



Centre for Genomic Regulation

**HR Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)
Action Plan 2019-2021**



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH



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1. CRG HR Strategy for Researchers. Introduction

The Centre for Genomic Regulation (CRG) is an international biomedical research institute of excellence, created in December 2000. It is a non-profit foundation funded by the Catalan Government through the Departments of Business & Knowledge, the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation & Universities, "la Caixa" Banking Foundation, and includes the participation of Pompeu Fabra University.

The mission of the CRG is to discover and advance knowledge for the benefit of society, public health and economic prosperity.

The [Charter for Researchers](#) and [Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers](#) were endorsed by CRG in 2008. Following this commitment, in 2011 CRG accepted an invitation by the European Commission to participate in the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers initiative (third cohort) to make CRG a more attractive workplace for researchers at all levels.

The Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) is conceived by the Centre for Genomic Regulation (CRG) as of a methodology to put the principles of the [Charter & Code](#) into practice. To achieve this challenge, the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) follows a cycle that iterates once the process is completed. The cycle can be described as follows:

- Internal Gap Analysis
- Strategy and Action Plan
- Revision and acknowledgment by the European Commission
- Self-assessment
- External Evaluation by the European Commission

Since its endorsement in 2008, CRG has been working on aligning their human resources policies to the 40 principles of the [Charter & Code](#), based on a customized action plan/HR strategy.

The first action plan was designed for the period of 2013-2015 with the involvement of a Monitoring Committee, and an internal Working Group with representatives from all research professional communities and approved by the CRG Executive Board. The proposed HR Strategy was based on the HR Strategic Objectives 2013-2017 outlined below:

1. Promote and enhance recruitment policies to attract top talent and train the next generation of scientists
2. Provide a positive work environment that builds on the principles of equal opportunities and work-life balance
3. Support the talent through career development, including guidance to researchers looking for their next professional step inside and beyond the CRG
4. Develop an integrated set of transparent HR policies and Code of Conduct to ensure ethical integrity at all levels throughout the CRG
5. Deliver high quality and professional HR services to the CRG community

On the 19th of November of 2013 CRG received the '[HR Excellence in Research](#)' award from the European Commission. This is a recognition of the institute's commitment in developing a Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R), designed to bring the practices, policies and procedures in line with the principles of [Charter and Code](#).

The second action plan was designed for the period 2016-2017, and was followed by 2018 midterm actions, before designing the current action plan for the period of 2019-2021. The main lines of action pursuing in the plan were:

- Design HR policies (recruiting and career development)
- Enhance promotion of gender balance and work-life balance
- Further development of training activities

The main midterm actions in 2018 can be summarised as follows:

- Increase awareness in gender bias and continue integrating specific actions in Recruitment, Career Development, Work-Life Balance, Sex-Gender dimension of Research and Management (within Gender Equality Plan – GEP)
- Expand our Training Portfolio, fostering Research Integrity and Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) learning activities
- Reinforce dissemination of *Recruitment Policy* and the Principles of the [Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers](#)

2. Designing HRS4R Action Plan 2019-2021. The previous steps

To design the new Action Plan 2019-2021 several steps were taken:

1. Kick-off meeting 'Renewal Phase' HR Excellence in Research award

A kick-off meeting took place in March 2019 with the members of the Monitoring Working Group composed of the Managing Director, the Head of Human Resources, the Head of International and Scientific Affairs, the Training Coordinator and the Academic Coordinator. The objectives, the methodology and the main roles and responsibilities were discussed and agreed.

2. Gap Analysis based on Action plan 2013-2015/2017-2018 and the midterm actions 2018

From December 2018 to March 2019, an in-house gap analysis led by the Human Resources Department was carried out with the collaboration of the Monitoring Working Group, and key stakeholders/working group, to analyse strengths and weaknesses of the main areas that encompass the 40 principles of the [Charter & Code](#): Ethical and Professional aspects, Recruitment, Working Conditions & Social Security, and Training and Development. A work plan including meetings and sessions with key members of the centre was prepared to identify strengths and weaknesses. Considering the specificities of the institution, the major tools to perform the gap analysis were:

- 1) Group sessions and face-to-face meetings in order to allow gathering qualitative information including opinions and views.
- 2) Creation of a working group to include all relevant actors in the process, as well as the top management. Key players and experts on different principles of the *Charter & Code* were identified and engaged to participate in the gap analysis.
- 3) Data collection and evaluation to identify potential topics of the *Charter & Code* not covered so far.
- 4) Survey. A user survey was launched in order to gather the opinion of the CRG community to enrich the gap analysis.

Once the identification process of the strengths and weaknesses was completed, a first draft report was written and shared with the stakeholders involved in the gap analysis to gather new contributions or amendments and promote synergies between the working group. This work plan allowed the collection and in-depth evaluation of the principles of the *Charter & Code* considering last actions plans and policies grades' of implementation.

The main gaps identified through the deep analysis can be summarised as follows:

- Ethical and Professional Aspects

CRG ensures that our professional activities are transparent and carried out following ethical principles. All CRG members are required to carry out their activities in line with the values of the Institute, which include interacting with peers and colleagues in a professional, collaborative and supporting manner and without discrimination. All researchers and technicians need to take a course on ethics and integrity before signing their contract at the CRG. CRG regulates and ensures compliance through specific documents: *PRBB Code of Good Scientific Practice*, Internal Staff Regulations, Health and Safety Regulations, *Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer Policy*, among others. The Institute stands out for its integrity, fostering a culture of open communication, transparency, trust, respect and mutual cooperation, where diverse perspectives and views are encouraged and valued. However, it has been identified the need to increase awareness and information about CRG policies on ethics and good scientific practice.

- Recruitment Area

CRG employers adhere to the principles set out in the *Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers* when recruiting researchers. To ensure the operational adhesion to the principles of the code, different measures, policies, procedures and good practices have been implemented: *Recruitment Policy*, Recruitment Tool/ Applicant Tracking System, Dissemination of the *Charter & Code*, a fully transparent description of the positions, among others.

Although improvements related to recruitment are considered notable and have a high compliance with *Open, Transparent and Merit-based (OTM)* policy, there are still

issues to be addressed, such as, specific guidelines stated clearly in a written document about appointment/composition of committees, procedures for R3 and R4 career stage including more specifications such as gender perspective and the appointment of committees/panel, and training/information about OTM.

- Working Conditions and Social Security

CRG employers recognize researchers as professionals within a career path and treat them accordingly, applying the working conditions regulated at both national and international level. CRG provides improving working conditions and ensures a stimulating research environment. Regarding representation, researchers are represented in consultation to be able to protect their collective interests. Among others, the existing representative groups and councils are PhD representatives and Graduate Committee, Postdocs Representatives and Postdoc Committee, Technicians Representatives, Faculty, and Executive Board where researchers are represented by the Programme Coordinators.

Although the Institute has bodies through which deal with complaints/appeals, would be recommended to integrate an impartial person (ombudsperson-type) to help in resolving work-related conflicts and disputes.

“Equality, Diversity and Inclusion” has been identified as a strategic line of action of the centre in which there are concerns to continue making improvements.

- Training and Development

One of the main strategic goals of the Institute is to provide multi- and inter-disciplinary training for the next generation of scientists. CRG boasts an excellent comprehensive training programme that addresses the needs of the different professional categories at the Institute and prepares scientist for the next step in their professional career. CRG website offers a professional and wide explanation about the training offering at each career level. Develop a *CRG Training Policy* as a formal document could help to govern our advanced and excellent training as an employee’s benefit.

Career Development Actions and Mentoring Programmes have been identified as ongoing demands and real needs to contribute to the career advancement, in particular career advice to last year PhD students and Postdocs in transition to next career step.

3. Action Plan

The gap analysis report guided towards the concretion of the main strategic lines of action for the 2019-2021 Action Plan. According to the outcome of the analysis, the main strategic lines of actions to follow are the following:

1. Increase awareness and communication about CRG policies on ethics and good scientific practice, including the dissemination of the CERCA¹ Code of Conduct.
2. Reinforce the *Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment Policy* for Researchers by establishing a mechanism for suggestions and complaints, monitoring quality of the process and creating specific guidelines for panel composition and selection of Group Leaders.
3. Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion by designing and implementing an integrative Equality Plan, and executing the LIBRA² sustainability plan in collaboration with EU-LIFE³ partners.
4. Further support the talent through career development actions and activities, including mentoring programmes and the design of a comprehensive Training Policy for the Institute.

¹ The CERCA Institute is the Government of Catalonia's technical service and its means for supervising, supporting and facilitating the activities of the research centres in the CERCA system.

² LIBRA is European Commission funded project which brings together ten research institutes in life sciences in ten European countries, and it has been coordinated by CRG.

³ EU-LIFE is an alliance of top research centres in life sciences to support and strengthen European research excellence and be a voice for research in European policy.

The actions proposed in the Action Plan 2019-2021 have been approved by the CRG Executive Board in October 2019. They have been grouped in four areas in alignment with the *Charter & Code*: Ethical and Professional Aspects, Recruitment, Working Conditions, and Training and Development. For each action has been identified the Charter & Code principle/s, the unit/s in charge, a timeframe, and corresponding indicator/s.

The CRG HRS4R Monitoring Working Group will assess the implementation of the Action Plan. Reporting once a year to the Executive Board, the CRG HRS4R Monitoring Working Group will follow-up the progress of the actions planned.

CRG HRS4R Monitoring Working Group takes this opportunity to thank you all the stakeholders, key players and experts for their collaboration, contribution and support, and understands the subsequent Action Plan as a result of a collaborative effort.



October 2019

CRG HRS4R Working Monitoring Group

ACTION PLAN 2019-2021

Ethical and Professional Aspects					
Action Nr.	Action	C&C Principle	Depts. in charge	Timeframe	Indicator
1	Awareness and dissemination activities (talks, roundtables, mailing etc.) about CRG policies, and specifically on ethics and good scientific practice.	2, 3, 4, 5, 7	Direction HR ISA	Q4-2019 to Q4-2021 <i>Ongoing activity</i>	- List of activities - Number of participants
2	Dissemination of CERCA Code of Conduct applicable to all members of CERCA institutes to current members of the CRG and delivery to newcomers with onboarding.	2	Direction HR	Q4-2019 to Q2-2020	- Dissemination actions
3	Public Dialogue aiming at opening up the research strategy of the institute to explore how to incorporate the views and ideas from civil society and different stakeholders, such as funding agencies, policy makers, and industry partners, to the elaboration of the research strategy for the period 2022-2026. This exercise will also promote a cultural change about the perception of open science throughout the CRG research community. This is one of the actions of Orion project about Open Science funded by European Commission and coordinated by CRG.	9	Direction Comms ISA	Q2-2019 to Q2-2020	- List of activities - Number of participants - Number researchers involved - Outcomes (participants vision)
4	Citizen Science Project GENIGMA : aims at investigating genomic alterations in cancer, through a video game. This is one of the actions of Orion project about Open Science funded by European Commission and coordinated by CRG.	9	Direction Comms ISA	Q4-2018 to Q2-2021	- Number of participants - Number of players

Recruitment					
Action Nr.	Action	C&C Principle	Depts. in charge	Timeframe	Indicator
5	Provide more specific guidelines on the composition of committees in the selections (in terms of gender, internationality, disciplines, etc.) by complementing and expanding the information provided in the "Recruiting Policy"; and disseminate accordingly.	14	HR	Q1 to Q2-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document established - Number of dissemination actions
6	Create specific guidelines for the recruitment of Group Leaders (R3 and R4), by complementing and expanding the information provided in the "Recruiting Policy"; and disseminate accordingly.	17	HR	Q1 to Q2-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document established - Number of dissemination actions
7	Establish a mechanism for suggestions or complaints during the Selection Process, following the OTM guidelines for recruiting.	13	HR	Q3 to Q4-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mechanism established - Number of suggestions/complaints
8	Create a questionnaire to monitor quality control of the different selection processes, following the OTM guidelines for recruiting.	15	HR	Q1 to Q2-2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questionnaire established - Results of the Questionnaire
9	Briefing/training Hiring Managers and Panel Members, in particular chairs, on the guidelines applicable for the given selection process, including the principles of the <i>Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers</i> to be observed.	16, 18, 19	HR	Q3-2019 to Q4-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness actions implemented

Working Conditions and Social Security					
Action Nr.	Action	C&C Principle	Depts. in charge	Timeframe	Indicator
10	Develop a <i>Parental Leave Guidelines for CRG employees</i> explaining the benefits of parental leave established by Law and CRG regulations in the different steps. The document also improves the existing regulations of the institute, by extending the time allowed to stay at the CRG (PhD students, postdocs, staff scientist, junior principal Investigators) in case of parental leave.	24, 25	HR Gender Committee	Q1 to Q4-2019	- Document - Number of staff applying and granted to extent their stay at the Centre
11	Continue offering for PhD students, postdocs, and technicians internship opportunities in Administration Departments in order to gain new transferable skills, and cross functional experience.	24	ISA	Q1-2020 to Q4-2021	- Number of Internships undertaken
13	Design, approval and implementation of the new Equality, Diversity and Inclusive Plan (2020-2022), incorporating the recommended actions from the LIBRA Sustainability Plan (2018), including among others mobbing and sexual harassment topics.	27	HR Gender Committee ISA	Q3-2019 to Q4-2021	- Document approved - Number of actions implemented - Number of dissemination actions
14	Actively participate and contribute in national and international initiatives on gender equality, including the PRBB committee, the SOMMa and EU-LIFE working groups, and the H2020 project ACT on gender.	27	Gender Committee ISA HR	Q4-2019 to Q4-2021	- Number of actions implemented
15	Establish the procedure for contacting the CERCA Ombudsperson. The Ombudsperson was created in 2019 for all CERCA institutes to provide impartial and neutral assistance and help resolve conflicts. The internal procedure will establish the steps to be followed when a work-related conflict arises, including the possibility to contact the Ombudsperson in case that the conflict cannot be resolved at the level of CRG. The existing policies (including "Scientific Misconduct Policy") will be modified accordingly.	34	Direction HR ISA	Q4-2019 to Q4-2021	- Document, Procedure - Number of conflicts or consultation
16	Explore the possibility with the <i>Barcelona Biomedical Research Park</i> (PRBB) to establish psychological counselling for the CRG community, and offer recommendations of a pool of psychologists/counsellors to the staff.	24	HR	Q4-2019 to Q2-2020	- Psychological counselling established - Number of sessions

Training and Development					
Action Nr.	Action	C&C Principle	Depts. in charge	Timeframe	Indicator
17	Develop a CRG Training Policy for the different communities at the CRG.	38, 39	HR ISA	Q4-2020 to Q1-2021	- Document - Number of dissemination actions
18	Evaluate to re-launch the call for technicians to provide financial support for external training activities.	38, 39	ISA	Q1-2020 to Q2-2021	- Number of applicants - Number of awards - Reports about the taken training
19	Implementation of a pilot mentoring programme for PhD students (provided by postdocs who would be the mentors) and explore to extend to whole PhD community.	36,38	PhD Graduate Committee Postdoc Committee HR	Q2-2019 to Q4-2021	- Number of mentored PhD students - Number of postdoc participating as mentors
20	Implementation of the postdoc mentoring programme promoted by Postdocs.	36, 38	Postdoc Committee ISA	Q1-2019 to Q1-2020	- Number of mentored postdocs
21	Mentoring programme addressed to Junior Group Leaders (internal/external).	38, 39	Junior Group Leaders	Q-3 2019 to Q4-2021 <i>Ongoing activity</i>	- Number of mentees - Number of mentors
22	Implementation of EU-LIFE postdoc exchange seminar programme.	38, 39	Postdoc Committee ISA	Q3-2019 to Q3-2020	- Number of hosted postdocs - Number of CRG postdocs visiting other institutes
23	Implementation of activities for career development (BIST Career days, "Career charlas", workshops, etc.) and targeted career advice in particular to last year PhD students and postdocs in transition to next career step, in collaboration with different partners and alliances (BIST, EU-LIFE), complementary to PRBB Intervals and other existing activities.	30, 38, 39	HR ISA	Q4-2019-Q4-2021 <i>Ongoing activity</i>	- Number of events - Number of participants - Result of satisfaction surveys



Acronyms

Q: Quarter of the year

Comms: Communications and Public Relations Department

HR: Human Resources Department

ISA: International and Scientific Affairs

