# TEMPLATE 2: HR STRATEGY - ACTION PLAN

Name Organisation under review:

**University of Florence (UNIFI)**

Organisation's contact details:

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Web link to published version of organisation's HR Strategy and Action Plan:

http://www.unifi.it/vp-10899-hrs4r-excellence-in-research.html

SUBMISSION DATE:  18/05/2018

## 1. ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION
*Please provide a limited number of key figures for your organisation. Figures marked * are compulsory.*

| STAFF & STUDENTS | FTE |
|---|---|
| *Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research* | *4.258* |
| *Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)* | *245* |
| *Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation)* | *450* |
| *Of whom are women* | *2.615* |
| *Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor.* | *1.634* |
| *Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level* | *1.500* |
| *Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level* | *733* |
| *Total number of students (if relevant)* | *50.318* |
| *Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff)* | *5.779* |
| **RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)** | **€** |
| *Total annual organisational budget* | *486.063.621,67* |
| *Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)* | *20.243.329,97* |
| *Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)* | *9.622.949,31* |
| *Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research* | *5.670.981,79* |
| **ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE (a very brief description of your organisation, max. 100 words)** | |

The University of Florence is an important centre for research and higher training in Italy. With 128 Degree courses organized in 10 Schools and with a population of about 55,000 enrolled students, UNIFI aims at guaranteeing high quality standards in its different competence areas. Attracting high-level researchers is one of its objectives, as well as ensuring high-quality standards and environment for its researchers. The University promotes relations with European and International research institutions, provides its researchers with access to finance and use of facilities, and ensures the freedom of research, basic and applied, of individuals and research teams. Researchers at UNIFI operate within 24 different departments and have at their disposal approximately 40 research structures.

## 2. NARRATIVE (MAX. 2 PAGES)

The national law 240/2010 (Legge Gelmini) and the following regulations have involved all aspects of researcher and university teachers' career from the recruitment procedure to economical treatment, social security, maternity/parental leave and progress in career. The Statute of the Università degli Studi di Firenze has been consequently adapted to comply with the requirements set by the law itself and several regulations have been issued at internal level to manage single specific aspects of the professional figure of the researcher. On the other hand, specific matters related to health & safety condition in the working areas are regulated by national law and regulations, with strict legislative prescriptions and timeline of compliance.

Due to the mandatory nature of the above mentioned prescriptions, the analysis of the internal gap - between legal requirements and implemented procedures - put in evidence a quite positive situation of respect of fundamental rights. However, the generic concept of "researcher" includes different kind of staff members, from the permanent teachers and researchers, to the temporary researchers; this leads to an undeniable difference in the level of protection and guarantees the need to be improved in favor of the temporary staff.

In order to better identify the needs of these categories of researchers, their acquaintance on rights and perception of their personal role, an internal survey was submitted to all the researchers to better understand and trace the weaknesses of the current system.

The questionnaire included 38 questions divided into the following four sections, consistent with the C&C principles:

1. Recruitment
2. Working conditions and social security
3. Professional recognition, non-discrimination and research environment
4. Improvement of Researchers' training, competences, and professional experience

For each dimension the interviewees were asked to express their satisfaction toward a series of affirmative sentences through a measurement scale from 0 to 4 where 0 indicates the maximum disagreement and 4 the maximum agreement. For each dimension the interviewees were asked as well to put the proposed sentences in order of priority.

Since relevance and priority are milestones in any customer satisfaction system, UNIFI adopted the quadrant analysis as a tool that allows to categorize processes based on their level of strategic importance and on the level of priority of the information involved.



Participants' answers have been allocated within each quadrant, as shown in the Chart on the left, to allow the identification of strengths and weaknesses in the strategies in force. The quadrant above on the left allows the identification of the so called "Undervalued assets", i.e. the sectors where the need of improvement is of the utmost importance. The quadrant below on the left identifies sectors of "Unimportant weaknesses", still needing improvement but not as urgently. The other quadrants refer to sectors already at a good level of implementation.

Coming to the outcomes of the survey and of the internal gap analysis in detail the following strengths and weaknesses have been identified:

**Ethical and Professional Aspects**

Strengths: Università degli Studi di Firenze adopted a new Statute (2012) and an Ethic Code (2008, revised in 2011) recognizing the principles stated respectively by the Constitution of the Italian Republic (principle of Research Freedom) and by the several legal prescriptions in the matter of professional aspects (see table "European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researcher: GAP analysis overview). The internal survey confirmed widespread satisfaction about the level of enforcement of fundamental principles such as ethical principles, non-discrimination, ecc.

Weaknesses: lack of financial resources to be dedicated to the research may limit the improvement of the professional conditions of researchers.

**Recruitment and Selection**

Strengths: National legislation guarantees equal opportunities in recruitment and selection procedures, both under the non-discrimination point of view and for offer of opportunities. The agreement of the replying interviewees under this section is on average good.

Weaknesses: despite the offer of transparent open procedures and equal opportunities of employment, more can be done to make offers available to incoming researchers. The replying interviewees criticized the effectiveness of the actual university communication strategy on available procedures to promote Researchers' career advancement. This problem was strongly addressed by early stage researchers and university researchers. It is also to be noted that ~~As a matter of fact,~~ few of the documentation related to the recruitment and selection procedure is currently available in English version (even if our University is currently taking care of this process).

**Working conditions and security**

Strengths: Università degli Studi di Firenze implements all the legislative prescriptions aimed to offer to its researchers and employees the most suitable working – both real and figurative - ambiance and respect of security levels. Salary levels are guaranteed by the law, even if with significant differences between different researcher category. Again the interviewees show a good level of average agreement under this section.

Weaknesses: among the various aspects of good working and security conditions we must focus on the economic impact and opportunities available for public universities. Limited financial resources and a strict legislative regulation, necessarily affect the possibility to implement better working premises and to adequate salary to the European common level. The agreement among the interviewees about the ability of the departments to provide a stimulating, pleasant to work-in environment, supporting research activities, is low for all the category of the respondents .

**Training and development**

Strengths: National legislation assigns to the young researchers the duty/right to be supported, trained and evaluated. Our university, with its internal regulation, individuates and assigns to each young researcher (PhD candidate, fellow researcher) a senior supervisor who accompanies the young researcher during his/her career path. For the development of their career, young researchers can benefit also from services provided by the institution itself from the life-long learning programs to the support in building in-progress entrepreneurship and finding job opportunities.

Weaknesses: Among the interviewees a good level of disagreement was shown on the fact that internal regulations were still lacking on the training for teaching. It was also evidenced that there is certain difficulty in benefiting of geographical, intersectoral and interdisciplinary mobility plans and between the public and private sectors. Furthermore a more wide information on services at young researchers' disposal for the development of their career could be implemented and developed.

# 3. ACTIONS

Please provide a list of all actions to be undertaken in this HR strategy. The list must be accompanied by an extended version in which the actions are described in more detail. The overview must contain at least the following headings: Title action – timing – Responsible Unit – Indicator(s) / Target(s).

| C & C Chapter: Ethical and Professional Aspects | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **C & C Principle** | **Title action** | **Timing** | **Responsible Unit** | **Indicator(s) / Target(s)** |
| *1. Research freedom* | *Increase of funds available for research related activities* | *December 2018* | *Research and Technology Transfer Area* | ✓ *Increase of at least the 10% of the participation of UNIFI researchers within national, European and international funding programmes;*<br>✓ *at least one annual call to support young researchers projects.* |

| C & C Chapter: Recruitment and Selection | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **C & C Principle** | **Title action** | **Timing** | **Responsible Unit** | **Indicator(s) / Target(s)** |
| *13. Recruitment (code)* | *Translating the web site and recruitment related information in English* | *18 months* | *Communication Area*<br><br>*Research and Technology Transfer Area*<br><br>*Human Resources Area*<br><br>*General Affairs Area*<br><br>*Legal Affairs* | ✓ *Within the first 12 months of implementation at least 50 % of the university of Florence website and advertisements and contracts related to researchers recruitment to be translated in English.*<br><br>✓ *Within 18 months at least 70% of the university of Florence website and advertisements and contracts related to researchers recruitment to be translated in English.* |
| *13. Recruitment (code)* | *To promote the clearness and effectiveness of the university web site* | *18 months* | *Communication Area*<br><br>*Research and Technology Transfer Area*<br><br>*Information and Technology University Services* | *Within 18 months: all young researchers will be asked to join an online survey to verify their opinion on the same topic.* |

| C & C Chapter: Working Conditions and Social Security | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **C & C Principle** | **Title action** | **Timing** | **Responsible Unit** | **Indicator(s) / Target(s)** |
| *23. Research Environment* | *Promotion of an improvement of work spaces and of adequate equipment* | *48 months* | *General Affairs Area*<br><br>*Logistics services* | Within 24 months:<br>✓ to adopt a new regulation on the use of existing |

| | | | *Communication Area* | infrastructures |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Within 36 months: <br> ✓ to finalize the plan to implement the indications provided within the regulation <br><br> Within 48 months: <br> ✓ to promote the information on the new regulation and plan adopted |
| *25. Stability and Permanence of Employment* | *Promoting of stability and permanence of employment* | *36 months* | *Research and Technology Transfer Area* <br><br> *Human Resources Area* <br><br> *Communication Area* | *Within 36 months* <br><br> *At least 30 new positions of temporary researchers* <br><br> *Within 12 months:* <br><br> *To organize dedicated info days and an help desk for the participation within excellence programmes.* <br><br> *To achieve an increase by the 10% of the proposals submitted within excellence programmes.* |
| *29. Value of mobility* | *Promoting mobility* | *24 months* | *Research and Technology Transfer Area* <br><br> *International Relations Area* <br><br> *Communication Area* | Within 24 months: <br> ✓To increase the number of existing cooperation agreements <br> ✓To increase the share of funds foreseen in the university internationalization plan to promote mobility opportunities for researchers; <br> ✓To launch a new interactive section on the web site dedicated to mobility opportunities. |
| *33. Teaching* | *Teaching Training* | *24 months* | *Education Services Area* <br><br> *Communication Area* <br><br> *Information and Technology University Service* | Within 12 months: <br> ✓To promote the knowledge and access of researchers, wherever not already available, to the existing e-learning activities <br><br> Within 24 months: <br> ✓ To plan and organize training courses in this field, especially intended for young researchers |

## Translating recruitment related information in English

*C & C Principle: 13. Recruitment (code)*

The internal action plan has made clear as one of the weaknesses to be corrected the fact that the university web site and the information made available for selection procedures is only partially available in English.
The willingness to correct this weakness is as well confirmed by UNIFI Strategic plan 2016/2018 stating at point Os4.1 the need to promote the international competitiveness of the university at the communication level by improving the share of web site pages available in English.

For all researchers temporary positions the recruitment shall therefore be made easily accessible as well to foreign candidates through the translation in English of : Advertisement with supporting documents, contract, guidelines on rights and duties, applicable rules on health and security on the workplaces.

## Increase of funds available for research related activities

*C & C Principle: 1. Research Freedom*

The internal action plan has shown that lack of available funds for research related activities strongly limits the chances researchers may be offered within the university of Florence and strongly influence the recruitment policy that may be put in place.

Therefore UNIFI Strategic plan 2016/2018 – point Os2.4 aims at improving the University capacity of getting resources through:

1. implementation of the competitiveness of research at national level to get a greater share of FFO (fund of ordinary funding)
2. Increase the percentage of UNIFI researchers involved in European and International funding programmes.

Furthermore UNIFI will invest own funds and funds from external local funders to support young researchers projects.

## To promote the clearness and effectiveness of the university web site

*C & C Principle: 13. Recruitment (code)*

Complementing the Internal Gap Analysis, an Online Survey amongst all UNIFI researchers was launched to get an insight whether and to what extent the principles contained in the C&C were actually acknowledged by UNIFI's policies and practices.
If the internal gap analysis outcomes are satisfactory on the recruitment (code) showing a national and local regulation guaranteeing the principles included in the C & C, on the other side we remarked a certain criticism on this point among the young researchers interviewed.

Since the criticism within the questionnaire arose mainly among young researchers  it is assumed that this may be due to a lack of information. Therefore the planned action is to improve knowledge in this field through:

-        dedicated web pages easily accessible including all selection procedures currently available;

-        dedicated web pages with explanations on possible career prospects allowed by national and local regulation and how to access each step.

## Promotion of an improvement of work spaces and of adequate equipment

*C & C Principle: 23. Research Environment*

UNIFI Strategic plan 2016/2018 point III.2.1 underlines the need of requalification of work spaces including laboratories. This requalification and improvement may be as well useful in view to the implementation of the principle of the C & C however in order to realize it, it is first crucial to verify available resources and infrastructures and to develop a plan and a new regulation aimed at maximizing (optimizing) their exploitation and accessibility.

Following the new plan and regulation a dedicated web site page will be created to promote information among researchers on available infrastructures.

It will be as well supported an increased participation within the ESFRI European infrastructures funding scheme.

## Promoting stability and permanence of employment

*C & C Principle: 25. Stability and permanence of employment*

As explained in the internal gap analysis national prescriptions and available funds strongly limit the number of permanent positions that may be offered. However the interviewees strongly supported the necessity of corrective measures in this field.

Therefore the University of Florence will promote the creation of as many tenure track positions as possible (type B temporary researchers, RTD-B) to support career prospects of young researchers. In fact RTD-B identifies a researcher that is in the running for a permanent position.

Furthermore recently the MIUR adopted a dedicated decree to allow the direct access to permanent positions to researchers having obtained funding within local (MIUR – SIR and Rita Levi Montalcini) and European (ERC and MSCA IF) excellence programmes. Therefore the University will try and promote knowledge and participation of its researchers within such programmes.

## Promoting Mobility

*C & C Principle: 29. Value of mobility*

The interviewees underlined the need of further promotion of mobility opportunities, UNIFI Strategic plan for 2016/2018 foresees promoting:

- the international competitiveness of the university at the communication level by improving the share of web site pages available in English (strategic plan point Os4.1);

- UNIFI researchers cooperation within European and international researcher groups (point Os4.1.1) ;

- the increase of the agreements with foreign universities and research centers, diversifying them from a geographic point of view. Furthermore an interactive section dedicated to all available mobility opportunities will be implemented within the university web site (Point Os 4.1.2).

## Teaching Training

*C & C Principle: 33. Teaching*

A gap has been identified in the limited training received by young researchers on how to perform teaching activities.

UNIFI Strategic plan for 2016/2018 foresees the improvement of training courses to endow young researchers with the necessary knowledge and competences to perform teaching activities. The e-learning activities (such as Moodle) promoted within the University will foresee as well additional instruments for young researchers in this field.

As the establishment of an Open Recruitment Policy is a key element in the HRS4R strategy, please also indicate how your organisation will use the Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment Toolkit and how you intend to implement/are implementing the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment. Although there may be some overlap with a range of actions listed above, please provide a short commentary demonstrating this implementation.

If your organisation already has a recruitment strategy which implements the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment, please also list the web link where this strategy can be found.

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Actions addressing the implementation of Open, Transparent, Merit-Based Recruitment principles:

Most of the elements foreseen in the OTM-R toolkit are stated in National Law 240/2010 drawing prescriptions on the contents of researcher job advertisement, evaluation and selection criteria, appointment procedures.

Consequently, procedures implemented by Italian public universities (to which University of Florence belongs) reflect these mandatory prescriptions.

At our University level, peculiar procedures are put in place according to the profile of researcher to be recruited  (fellow researchers, researchers, teachers, ecc.); single procedures are described under dedicated website links:

http://www.unifi.it/vp-2368-opportunita-di-lavoro.html

http://www.unifi.it/vp-2377-reclutamento-concorsi-selezioni.html

At the link provided for each category of available positions all relevant information on our OTM-R procedures and practices is available.

On our University website, all relevant guidelines and templates for advertising positions are currently available in the national language (with navigation panels available in English),while positions are advertised also in English language on the Euraxess web site.

For what evaluation and selection is concerned, specific regulations have been adopted to manage all aspects of the different researcher profile's selection (Regulation on Fellow Researcher, Regulation on Ph.D, etc).

Skilled staff resources are dedicated to different  phases of the hiring procedure both at central and at department level, with the aim to run smoothly the administrative burden aspects in the respect of law prescriptions.

## 4. IMPLEMENTATION (MAX. 1 PAGE)

In order to oversee constantly the progress in the application of the corrective measures foreseen in the action plan the University of Florence has identified the need of a synergic effort of the University Research Committee and of the working group already identified in the preparatory phase.

The working group is a task force joining the efforts of the services involved in the implementation of the action plan, such as human resources, research and technology transfer area, communication, ecc. This group main tasks will be of an executive nature and will involve among others:

- ✓ Follow the application of the corrective measures;
- ✓ Decide on any corrective measure that may be needed;
- ✓ Apply back-up plans in case of need;
- ✓ Monitor periodically the satisfaction of the research community at large with dedicated online surveys (at least one a year);
- ✓ Report periodically (every six months) to the Research Commission on the stage of implementation reached.

The working group will be coordinated by the Research Projects office that will operate as intermediary between the decision bodies/Vice Rector and the other offices involved. It will call meetings on a regular basis, at least every three months.

Each office will be responsible for the implementation of the actions foreseen in the action plan and will report in the periodic meetings organized about the status of implementation attained.

After 6 months from the start of the implementation phase a new online questionnaire will be administered to all researchers to monitor their satisfaction.

Every six months a period report will be drafted by the working group members evaluating the status of implementation attained and the respect of the action plan proposed. These reports will be submitted to UNIFI Research Committee.

The Research Committee is a permanent structure of the university of Florence whose main role is to take strategic decisions and to propose politics to UNIFI governing bodies related to research issues. It will represent the decision making body in the implementation of the plan and the trait d'union between the working group and the local governing bodies. The Research Committee, on the basis of the periodic reports received from the working group, will decide on strategic changes in the global strategy to be included as well in the periodic strategic plan of the university.