Action Plan

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1. HR STRATEGY - ACTION PLAN

Name Organization under review: CIC nanoGUNE

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Web link to the published version of the organization's HR Strategy and Action Plan:
https://www.nanogune.eu/es/estrategia-y-politicas

Date Endorsement Charter and Code: 30 August 2017
Submission Date: 27 April 2018
Consensus Report: 19 February 2019
Re-submission Date: 29 July 2019

a. Organizational Information

Advances in nanoscience and nanotechnology are nowadays at the heart of the technological development of our society. Our current ability to observe and control matter at the atomic and molecular scale (the nanoscale) will allow, in the next few decades, the design of new objects and the development of more efficient and less expensive manufacturing processes in a great variety of industry sectors.

At nanoGUNE, it is our mission to carry out world-class nanoscience research, thus contributing to the creation of the necessary conditions for the society to benefit from a wide range of nanotechnologies: confronting new scientific challenges through cooperation with other research and technological agents in the Basque Country and worldwide, building bridges that fill the gap between fundamental science and technology, as well as promoting high-level training and outreach activities.

With the objective of placing the Basque Country at the forefront of nanoscience research, we have been successful in putting together a state-of-the-art infrastructure and incorporating highly-qualified researchers that have been making outstanding contributions in various fields of nanoscience and nanotechnology. We have succeeded in transferring our knowledge into the market through the creation of new nanotechnology-based companies and also working directly with the existing industry.

Being a small center in a small country, we will keep developing close scientific partnerships with the best research laboratories around the world, with the expectation that we will always find the niche for us to offer something different. This is the big challenge of the small.

Structure and Governance

NanoGUNE was legally set up as a private non-profit making association in 28 February 2006. A state-of-the-art building was inaugurated in January 2009.

The Association is currently formed by the following partners:

- DIPC: Donostia Interntional Physics Center
- TECNALIA
- IK4
- UPV/EHU: University of the Basque Country
- GFA: Gipuzkoako Foru Aldundia
- CAF
- PETRONOR
- IKOR

Organizational Chart

The global management and organization of nanoGUNE are carried out along the lines displayed in the chart below, which shows the key roles of the center.

Research fields

NanoGUNE focuses its research activities on the following four major strategic areas:

- Physics of low-dimensional structures, nanostructures, and nanoscale structured complex systems.
- Synthesis, assembling, and nanofabrication of nanomaterials (nanoparticles, nanotubes, thin films, nanocomposites), and nanostructured materials.
- Development of nanodevices and its impact on molecular electronics, spintronics, nanomagnetism, and nanophotonics.
- Biofunctional nanoparticles and nanobiotechnology

The research program is implemented in the framework of 10 research groups.

STAFF & PhD STUDENTS	FTE
Total researchers = staff, fellows, bursary holders, and PhD students either full-time or part-time involved in research	68.80
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)	29.59
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organization is the host organization)	53.45
Of whom are women	31.96
Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor	18.90
Of whom are stage R2 = in most organizations corresponding with a postdoctoral level	22.40
Of whom are stage R1 = in most organizations corresponding with a doctoral level	27.50
Total number of students (if relevant)	-
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching, and research staff)	93.14
RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)	€
Total annual organizational budget	6,453,964
Annual organizational direct government funding (designated for research)	3,298,240

Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organizations – including EU funding)	2,249,634
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	476,546

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

NannoGUNE is a Basque research center created with the mission of carrying out world-class nanoscience research for the competitive growth of the Basque Country. The organization is composed of 96 employees coming from 25 countries worldwide. The aim is to place the Basque Country at the forefront of nanoscience research, helping to create the necessary conditions for the society to benefit from a wide range of nanotechnologies, increasing the business competitiveness and the economic growth of the Basque Country.

NanoGUNE decides to get underway in the process of implementation of the HRS4R policies in order to direct the organization in the right direction in the field of human resources. To this end, a process is initiated whereby all nanoGUNE employees are consulted, thus being able to determine individual perceptions on issues related to the 40 principles contained in the four blocks Working Conditions and Social Security, Training, Recruitment, and Ethical and Professional Aspects.

After collecting the answers to a questionnaire, and with a quantitative response, we proceed to assess the qualitative aspect of the impressions of nanoGUNE's employees, with all the groups and positions represented (PhD students, Post-docs, Research Fellows, Senior Scientists, and Staff).

During this process, nanoGUNE has presented various points of improvement, as well as strengths, throughout the process to obtain the HR Logo. Throughout this writing, we expose strengths and weaknesses in order to develop the pertinent actions to improve on the necessary issues. We will focus the analysis on the four blocks presented.

In general terms, it is observed that all the blocks were evaluated positively. The lowest result is observed in relation to Working Conditions and Social Security. Analysing the principles one by one, we observe that the highest and the lowest scores are in this block. The Research Environment is presented as the greatest strength of the Center.

We have observed that the research environment provides adequate equipment and resources, opportunities for collaboration in international environments, as well as compliance with regulations related to health and risk prevention. It is also perceived that the people who are part of nanoGUNE value these issues positively.

The principle of co-authorship is also presented as a strength of the Center; in other words, the Center guarantees the visibility of the contributions of researchers, especially in the case of those who are at the beginning of their career, through co-authorships in publications, patents, or others.

The lowest scores are also in this section, specifically in the following principles: Participation in decision making bodies, Career Development, Access to Career Advice and Stability, and Permanence of Employment. Regarding the last one, the low score is a consequence of the nature of the activity, which promotes mobility in a number of roles.

Regarding the other low scores, we observe that there are no formal and previously established procedures for career development. Concerning the Participation in Decision Making Bodies, researchers are nanoGUNE do not feel consulted or properly represented.

Strengths are also identified in other blocks, such as Research Freedom, Ethical Principles, and Professional Responsibility. The results obtained in these principles 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 do not plagiarize.

Other principles such as Accountability, Continuing Professional Development, Public Engagement, Relation with Supervisors, Value of Mobility, Supervision, Professional Attitude, and all those related to recruitment also exhibit a high and positive perception.

On the other hand, the evaluation for the treatment of processes related to complains and appeals can be improved. Not because they disagree with the current system but because no formal procedure has been established. Other weak points to be improved are related to (i) salaries (while the post-doc salary is perceived to be adequate, the remuneration of PhD students is perceived to be low) and (ii) the principle of Non-Discrimination. Although the Center does not encourage any kind of discrimination, it is a fact that all senior scientists are men.

After this analysis, an action plan will be developed in order to improve on those issues that were identified as weaknesses.

c. Actions

The implementation of this Action Plan aims to adequate internal workflows with that of the Charter and Code (C&C). The plan will be carried out over the next 24 months. Each action will be assigned to specific group in order to be executed properly.

Title action	Extended Description	Addressed principles (Gap Analysis)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
A1. Reinforcement of a Gender Equality Committee	A Gender Equality Committee has been launched. Developing a Gender Equality Plan.	10, 27	2S2019	Gender Equality Committee	Gender Equality Plan developed
A2. Supervision by Senior Scientists	Reinforcement of the role of senior scientists through a specific training, as multi-faceted supervisors of PhD students and post-docs in their career development as well as representative of PhD students and post-docs in decision-making bodies.	21, 25, 26, 28, 30, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40	1Q2020	Research Director	Reinforced senior scientists / 10
A3. Soft-skills training	Broadening to all employees the access to soft-skills training.	28, 39	2020-2021	Outreach Manager	N. of participants
A4. Corporate Compliance Plan	Development of a Corporate Compliance Plan and the implementation of a protocol for the handling of Grievance and Complaints in the framework of the 2019 Health and Safety Plan. This plan also addressed issues related with the Ethical Code	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 34	1Q2019	Finance Director	This action is already fulfilled, a Corporate Compliance Plan is developed and available on the website and 75 employees attended to a specific training.
A5. Transfer of researchers to Industry	Definition and development of a specific program for those researches that end their stage at nanoGUNE and/or want to continue their career in an industrial company.	25, 28, 29, 39	2Q2019	Technology Transfer Manager	Number of researchers transferred to industry per year
A6. Internal Communication Plan	Definition and implementation of an Internal Communication Plan that helps CIC nanoGUNE researchers and staff to be aware of internal policies and procedures like Ethical Code, Recruitment Policy, Property Rights, Competency Map, Salary Policy, etc.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 26, 30, 32, 38	2Q2020	Gender Equality Committee + Finance Director + Outreach Manager	Internal Communication Plan developed

Establishing an open recruitment policy is a fundamental issue for the HRS4R strategy. The objective is to establish the basis of an open, transparent and merit-based recruitment policy that also excludes any type of discrimination.

In this part, we will give a global and complete view of this policy as well as the principles related to it. All the phases and actions of the selection process identified in the OTM-R expert report are analysed:

1- Advertising and application phase

2- Evaluation and selection phase

3- Appointment phase

1. Advertising and application phase

As a first step, all vacancies will be posted on the website (www.nanogune.eu/careers) by following the criteria of an open and transparent recruiting policy.

In addition to this, the existing offers will also be published at other job-search portals (i.e. www.infojobs.net and at social networks such as LinkedIn or Twitter.

Vacancies will also be published at EURAXESS, with the aim of opening the participation in our selection processes to international candidates.

The content of the offers will always include questions such as:

- Description of the organization.
- Description of the vacant position, the amount of vacancies, and the related tasks.
- Working conditions related to the job offer as well as the desirable starting date.
- Minimum and desirable requirements for the candidates.
- Professional development opportunities.

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

These conditions are applicable to everyone registered and participating in the selection process.

The website is also prepared to invite potential candidates to apply even if the absence of vacancies, with the aim of creating an accessible pool of candidates.

2. Evaluation and selection phase

Various employees might take part in the selection process, depending on the open position. These employees will always be aware of the principles of the OTM-R policy and will always apply this policy in the whole recruitment process.

The first filter is done in view of the minimum and desirable requirements published in the offer. Candidates not fulfilling these requirements will be excluded and will be informed by email. In a second stage, a few selected candidates will be called for an interview. This interview could be face-to-face or remote, depending on the localization or situation of the candidate. This first conversation will cover the background and experience of the candidate, as well as their future prospection. Other issues as mobility and/or seniority will be considered as well.

In order to evaluate the experience of the candidate, interviewers will focus on the following issues:

- Acquisition of funding
- Generation of societal impact
- International experience
- Knowledge transfer and exchange

- Management of research and innovation
- Organizational skills/experience
- Outreach and/or public-awareness activities
- Research performance
- Supervision and mentoring
- Teaching
- Teamwork

Once these first interviews are finished, interviewers will decide which candidates will pass to the next stage, on the basis of the criteria listed above. For this decision, personal information will not be taken into account. The excluded candidates will be notified, giving them feedback about their strengths and weaknesses.

A second interview, if necessary, will be conducted with the selected candidates in order to go in depth in those aspects that are not clear enough and that can show differences between the candidates.

In order to take an objective decision, interviewers will fill a template comparing and contrasting the professional strengths and weaknesses of the candidates; personal information will not be taken into account. Thus, we can ensure that the recruitment process is merit based.

3. Appointment phase

After analysing the information collected in the templates, a candidate will be chosen for the position. Then, an offer will be made and once the candidate accepts the offer the remaining candidates will be informed about the result of the selection process.

d. Organization, Implementation, and Follow-Up Action Plan

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, four actions will be implement with the aim of improving the principles scored under 6.

The implementation of the C&C principles is understood as a dynamic and constant process; hence, other principles scored over 6 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 2018-2020 and includes the actions planned for the final list of C&C principles defined by the process previously described.

NanoGUNE's HR Strategy and action plan will be 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 meetings of the C&C Team every 2 months, in order to evaluate the progress of the design and implementation of each action.

In June 2020, 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.

e. Conclusions

This process enables organizations to identify HR aspects to be improved, but also those that are already ongoing but not perceived by the organization.

This analysis was made in April 2018 and some actions were proposed. Despite of not having EURAXES approval of the Action Plan, nanoGUNE decided to start with some of the actions defined.

One of them was the Corporate Compliance Program that was finished on the first semester of 2019. This action (A4) involved a Corporate Compliance Program already available on the website (https://www.nanogune.eu/es/corporate-compliance) and the implementation of a protocol for the handling of grievance and Complaints, a principle that was scored low in our analysis. In addition, 75 employees attended to a training regarding this issue. This plan also addressed issues related with Ethical code principles.

Apart from this action, other 5 actions have been identified for their implementation. During the months between the first submission and today, a Gender Equality Committee has been launched and they are already working on a draft of the Gender Equality Plan. However, one of the action addressed in the Action Plan (A1) is the reinforcement of this group and the development of a Gender Equality Plan.

Other actions are related to the reinforcement of the role of senior scientists as key figures (A2) to help PhD students and post-docs in the development of their careers as well as representatives of PhD students and post-docs in decision-making bodies. NanoGUNE has already formed two working groups were every employee at every stage of their career is represented, Gender Equality Committee and C&C Team. Both groups were gender representative. These groups increase the participation of employees in decision making bodies. Apart from this, a wider accessibility to the training of soft skills will be promoted, as requested by our researchers (A3).

Another strategic project is the transfer of researchers to Basque industry and research centers, a specific program that will be launched to help those researchers that cannot be permanent in nanoGUNE to be transferred to another organisation to continue their career (A5). We will ask researchers if they are interested in taking part in the project, and which are their career preferences (industry, technology centre…). We will analyse their skills and competences and we will be in touch with those companies and research or technology centres that could be interested on those profiles. We will present these profiles with the aim of achieving an interview between them.

Finally, it is important for us to improve our communication channels. Therefore, an Internal Communication Plan will be developed (A6). This action will impact in many areas of the organisation and in many principles of this project

We enjoy a very good working environment already; but we are committed, nonetheless, to a continuous improvement.

We truly believe this will be a very practical and useful guide in order to achieve the satisfaction of our employees and to guarantee our attractiveness for other researchers worldwide.