Human Resources Strategy for Researchers

University of Rijeka, Croatia

Strategic Priority Areas and Action Plan for their implementation

INTRODUCTION

The University of Rijeka is the first university in Croatia and one of the first ten in Europe to have signed "The European Charter for Researchers" and "The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers", thereby accepting the initiative of the European Commission, which in 2005 adopted these documents with the aim of increasing employability and promoting careers in research as vital to economic growth, employment, and the setting up of a European research area.

We were, what is more, the first to sign the Charter for participation in the European Commission's Group for Human Resources Strategy Implementation. By signing the above-mentioned charters, we have committed ourselves to implementing these documents at the University of Rijeka, which is a strategic goal included also in University of Rijeka Strategy. The "Strategy of Human Resources in Research" project was adopted at University's Senate meeting in October 2009, while the survey report, internal analysis and activity report (HR Strategy for Researchers) were adopted at the Senate's meeting in June 2010. In July 2010, the University of Rijeka received a formal acknowledgement by EC and the 'HR Excellence in research' logo.

Based on our current level of implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers and especially the feedback received during the external assessment and the site visit, as part of the renewal phase of the Strategy, the University of Rijeka defines in this framework:

A.) its renewed strategic priority areas for current and the next phase, and

B.) the action plan with the responsible bodies/persons and the implementation deadlines.

A. STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS

1. <u>Coherent, open and transparent information package:</u> The University's web site for international researchers already contains relevant information about scientific research areas and the university constituencies, as well as information about university strategies, international relations (including EURAXESS.hr), qualification policies and tips for traveling to and settling at the University of Rijeka, including visa policies, health insurance and related information. This information has been complemented and will be constantly updated with all information for domestic and international researchers applying for recruitment at the University of Rijeka (see also strategic priority area 11). A starting point for the renewal and more vigorous

implantation of these activities will be a new self-assessment online survey and gap analysis comparable to that performed AT THE University in 2010.

2. <u>Ethics and professionalism:</u> The Ethics Code is to be continuously revised in accordance with the results of surveys carried out at the University (internal or mandated by EU funding frameworks) about academic integrity and research code of conduct (the last revision dating from 2018). The University of Rijeka is unique in its regular analysis and reports on the issue of gender equality, recently also as part of an EU-wide framework (H2020 project "Supporting and implementing Plans for gender Equality in Academia and Research (SPEAR)"). The University of Rijeka is proud that there are more female than male representative in its highest representative body: the University Senate. Furthermore, numerous round tables and scientific meetings are to be organised with the aim to emphasize and rectify ethical issues including the issues of academic integrity and the research code of conduct.

3. <u>Ensuring scientific excellence:</u> The University of Rijeka strongly supports the concept of open science and has formally accepted at the beginning of 2019 (as the first in Croatia and one of the first in the EU), via a unanimous decision of its Senate, its own "Declaration on Open Science". The open science principles will be increasingly harmonised with the EU Plan-S initiative and its implementation at the EU level. The institutional funds devoted by the Ministry of Science and Education to the University of Rijeka for scientific activities, are and will be distributed via transparent peer-review-based procedures to the early-stage researchers (an increase of more than 100% was dedicated to this funding scheme in 2018), to more experienced researchers via UNIRI projects, and dedicated to incoming researchers' mobility schemes. What is more, in 2018 the University has also introduced the role of honorary professors defined as „teachers and scientists of exceptional international reputation that actively cooperate and contribute to the activities, or are willing to actively cooperate and contribute, as well as distinguish themselves, with the affiliation of the University of Rijeka". Each year at least 1-2 new honorary professors will be appointed. Regarding the area of supervisor-related policies, relations with D. Sc. students have witnessed a significant improvement, particularly pertaining to regulations and practices, such as the evaluative mechanisms of monitoring researcher advancement and mentor success, which shall be enhanced further via the ongoing establishment of the Doctoral School of the University of Rijeka.

4. <u>Teaching and research:</u> The balance of teaching and research obligations is still a challenging issue due to national regulations and the limitation in institutional resources at certain university constituencies. The new national "Collective Contract for Science and Higher Education", adopted at the end of 2018, has introduced in this frame significant modifications and the relevant policy bodies of the University of Rijeka are defining the respective implementation measures.

5. <u>Mobility:</u> There are strong policies which encourage professional growth by means of mobility programs such as ERASMUS+, H2020 and alike. The results of such improved mobility are evaluated by assessing research portfolios and recognized as relevant criteria for basic institutional research financing (see also the above section on scientific excellence). The recognition of mobility experience is also part of the national criteria for

promotion as defined in the Rulebook of the Conference of Croatian Rectors as well as of the provisions for doctoral education at the University of Rijeka.

6. <u>Financing:</u> In spite of some improvements, the University is still challenged by the lack of sufficient financial means related to recruitment policies, the deficiencies of some of the national policies as well as by the lack of competences and motivation for applying for the competitive EU research funds. Also, there is room for improvement in the domains of team work, research strategies for smart specialization (the new S3 set of University's priorities was adopted in 2018 and partnerships in this frame with the local authorities (the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County) have been formalised) and the collaboration between university and business (the University has established in this frame a Knowledge Transfer Committee constituted by its researchers and by stakeholders from the business and local government sectors – this Committee is also part of the Competitiveness Council of the City of Rijeka urban agglomeration). An increasing volume of lifelong learning programs could also contribute to the financial status of the University.

7. <u>Training skills and competences:</u> Significant improvements have been attained in the domain of strategic management (the University of Rijeka is the only university which ensures international programs in strategic management for the university management), as well as in advanced learning methods (e-learning, on-line lectures) which will be systematically fostered also in the future. Recently the University has also appointed a specially dedicated Vice-Rector for Quality Assurance and Enhancement whose portfolio is strongly oriented towards this strategic area.

8. <u>Upgrading institutional regulations and mechanisms:</u> The University of Rijeka is one of the most successful regional entities in the domains of strategic management and institutional research. The Career office and Human Resource management policies have been partly enacted due to the lack of national policies and institutional motivation. What is more, University of Rijeka's intellectual property management policy and other relevant policy mechanisms have also been enacted. The main hindrance to implementing EU policies is the context of a non-integrated university, wherein it is not obligatory to enact university policies, the lack of individual motivation for institutional results as well as resistance to reforms and to more intensive collaboration between university and business. The concept of continuing coordination with its constituents, leading towards functional integration policies, as well as the above-outlined activities aimed at enhancing the knowledge transfer-based collaboration with the business sectors, are to be emphasised and fully implemented.

9. <u>Towards national and international level initiatives:</u> Intensive campaigns towards the national level have resulted in a relatively lacking outcome, mostly because within the last five years five national science ministers have changed, which has substantially hindered the formation of a coherent national strategy. Stable levels of financing from the national budget emerge as the most challenging issue, as well as the lack of national support for research and development, and university improvements in international raking systems (especially in the U-Multirank system recognized by the EC). The University of Rijeka will pursue continually to improve this status via its representatives in relevant national bodies (such as the national

Rectors' Conference) but also by enhancing its internationalisation activities - via a strong involvement in the European University Association, via the active participation to the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) alliance, via international fora such as the Alps-Adriatic Rectors' conference that we are heading, the Berlin process, the initiative of the rectors of the South-East Europe and the Western Balkan region, the Uniadrion initiative, via bilateral contracts with EU universities, especially in neighbouring countries such as Italy, Austria, Slovenia and similar, etc. - so as to compensate for inland weaknesses. All this should be finalised towards adopting the culture of merit-based recruitment and advancement of researchers founded on transparent criteria whose levels ought to be increased towards those of the scientifically most developed EU member countries.

10. <u>Popularisation and broadening of science:</u> This is one of University of Rijeka's most prominent interests, as is supported by the fact that members of its research community have been awarded numerous national awards for their efforts in popularizing science. Many activities are thus promoted for the disclosure and public broadening of science and scientific results ("open days", round tables, public fora, Rijeka of Psychology, Rijeka of Technology, new UNIRI web page, etc.), services are put in place, longer-term policy is being elaborated and set as a global priority in our Strategy and the respective KPI, etc. A dedicated policy body (Committee for Strategic Visibility) was established at the beginning of 2019 with the aim of including these activities in a broader framework of improving the perceived relevance, role and recognition of the University of Rijeka in both the national and the international frames – for students, researchers, stakeholders for the broadest public and the media.

11. <u>OTM-R policy:</u> The EC OTM-R toolkit and recommendations are to be fully addressed and the respective principles are to be implemented via the relevant organisational instances of the University of Rijeka, especially by including these principles in the University of Rijeka Strategy 2021-2027 and the portfolio of Rector's Assistant for Strategic Affairs and Human Resources. In relation also to the above strategic area 1, national recruitment and advancement regulation (Act on Science and Higher Education as well as Rulebook of the Conference of Croatian Rectors), with respective internal (statutory) rules of the University itself, the description of the procedure for the advancement in the placements and scientific ranks (based on peer-review) and on the working conditions in Rijeka, as well as all the public recruitment announcements (from those relative to D. Sc. study programs, via those related to post-doc, assistant professors, associate professors, full professors and full professors with tenure) are to be systematically made publicly available via a dedicated HRS4R section of the uniri.hr web pages with links to respective EURAXESS pages and the pages of the University constituents. A section of "good practise examples", including that related to the relation of D. Sc. and post-docs to their supervisors (and vice versa) will also be part of this section of the uniri.hr website. Wherever and whenever possible, this information will be available on the web not only in Croatian but increasingly also in English. The quality of the process is to be continuously monitored and improved, with a specific KPI dedicated to the goal of increasing the number of researchers from abroad.

The overall responsibility for the coordination and monitoring of these priority areas and the respective activities as outlined below is the Council for Science of the University of Rijeka with its president (currently Prof. Saša Zelenika) reporting in this regard directly to the Rector. In addition to the relevant bodies outlined below and the Council for Science itself, the operational activities relating to the implementation of the HRS4R will be performed by the working group ("Junior Council for Science") constituted by the University of Rijeka researchers (3 representatives for each of the R1, R2, R3 and R4 groups - participants well gender-balanced and including national and international researchers) that have participated to the February 2019 HRS4R external assessment and the site visit. The established collaboration between the senior and junior researchers' councils, the new self-assessment online survey and gap analysis (discussed by focus groups and based on the sharing of good practices) will result in the Human resource strategy for researchers at the University of Rijeka (2019 – 2023). In addition, on the new University web page, the HRS4R and logo - HR Excellence in Research - is more visible (https://uniri.hr; https://uniri.hr/en/science-and-research/charter-and-code/)

B. ACTION PLAN RELATIVE TO STRATEGIC AREAS WITH DEFINITION OF RESPONSIBLITIES AND DEADLINES

The above outlined activities within the established set of strategic priority areas will be implemented by the set deadlines via the specified responsible University of Rijeka management roles and respective committees/councils.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA	RESPONSIBILITY	IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE
1. COHERENT, OPEN AND TRANSPARENT INFORMATION PACKAGE	• Vice-Rector for Informatization and Organization with Professional Council for Computerization • Vice-Rector for Science and Arts with Professional Council for Internationalisation, Research and Projects • Committee for the Erasmus mobility Program	Ongoing – continuing activity with periodic formal report once per year starting with end of 2019 Self-assessment online survey to be performed in the second half of 2019 with the gap analysis to be performed in the first half of 2020
2. ETHICS AND PROFESSIONALISM	• Rector's Assistant for Ethics and Academic Integrity with Council for Scientific Honour	Ongoing – continuing activity with periodic formal reports once per year (already in place – ties to HRS4R to be enhanced)
3. ENSURING SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE	• Council for Science as well as Council of the University of Rijeka Doctoral School	Ongoing – continuing activity with periodic formal reports once per year starting (already in place – ties to HRS4R to be enhanced) Doctoral school to be functional by October 2020.

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4. TEACHING AND RESEARCH	• Vice-Rector for Science and Arts with Professional Council for Internationalisation, Research and Projects • Council for Science • Senate of the University of Rijeka	New norms, in accordance with the new national "Collective Contract for Science and Higher Education", to be defined and put into action per October 1, 2019
5. MOBILITY	• Vice-Rector for Science and Arts with Professional Council for Internationalisation, Research and Projects • Committee for the Erasmus mobility Program	Ongoing – continuing activity with periodic formal reports once per year (already in place – ties to HRS4R to be enhanced)
6. FINANCING	• Vice-Rector for Financing and Business • Knowledge Transfer Committee	Set of actions with respective responsibilities and deadlines to be defined by the end of 2019
7. TRAINING SKILLS AND COMPETENCES	• Vice-Rector for Quality Assurance and Enhancement with Council for Quality Assurance and Enhancement • Committee for Lifelong Learning	Ongoing – continuing activity with periodic formal reports once per year (already in place – ties to HRS4R to be enhanced)
8. UPGRADING INSTITUTIONAL REGULATIONS AND MECHANISMS	• Vice-Rector for Quality Assurance and Enhancement, • Vice-Rector for informatization and Organization • Rector's Assistant for Strategic Affairs and Human Resources • Board of Statutory Issues • Board for University Strategy • Committee of Secretaries	Ongoing – continuing activity with periodic formal reports once per year (already in place – ties to HRS4R to be enhanced)
9. TOWARDS NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL INITIATIVES	• Rector • Vice-Rector for Science and Arts with Professional Council for Internationalisation, Research and Projects • Council for Science	Ongoing – continuing activity with periodic formal reports once per year (already in place – ties to HRS4R to be enhanced)
10. POPULARISATION AND BROADENING OF SCIENCE	• Committee for Strategic Visibility	Set of actions with respective responsibilities and deadlines to be defined by mid 2019

| 11. OTM-R POLICY | • Rector's Assistant for Strategic Affairs and Human Resources
• Board for University Strategy
• Vice-Rector for Informatization and Organization with Professional Council for Computerization | Set of actions with respective responsibilities and deadlines to be defined by the end of June 2020 |

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