Human Resources Strategy for Researchers at the University of Dubrovnik (2019 – 2022)

In line with

the European Charter for Researchers and
the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

Dubrovnik, September 2019
I. INTRODUCTION

The potential shortage of skilled researchers, identified in certain key areas, is a serious threat to the strength of innovation, knowledge capacity and growth of the European Union's research productivity in the near future. Against this background, the European Commission has found it necessary to improve its ability to attract researchers, to create new instruments for developing their careers and to provide greater support to the creation of conditions required for more sustainable and attractive careers in the research and development sector. Thus, in April 2005, the Commission adopted recommendations regarding the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, which aim to define the roles, responsibilities and rights of researchers and their employers and / or fund providers. The Charter and the Code for Researchers apply to all researchers in the European Union at all stages of their careers and cover all areas of research in the private and public sectors, regardless of the nature of their position or employment, the legal status of their employer or the type of organization in which they work.

Since the foundation of the University of Dubrovnik, its international affirmation in the European Research Area has been of utmost importance. Recognizing its goals and visions with in the principles of the Charter and the Code for Researchers and based on the National Plan for the Mobility of Researchers 2009-2010, which recommends that all scientific organizations in the Republic of Croatia sign and implement the Charter and the Code for Researchers, the University of Dubrovnik already in January 2011 adopted the Internal Analysis and Human Resources Strategy for Researchers along with the related Action Plan for the upcoming five-year period, thus committing itself to follow the principles and procedures of the Charter and the Code for Researchers in all future research-related activities. These documents are an integral part of the University strategy that promotes national and international research cooperation, while at the same time adapting to new national and EU directives and regulations in the research sector. Based on the evaluation of the aforementioned documents, that same year the European Commission granted recognition to the University of Dubrovnik for excellence in the implementation of the principles of the Charter and the Code for Researchers - HR Excellence in Research Award. Two years later, in line with the obligations arising from the obtained recognition, the Commission accepted a self-evaluation conducted by the University of Dubrovnik with regard to the implementation of activities from the adopted Action Plan, thus the recognition for excellence remaining in force for another three years, after which a process of re-accreditation or renewal of recognition was required. In June 2018, the Commission called on the University to enter into the process of re-accreditation of the HR Excellence in Research Award, after which the Rector of the University appointed a working group to produce the analysis of the current situation in terms of implementation of the Charter and the Code for Researchers and then to develop a new Human Resources Strategy for Researchers for the period 2019-2022, with an associated Action Plan.

The Working Group includes researchers from all research areas represented at the University who are at different stages of their research careers, and also members of related administrative services.

Currently, 1 148 institutions from 40 countries have adopted the principles of the Charter and the Code for Researchers. Of that number, 493 institutions, sixteen of them from Croatia, have taken further steps in applying these principles and have been rewarded for their efforts with the European
Commission's *Human Resources Excellence in Research* award. The National Plan for the Mobility of Researchers 2017-2020 continues to strongly support the implementation of the European Charter and the Code for Researchers, and it is therefore of utmost importance for the University of Dubrovnik to retain this important recognition. Further implementation of the principles of the European Charter and the Code for Researchers and of the activities outlined in this document will ensure:

- increased attractiveness of the University as a desirable scientific research institution,
- increased presence of the University of Dubrovnik in the European Research Network (ERA) and internationally,
- the creation of an attractive, open and sustainable European labour market for researchers, where conditions allow the recruitment and retaining of high-quality researchers in environments that promote high quality of work and productivity.

This document complements and builds on the main University strategy that promotes systematic care for the existing and new scientific staff, respect for ethical principles, development of researchers and enhancement of the quality of research work.
II. SW ANALYSIS AND ACTION PLAN

II.1. SW ANALYSIS

Strengths and weaknesses

1. ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL ASPECTS

Strengths:

- researchers are given the freedom to research while respecting the ethical standards,
- plagiarism and unauthorized use of someone else's work is prohibited,
- no cases of discrimination based on gender, age, ethnic origin, and religious beliefs have been reported.

Weaknesses:

- there is no training for researchers regarding current labour regulations governing the ethics of research activity,
- no plagiarism detection software.

2. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Strengths:

- recruitment and work of researchers is regulated by a number of laws and by-laws (Law on Scientific Activity and Higher Education, Labour Act, Conditions set by the Rector's Conference) and the general acts of the University of Dubrovnik (Statute of the University of Dubrovnik, Rules of Procedure, Rulebook on the invitation to associate titles and corresponding positions at the University of Dubrovnik, Rulebook on the organization and operation of the expert committee for the evaluation of the teaching component in the invitation process for the scientific-teaching, artistic-teaching and teaching titles, Rulebook on the evaluation of the work of assistants, postdoctoral students and mentors, Code of Ethics),
- advertising a post in official gazette, websites and the Euraxess portal, thus making the jobs available to researchers at international level

Weaknesses:

- restrictive and limited employment opportunities due to lack of funding
- non-competitive, low real wages, regulated by regulations; low nominal wages due to the high cost of living and extremely expensive and limited accommodation in Dubrovnik,
- currently, recruitment is possible only if Human Resources Management Plan is adopted and approved by the Ministry a year in advance and is focused for the most part on the teaching posts and to a lesser extent to research;
- the University of Dubrovnik does not have the authority to conduct the procedure of election to titles. The evaluation of candidates is performed by other authorized institutions, while the University is left only with the right to choose among eligible candidates,
• the selection of candidates from outside the Republic of Croatia is determined by the knowledge of the Croatian language, as research posts are generally associated to the teaching process,
• restrictive employment and residence opportunities for researchers who are non-EU nationals
• legal barriers to the recognition of scientific and scientific-teaching titles and / or length of work abroad

3. WORKING CONDITIONS

Strengths:
• encouraging and financing research within the institution's capabilities, such as: VIF funding and awards, flexible working hours, grants for research project applications, awards for excellence in research work,
• the competent Ministry's support to research work (grants for the Obzor projects, for the organization of scientific meetings, for the popularization of science projects),
• the relevant Ministry’s support to scientific organizations in the implementation of the Charter and the Code.

Weaknesses:
• lack of funding for research lab equipment and toolkits
• insufficient scientific cooperation with other scientific institutions in the world,
• insufficient number of science projects
• research at the University is predominantly individual and not teamwork
• lack of a specialized project application and administration office,
• insufficient financial incentive for the most successful scientists.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCIES

Strengths:
• prescribed mandatory invitation for the election to titles, whereby the University bears all the costs,
• provided access to training at other scientific institutions at home and abroad,
• possibility to attend scientific conferences, meetings, etc.
• exchange of researchers through Erasmus + and other mobility programmes,
• possibility to take a sabbatical,
• Introduced obligation to appoint advisor mentors to younger researchers to assist and guide them in their research work.

Weaknesses:
• lack of strategic research guidelines at the University,
• motives for advancement and development of competences are in some cases limited to meeting the statutory requirements and not motivated by genuine research interest,
- PhD students regularly enrol in studies outside the institution and outside Dubrovnik, thus making the communication with mentors difficult.
## II.2. ACTION PLAN

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<td>1.2.</td>
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<td>1, 2</td>
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<td>1.4.</td>
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<td>Familiarizing researchers with the relevant laws and regulations (Law on Scientific Activity and Higher Education, Labour Act, Conditions set by the Rector's Conference) and the general acts of the University of Dubrovnik (Statute of the University of Dubrovnik, Rules of Procedure, Rulebook on the invitation to associate titles and corresponding positions at the University of Dubrovnik, Rulebook on the organization and operation of the expert committee for the evaluation of the teaching component in the invitation process for the scientific-teaching, artistic-teaching and teaching titles, Rulebook on the evaluation of the work of assistants, postdoctoral students and mentors, Code of</td>
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<td>Vice-Rector for international cooperation and science, The Human Resources Office, Human Resources Strategy for Researchers Drafting Committee</td>
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<td>1.5.</td>
<td>Prevention of discrimination, promotion of equality and gender balance in academia.</td>
<td>10, 27</td>
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<td>1.6.</td>
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<td>2.1.</td>
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<td>12-22, 34, 35</td>
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<td>The Rector's Office, Senate, The Human Resources Office, Human Resources Strategy for Researchers Drafting Committee</td>
<td>2020</td>
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<td>2.2.</td>
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<td>12-22, 34, 35</td>
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<td>The Quality Assurance Office. The Human Resources Office.</td>
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<td>2.3.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>2.3.1. Redesigned UNIDU website with relevant information (Croatian and English version). 2.3.2. Provided information and support to researchers. 2.3.3. Published online guide for foreign researchers.</td>
<td>The Public Relations Office, The Office for international relations and research projects.</td>
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<td>2. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION</td>
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<td>4, 5, 6</td>
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<td>The Human Resources Office, The Publications Office, Human Resources Strategy for Researchers Drafting Committee.</td>
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<td>2.5.</td>
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<td>2.6.</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>3. WORKING CONDITIONS</td>
<td>3.1.</td>
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<td>3.4.</td>
<td>The predominant “teaching approach” of employees will be channelled into research and cooperation with the local community</td>
<td>24, 25</td>
<td>3.4.1. Institution's workload composition annual plan developed in accordance with the sector's collective agreement</td>
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<td>4.1.</td>
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<td>30, 36, 37, 40</td>
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<td>4.2.</td>
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<td>Vice-Rector for international cooperation and science, The Office for international relations and research projects.</td>
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<td>4.3.2.</td>
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<td>Vice-Rector for international cooperation and science, Heads of university components, all researchers.</td>
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<td>Vice-Rector for international cooperation and science, Office for international relations and research projects.</td>
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<td>4.6. Participation in knowledge transfer projects <em>(Twinning, Capacity Building etc.)</em>.</td>
<td>39</td>
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<td>11, 28</td>
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<td>4.10. Researchers are trained for teaching activities and hence become qualified to participate in the teaching process. Preparing assistants for teaching activities, for their own design and proposal of new courses and parts of courses.</td>
<td>33, 38</td>
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<td>33, 38</td>
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<td>Vice-Rector for studies and students, Senate, Distance Learning Committee.</td>
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II. POLICY OF OPEN, TRANSPARENT AND MERIT-BASED RECRUITMENT OF RESEARCHERS

III. 1. INTRODUCTION

UNIDU implements a recruitment policy which adheres to Constitutional principles and Croatian Laws and provides Researchers with “Open, transparent and internationally comparable selection and recruitment procedures”, in line with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

Open, transparent and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R) is an important component of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R). OTM-R ensures that the best person for the job is recruited, guarantees equal opportunities and access for all, facilitates developing an international portfolio (cooperation, competition, mobility) and makes research careers more attractive. It brings benefits to researchers, institutions and a country's research system.

UNIDU is committed to advancing the principles presented in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

III. 2. OTM-R

2.1. General considerations

UNIDU recognizes the high importance of the principles and requirements of OTM-R and is working towards their full implementation.

OTM-R policy seeks to make careers in research more attractive, guarantees equal opportunities in accessing a career in research, to promote international and inter-sector mobility.

UNIDU OTM-R policy aims to encourage, in particular, external applicants by:

a) providing clear and transparent information on the whole selection process, including selection criteria and an indicative timetable;

b) posting 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.;

c) ensuring that the levels of qualifications and competencies required are in line with the needs of the position and not set as a barrier to entry, e.g., too restrictive and/or requiring unnecessary qualifications;

d) considering the inclusion of explicit pro-active elements for underrepresented groups;

e) keeping the administrative burden for the candidate (proof of qualifications, translations, number of copies required, etc.) to a minimum;

f) reviewing, where appropriate, the institutional policy on languages.

As a result of those efforts UNIDU is committed to refine its institutional strategy where necessary, to develop good practice and to raise awareness in order to give impetus for change. OTM-R policy is in line with UNIDU strategic goals directed towards increasing the international recognition,
attractiveness and strengthening research cooperation with highly renowned research centres on an international scale. **Overall, UNIDU aims at appointing and retaining the best staff for the university as well as enhancing the career and mobility of its research personnel.** The aim is to recruit the most talented and motivated researchers and teachers to UNIDU and to promote researchers’ career progress.

All UNIDU researchers have an employment contract in accordance with national legislation and social security coverage. UNIDU provides its researchers proper working conditions for high-quality and efficient researcher work. University enables its researchers lifelong learning, training and opportunities to strengthen skills and competences. We also encourage our community to engage in entrepreneurial activities and to develop their own work.

### 2.2. General principles

UNIDU recruitment processes are carried out through the competitive calls system whereby the following principles are guaranteed:

- **Publicity**: When selecting and evaluating the University staff, the procedures and criteria are made publicly available to all potential candidates or employees,

- **Equal opportunities and non-discrimination**: When selecting and evaluating the University staff, equal opportunities are created; employees (or candidates) cannot be discriminated on the basis of race, nationality, gender, ethnic, national or social origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, language, disability, political opinions and social or economic status, or on other grounds unrelated to the performance of the functions. Evaluation of the work of the University research and teaching staff members cannot be subject to different requirements for researchers working in different areas or fields

- **Transparency**: Transparent and clear procedures and criteria apply when selecting and evaluating the University staff. Also, candidates are notified of receipt of their application and the result of the selection process.

- **Merit and capacity**: Candidates are evaluated by applying the principles of merit and ability, assessing the CV, the candidate’s suitability for the position offered and, where appropriate, holding interviews according to the criteria set prior to the evaluation of candidates.

- **Professionalism**: All selection processes are overseen by a selection committee consisting of professionals from the area of the profile sought.

- **Impartiality**: The University staff is selected and evaluated impartially, without prejudice.

- **Objectivity**: Objective criteria and procedures must be applied when selecting and evaluating the University staff.

- **Respect for human dignity**: The selection and evaluation of the University staff shall not undermine their human dignity.

- **Compliance with the mission, vision, values and strategic objectives of the University**: When selecting and evaluating the University staff their potential contribution to the mission, vision, and strategic goals of the University should be taken into account. When selecting research and / or teaching staff members, the ability of the candidates to contribute to the research, experimental development, entrepreneurship and the development of academic quality should be taken into account.

- **Promotion of international competitiveness**: When selecting and evaluating the University research and teaching staff members, the international competitiveness of their research should be given special attention.
- **Attracting excellence, initiative and promoting continuous development**: The selection and evaluation of the future University staff should aim at attracting employees of the highest excellence. When evaluating the future University staff, the continuous development of their competence, as well as introduction of new methods and technologies must be encouraged. The application of this principle means that active and continuously developing employees who apply modern technology in their work shall get the highest evaluation.

- **Quality**: When selecting and evaluating the University staff, the quality of their work must be taken into account. In evaluating research and teaching staff members, the quality of their research activities must be taken into account. When assessing lecturers, feedback from students and graduates, their activity in the preparation of textbooks, other teaching material and the quality of these tools shall be of the most importance.

- **Ethics**: Every employee shall comply with the Code of Ethics of the University.

### 2.3. Phases of recruitment

UNIDU recognises there are three phases in the recruitment process:

#### 2.3.1. Advertising and application phase

In accordance with requirements of the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education (MSE), the University of Dubrovnik defines and adopts yearly HR Management Plan which must be approved by the MSE prior to the advertising phase.

Advertising a post in line with the principles "Recruitment" and "Transparency" of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, UNIDU endeavours to keep the job advertisement and description of requirements as concise as possible. After the decision is adopted by the University Senate, all announcements are published on the official UNIDU website, in the official gazette of the Republic of Croatia (newspaper & website) and on the EURAXESS portal (in English).

#### 2.3.2. Evaluation and selection phase

All applications are screened. Once the registration period is closed, the eligibility of candidates is assessed. Depending largely on the number of applicants, the process may involve one or more steps, e.g., pre-screening to check eligibility, shortlisting of candidates for interviews, face-to-face interviews.

The initial selection of candidates is made by the members of the selection committee appointed by the University Senate. The committee selects from among the submitted candidates those who received the highest scores in the course of internal evaluation process of the candidates. The selected candidates are invited for an interview with the members of the selection committee.
The selection committees should provide expertise and competences, and proceed accordingly to the procedures for the different researchers’ categories.

The evaluation and selection phase should look to assessing merit and future potential. The criteria for selecting researchers should focus on both the candidates’ past performance and their future potential.

2.3.3. Appointment phase

In line with the principle of "Transparency" of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, all applicants should receive a notice at the end of the selection process. The institution should establish a procedure to deal with complaints made by applicants who believe that they have been treated unfairly or incorrectly.

All appointments at UNIDU are in conformity with Croatian law, and include social security.

III. 3. ACTIONS PLANNED AT UNIDU WITH RESPECT TO OTM-R

UNIDU will ensure the continued implementation of these policy rules and all activities relating to the continuous process of implementation of principles of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

UNIDU needs to improve the existing procedures, practices and assessment indicators to meet OTM-R requirements. New actions are included to HRS4R 2019-2022 concerning OTM-R to complete the above. These include:
1. adjustment of the existing recruitment procedures to the OTM-R rules
2. standardization of recruitment process at the university
3. Internal training on OTM-R principles for the Selecting Board, the HR manager and all persons involved in the recruitment, introduction of guidelines for newly hired staff at UNIDU
4. translation of key recruitment documents and enabling access to information about UNIDU procedures for candidates from other countries – on a public website http://www.unidu.hr
5. Establishing a quality control mechanism of the OTM-R combined with the internal assessment of the HRS4R;
6. participation in national and international workshops, trainings and info-days regarding HR issues