,50%
Researchers (Grade C')	8	7	87,50%
Researchers (Grade D')	8	4	50,00%
Other main Researchers Technical Associate	290	54	18,62%
Research Associate A'	0	0	-
Research Associate B'	3	2	66,67%
Research Associate C'	3	2	66,67%
Research Associate D'	0	0	-
Fellows	35	8	22,86%
Administrative personnel	57	2	3,51%
No Answer	-	9	-
TOTAL[2]	425	97	22,82%

The structure of the questionnaire was simple and allowed an ease and quick completion by the responders. It examined all 40 principles of the C&C which were grouped in 4 main categories:

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[1] The methodology of the Internal Analysis was based on the methodology applied by the University of Camerino amended properly taking into consideration CERTH's specific internal procedures and working environment.
[2] Not included: University professors of all ranks (21), assisting personnel (10) and 3 undergraduate fellows.

i.   Ethical and professional aspects
ii. Recruitment
iii. Working conditions and social security
iv. Training

Each C&C principle was represented by at least one question. Responders were asked to answer each question with YES/NO depending on their belief that the statement is in accordance with CERTH's HR policy. In addition, respondents had the possibility to select three statements from each category indicating them as the most important ones.

Findings of the survey

The findings of the survey were interpreted with the following two assumptions:

- In cases where 75% or more of the responders agree that the statement is already part of CERTH's HR policy then it is considered that no actions are necessary since CERTH's internal regulation is in conformity with the respective HR principle
- The statements that require significant attention are those which gather less than 75% agreement between the respondents and were rated among the three most important statements of each category.

An overview of the responses in terms of agreement and priority is depicted in the graph below:
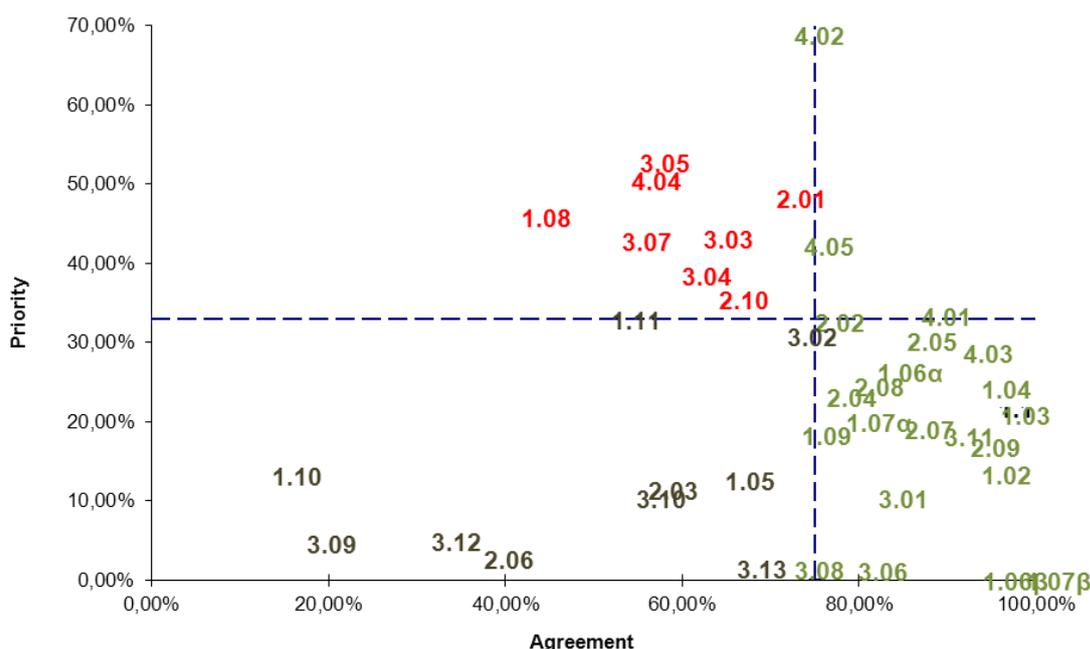
Graph 1. Relationship between agreement and priority of each statement

Based on the survey and researchers' responses, CERTH should pay particular attention to the following C&C topics:

Category 1: Ethical and professional aspects

1.08 – Dissemination of results (Agreement: 44,71%, Priority: 45,88%)

All researchers should ensure, in compliance with their contractual arrangements, that the results of their research are disseminated and exploited, e.g. communicated, transferred into other research settings or, if appropriate, commercialised. Senior researchers, in particular, are expected to take a lead in ensuring that research is fruitful and that results are either exploited commercially or made accessible to the public (or both) whenever the opportunity arises.

1.11 – Evaluation/ appraisal systems (Agreement: 54,88%, Priority: 32,93%)

Employers and/or funders should introduce for all researchers, including senior researchers, evaluation/appraisal systems for assessing their professional performance on a regular basis and in a transparent manner by an independent (and, in the case of senior researchers, preferably international) committee.

Category 2: Recruitment

2.01 – Recruitment (Agreement: 73,56%, Priority: 48,28%)

Employers and/or funders should ensure that the entry and admission standards for researchers, particularly at the beginning at their careers, are clearly specified and should also facilitate access for disadvantaged groups or for researchers returning to a research career, including teachers (of any level) returning to a research career. Employers and/or funders of researchers should adhere to the principles set out in the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers when appointing or recruiting researchers.

2.03 – Selection (Agreement: 59,09%, Priority: 11,36%)

Selection committees should bring together diverse expertise and competences and should have an adequate gender balance and, where appropriate and feasible, include members from different sectors (public and private) and disciplines, including from other countries and with relevant experience to assess the candidate. Whenever possible, a wide range of selection practices should be used, such as external expert assessment and face-to-face interviews. Members of selection panels should be adequately trained should be realistic.

2.10 – Postdoctoral Appointments (Code) (Agreement: 67,07%, Priority: 35,37%)

Clear rules and explicit guidelines for the recruitment and appointment of postdoctoral researchers, including the maximum duration and the objectives of such appointments, should be established by the institutions appointing postdoctoral researchers. Such guidelines should take into account time spent in prior postdoctoral appointments at other institutions and take into consideration that the postdoctoral status should be transitional, with the primary purpose of providing additional professional development opportunities for a research career in the context of long-term career prospects.

Category 3: Working conditions and social security

3.03 – Working Conditions (Agreement: 65,26%, Priority 43,16%)

Employers and/or funders should ensure that the working conditions for researchers, including for disabled researchers, provide where appropriate the flexibility deemed essential for successful research performance in accordance with existing national legislation and with national or sectoral collective-bargaining agreements. They should aim to provide working conditions which allow both women and men researchers to combine family and work, children and career. Particular attention should be paid,*inter alia*, to flexible working hours, part-time working, tele-working and sabbatical leave, as well as to the necessary financial and administrative provisions governing such arrangements.

3.04 – Stability and permanence of employment (Agreement: 62,79%, Priority: 38,37%)

Employers and/or funders should ensure that the performance of researchers is not undermined by instability of employment contracts, and should therefore commit themselves as far as possible to improving the stability of employment conditions for researchers, thus implementing and abiding by the principles and terms laid down in the *EU Directive on Fixed-Term Work.*

3.05 – Funding and Salaries (Agreement: 58,06%, Priority: 52,69%)

Employers and/or funders of researchers should ensure that researchers enjoy fair and attractive conditions of funding and/or salaries with adequate and equitable social security provisions (including sickness and parental benefits, pension rights and unemployment benefits) in accordance with existing national legislation and with national or sectoral collective bargaining agreements. This must include researchers at all career stages including early-stage researchers, commensurate with their legal status, performance and level of qualifications and/or responsibilities.

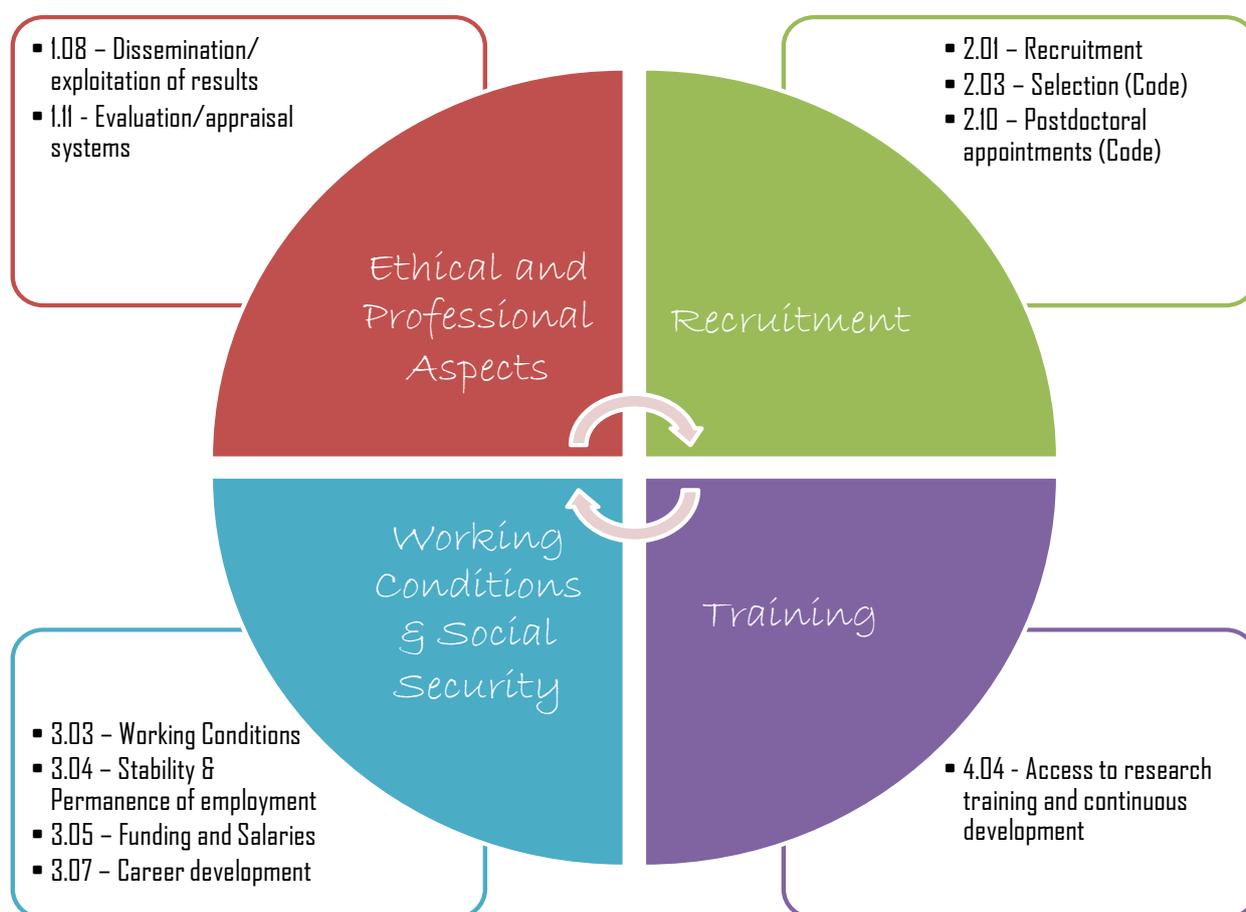**3.07 – Career development** (Agreement: 43,96%, Priority: 42,86%)

Employers and/or funders of researchers should draw up, preferably within the framework of their human resources management, a specific career development strategy for researchers at all stages of their career, regardless of their contractual situation, including for researchers on fixed-term contracts. It should include the availability of mentors involved in providing support and guidance for the personal and professional development of researchers, thus motivating them and contributing to reducing any insecurity in their professional future. All researchers should be made familiar with such provisions and arrangements.

Category 4: Training

4.04 – Access to research training and continuous development (Agreement: 42,86%, Priority: 50,55%)

Employers and/or funders should ensure that all researchers at any stage of their career, regardless of their contractual situation, are given the opportunity for professional development and for improving their employability through access to measures for the continuing development of skills and competencies. Such measures should be regularly assessed for their accessibility, take up and effectiveness in improving competencies, skills and employability.

Topics, divided by category, that need to be addressed based on the findings of the survey

- 1.08 – Dissemination/ exploitation of results
- 1.11 - Evaluation/appraisal systems

Ethical and Professional Aspects

- 2.01 – Recruitment
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Recruitment

- 3.03 – Working Conditions
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Working Conditions & Social Security

Training

- 4.04 - Access to research training and continuous development

Graph 2. Topics, divided be category, that need attention

N.B.: Due to the fact that the survey was performed in late 2009, it is possible that some answers might not reflect the current state in CERTH's working environment. This is mainly due to two significant factors: i) a series of austerity measures with national impact that were decided and implemented by the Greek state during period 2010-2012 and ii) the carefully designed plan of CERTH's administration to absorb the cost derived from the aforementioned measures and minimize their impact on CERTH's employees.

To this end, the intention of CERTH's administration is to repeat the survey in a reasonable period of time after the Commission's acknowledgement. The survey will allow CERTH to depict the contemporary researchers' opinion about CERTH's conformity with the C&C principles, gain feedback on recently implemented actions according to the current proposed action plan and revise the action plan by enhancing it with further tasks.

Corrective Actions

CERTH in its effort to be consistent, to the biggest possible extent due to limitations such as financial resources and national legislation constrains, with the principles of the C&C has put forward a new Human Resources plan which tackles the abovementioned topics.

Category 1: Ethical and professional aspects

1.08 – Dissemination of results

- *Reorganisation of CERTH's Liaison Office*

Based on the findings of the internal analysis the Board of Directors (BoD) of CERTH has moved on to the restructure of the Central Administration. The restructuring included the reorganization of the Liaison Office with the appointment of new personnel and the mandate by the BoD to enhance the extroversion of the organisation and the exploitation of CERTH-based research results. To this end, the Liaison Office has already implemented initiatives that can bring CERTH closer to the general public and to the national productive fabric. In May 2011, CERTH's liaison office published the first corporate e-newsletter of CERTH promoting the latest developments of the organization. CERTH's e-newsletter will be issued every four months. Other activities that are already in action include a corporate Facebook account, organisation of open-days for CERTH's institutes and participation in exhibitions.

In the near future, the Liaison Office will enhance its presence in the social media world with a Twitter and a LinkedIn account. Additionally, an entry in the Greek and the English version of Wikipedia will be prepared.

- *Establishment of CERTH's Press Office*

CERTH's Press Office started its operation in June 2011. Its mission is to manage CERTH's media relations which include the publicising of research results, news and events, monitoring media coverage and acting as a contact for media enquiries.

In the framework of its duties, CERTH's Press Office will create a database of internal experts who will be willing to provide comment and/or background briefing on a story of their scientific expertise to journalists.

Moreover, CERTH's Press Office will be responsible for the design, maintenance and development of "CERTH's Science Blog", a blog which will provide updated information on science at CERTH, the projects, the researchers and what's happening when the lights are off. The blog will, from one side, give the opportunity to researchers, regardless seniority, to promote their work and its results and on the other hand will contribute in altering public's negative perception for research.

1.11 – Evaluation/ appraisal systems

The Board of Directors will establish a working group consisted of representatives of all CERTH's institutes. The aim of the working group will be to investigate, first, the need for evaluation/appraisal systems for assessing professional performance of all researchers; then, the potential evaluation/appraisal systems that could be implemented and, finally, propose to the BoD the most appropriate methodology/system taking into consideration, among others, legal and socioeconomic factors, budget constrains and CERTH's culture.

Category 2: Recruitment

2.01 – Recruitment

▪ *Announcement of all research vacancies in the EURAXESS Jobs Portal*

CERTH's BoD, in order to ensure open and transparent recruitment procedure, will decide on the obligatory announcement of all research vacancies in CERTH in the EURAXESS Jobs Portal. The decision will then be circulated to all researchers that have the authority to employ researchers of any level.

▪ *Training on using the EURAXESS Jobs Portal*

The Horizontal Projects Implementation Unit which hosts CERTH's EURAXESS Services Centre will communicate with all potential internal employers and will offer training on the use of the EURAXESS Jobs portal.

Category 3: Working conditions and social security

3.03 – Working Conditions

▪ *Access to disabled personnel/visitors*

The Technical Services, operations and maintenance unit will take on the responsibility to investigate whether all premises of CERTH are accessible to disabled personnel/visitors. The premises (laboratories, convention centres, cafeteria, parking lots, lavatories, etc.) should be accessible to anyone without the assistance of others. In case that there are areas with little or no access to disadvantaged groups then the aforementioned unit will take on the responsibility of reconstructing the areas appropriately.

• *Flexible Working hours*

Despite the fact that efforts have already been made to provide a flexible working environment, national legislation as well as EC rules on FP7 project narrow down CERTH's possibilities for relevant actions. Nevertheless, CERTH's legal department will investigate the existing regulatory framework on flexible working time arrangements. Based on the finding of the study, it will propose to the Board of Directors a "flexible working" strategy that could be adopted by the organisation. The flexible working conditions should aim to provide working conditions which allow both women and men researchers to combine family and work, children and career.

• *CERTH's Ombudsman office*

In the framework of improving working conditions and dealing with complains CERTH will establish an Ombudsman's office. The aim of the office will be:

    i.   to work with individuals and groups in an organization to explore and assist them in determining options to help resolve conflicts, problematic issues or concerns, and

    ii.   to bring systemic concerns to the attention of the organization for resolution

CERTH's ombudsman will operate in a manner to preserve the confidentiality of those seeking services, maintains a neutral/impartial position with respect to the concerns raised, works at an informal level of the organizational system, and is independent of formal organizational structures.

The appointment of the ombudsman will be decided by CERTH's Board of Directors. Alternatively, the Board of Directors may decide to appoint the responsibilities of the office to the Association of CERTH's employees.

3.05 – Funding and Salaries

The economic downturn in Greece and the series of austerity measures that followed have aggravated the level of wages and salaries nationally. The new legal framework leaves minimum room for public organisations to determine their wages policy. Nevertheless, CERTH's Board of Directors has managed to preserve a significant part of the initial salary levels and commits to maintain this favorable wages policy also in the future in accordance with the national legislation.

3.07 – Career development

- *Mentoring program*

In the framework of researchers' career development, CERTH will develop a mentoring program. A volunteer experienced researcher (mentor) will be assigned to every early-stage researcher (mentee), newly employed by the organisation. The mentors, who need to prove a series of "soft" skills apart from research ability, will induct new researchers into CERTH's culture and, at the same time, the subculture of the institute that he/she works for.
The program that will be set up between mentor and mentee will focus on:

i. The research development of the trainee in many aspects of their scientific career, including methods, directions, creative thinking, completing academic or professional requirements and scientific communication
ii. The Career development of the trainee. This includes opportunities to make contacts with leaders in the trainee's field of research, active introduction into the network of people working in his or her discipline, and an awareness of the range of career options
iii. The socialization of the mentee. This includes promotion of skills for teaching, communication, working in teams, leadership, management of people, interacting with others, listening, expressing ideas, administration and planning, and budget management

The details of the mentoring program will be drawn up by the Horizontal Projects Implementation Unit.

Category 4: Training

4.04 – Access to research training and continuous development

- *Development of a database of experts/trainers and organisation of internal trainings*

Apart from the mentoring program that will contribute to the continuous training and career development of researchers, a database of experts/trainers (on volunteer basis) will be created. The database will include CERTH's researchers that throughout their research career have gained significant experience not only in their scientific field but also in complementary activities. As soon as the database is completed, a series of internal trainings will be organized aiming at the development of complementary skills of the researchers. The trainings could be on topics such as: entrepreneurship IPR issues, proposal writing, promotion of research results etc.

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