



Open, Transparent, and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers at nanoGUNE



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1. Introduction

NanoGUNE is a Basque nanoscience Cooperative Research Center officially inaugurated in 2009 with the mission of performing world-class nanoscience research for the competitive hgrowth of the Basque Country. The center is now focusing on three main strategic areas, which are: Quantum Nanoscience, Nanomaterials, and Nanomedicine.

NanoGUNE is a member of the Basque Research and Technology Alliance (BRTA) and it is recognized as a Maria de Maeztu Center of Excellence, a recognition given by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation, and Universities to research centers that stand out for the international impact of their research activity.

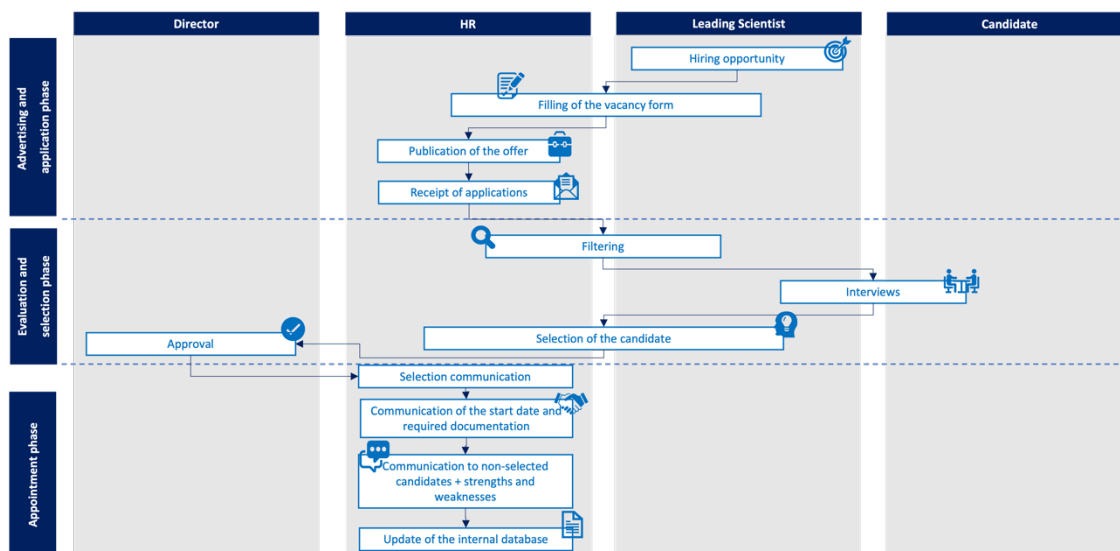
NanoGUNE has always been committed to establish and maintain a recruitment process that is:

- ✓ Open
- ✓ Transparent
- ✓ Merit-based

In this policy, nanoGUNE reviews its recruitment procedures following the principles and guidelines set out by the European Commission on what an OTM-R system should look like. Accordingly, a number of actions are established to improve the recruitment policy.

2. Review of nanoGUNE's current OTM-R policy, practices, and procedures

NanoGUNE has carried out a review of the recruitment system, by establishing a recruitment policy in accordance with the principles of OTM-R.



The recruitment policy has three phases.

The advertising and application phase starts when a leading scientist identifies a hiring opportunity and opens a new position. Together with the Human-Resources team, the ideal profile of the candidate is reviewed and established by filling out the corresponding vacancy

form. Once the ideal profile has been defined, the offer is published on the nanoGUNE website and other web portals like, e.g., Euraxess.

In the evaluation and selection phase, applications are filtered on the basis of the ideal profile agreed with the Leading Scientist. In this framework, candidates not meeting the minimum requirements are automatically discarded, and selected candidates are interviewed by the Leading Scientist and the Human-Resources team, if applicable. The selection of the ideal profile is then made by the Leading Scientist, in coordination with the Human-Resources team. Finally, the director approves (or not) the hiring of the selected candidate. Once the hiring is approved, the Human-Resources team informs the selected candidate that (s)he has been selected for the position and sends him/her an offer (appointment phase).

In the appointment phase, the selected candidate is informed about the start date, the required documentation, and the salary. Non-selected candidates are also informed, and, upon request, they would also be informed about their strengths and weaknesses. Once the selection process is over, the internal database will be updated with information related to the new person joining the center.

Finally, we note that we have used the 'checklist' provided by the European Commission to review our recruitment procedures. **Annex 1** of this policy details the assessment carried out through this checklist.

3. Develop and put in place a revised nanoGUNE OTM-R policy

NanoGUNE has developed and implemented an OTM-R policy that:

- a) Provides a clear and transparent information about the whole selection process, including selection criteria and an indicative timetable. This is reflected in the Recruitment procedure, which is part of the certified Innovation Management System (under UNE 166002: 2014) and details how the selection processes should be executed. This policy is published on the intranet and is, therefore, available to all employees. The aim here is to ensure that employees with the required level of preparation join the center. The selection criteria, as well as the indicative timetable, are shown in the job openings that nanoGUNE publishes on its website and on Euraxess.
- b) Posts a clear and concise job advertisement with links to detailed information on, for example, required competencies and duties, working conditions, entitlements, training opportunities, career development, gender equality policies, etc. All these requirements are included in the job openings, which, as indicated above, are published on nanoGUNE's website and on Euraxess, as well as on online recruiting platforms such as Bizkaia Talent.
- c) Ensures that the required qualifications and competencies are in line with the actual requirements of the position, not being, therefore, too restrictive or unnecessary. In this sense, the specifications that are requested in each job opening should be in complete accordance with the map of competences, which is part of the certified Innovation

Management System (under UNE 166002: 2014) and establishes all competence profiles.

- d) Includes explicit pro-active elements for underrepresented groups. Proof of this is nanoGUNE's commitment to the integration of women in science through our participation in the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Euskadi Seal. The STEAM Euskadi Seal recognizes those initiatives that (i) have passed a first evaluation phase, (ii) are oriented to the objectives of the STEAM Euskadi Strategy, and (iii) have a marked STEAM character. The objective here is to make visible the activity of women in science, to break with male roles typically attributed to scientific-technical activities, and to promote the choice of scientific careers among girls and young women. Moreover, we have developed at nanoGUNE an equality plan in order to eliminate any type of gender-based inequality or discrimination and to integrate equal treatment and opportunities between women and men.
- e) Keeps the administrative burden of the candidate (proof of qualifications, translations, number of copies, etc.) to a minimum. The request for supporting documents is limited to those which are really needed in order to proceed with a fair, transparent, and merit-based selection process. Furthermore, the whole recruitment process observes at all times the applicable legal obligations in terms of personal data protection.
- f) Reviews, where appropriate, the institutional policy on languages. NanoGUNE guarantees that the selection process is carried out in English, as well as in Spanish and/or Basque, if required. Finally, our official website is accessible in three languages: English, Spanish, and Basque.

4. Publishing NanoGUNE's OTM-R policy

The OTM-R policy is published in an easily accessible place on the website, addressing the minimum set of requirements (to be developed in relation to the points above) while respecting institutional autonomy and diversity. For those institutions implementing the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R), this is a requirement.

5. Quality-control system

A quality-control mechanism is established, including the supervision of the whole recruitment process to be administered by the designated staff. In this process, external reviewers take part within the peer review exercise of the HRS4R.

In order to monitor and assess the extent to which the OTM-R system is being implemented, a governance model has been developed and implemented.

NanoGUNE's governance model enables the organization to provide the structure, processes, decision-making models, and tools to successfully manage and control its activity. With this objective in mind, nanoGUNE's governance model is based on communication, transparency, transversality, integral vision, and participation.

In the framework of nanoGUNE's governance model, two committees have been set up. On the one hand, we have a Charter&Code (C&C) Committee, which represents a management body created to manage and oversee the implementation of the C&C principles of the HRS4R model. This committee is formed by seven employees, among which are the HR director and assistant, a senior scientist, a post-doctoral researcher, a pre-doctoral researcher, somebody from the management team, and the coordinator of the gender-equality plan. This committee has the following tasks:

- A. Evaluate the progress of the implementation of the measures established in the HRS4R process.
- B. Approve the OTM-R policy and checklist.
- C. Approve the new Action Plan resulting from the implementation of HRS4R.
- D. Decide and approve any other matter related to the HRS4R certification.

On the other hand, we have a Recruitment, Selection, and Development Committee, which is created with the mission of managing, supervising, and monitoring the implementation of the measures established for recruitment, selection, and development as part of the HRS4R certification process. This committee is formed by the HR director, the HR assistant, and two researchers, with the following tasks:

- A. Oversee the correct adequacy of the OTM-R policy and the associated OTM-R checklist.
- B. Review and update the Action Plan.
- C. Monitor the measures established in the Action Plan.
- D. Update and propose improvements in relation to the Selection and Recruitment Policy.
- E. Define the development opportunities for the research personnel.

Annex 2 of this policy details the governance model.

6. Adapt the internal OTM-R guide

In the internal OTM-R guide, clear and explicit rules and procedures for each call are defined, tailored to the specifications requested to the candidates.

According to the European Framework for Research Careers, which identifies four broad career profiles for researchers, our research categories are the following:

- **Pre-doctoral Researchers:** R1 First-Stage Researchers (up to the completion of the PhD)
- **Post-doctoral Researchers:** R2 Recognized Researchers (PhD holders who are not yet fully independent)
- **Research Fellows:** R3 Established Researchers (researchers who have developed a level of independence)

- **Senior Scientists:** R4 Leading Researcher (researchers leading their research area or field)

While the basic principles of openness, transparency, and merit should apply to all positions, the procedures are adapted in each call attending to the level, nature, and type of the open position. The key point here is to ensure that the various procedures or derogations are clear, objectively justified, and transparent.

In line with the principle "Recognition of qualifications" of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, an appropriate assessment and evaluation of the academic and professional qualifications of the candidates should be provided, including non-formal qualifications, skills and competences, as well as international and professional mobility.

7. Training and awareness-raising within the center

As our calls are international, all candidates are assessed in English. This implies that evaluators and staff are all trained to deal with processing the applications and conducting the hiring process in English.

8. E-recruitment

In order to avoid discriminating against candidates based on their geographical location and/or financial means, "e-recruitment" tools are used, drawing on the experience of existing platforms and tools. Specifically, email and video calls can be used, when necessary. On the other hand, there is a web-based tool for all the stages in the recruitment policy and a wide range of on-line job boards is used as well.