

The University of Dubrovnik

**Human Resources Strategy for Researchers
at the University of Dubrovnik
(2024 – 2027)**

In line with

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

Dubrovnik, February 2024

On the basis of Article 12, paragraph 3 of the Act on Higher Education and Scientific Activity ("Official Gazette" No. 119/22) and in accordance with Article 20 of the Statute of the University of Dubrovnik, the Senate of the University of Dubrovnik, at its 202nd session held on 28 February 2024, adopted the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers at the University of Dubrovnik (2024-2027) with the accompanying Action Plan.

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 within 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. At the end of 2023, the

University began to analyse the above Strategy and Action Plan and the Rector again appointed a working group to prepare new documents to renew this valuable recognition for a new three-year period.

Currently, 1483 institutions from 25 countries have adopted the principles of the Charter and the Code for Researchers. Of that number, 718 institutions, fourteen 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.

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 the unauthorised use of third-party works are checked,
- open science and the application of the FAIR principle is promoted,
- no cases of discrimination based on gender, age, ethnic origin, and religious beliefs have been reported.

Weaknesses:

- there is not enough training for researchers regarding current labour regulations governing the ethics of research activity,
- researchers are not sufficiently familiar with the importance and principles of open science and the FAIR principle.

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, Ordinance on the conditions of election to scientific titles, 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, Ordinances on additional conditions for employment at university constituents, Code of Ethics),
- advertising a post in official gazette, websites and the Euraxess portal, thus making the jobs available to researchers at international level,
- strengthening internationalisation and scientific potential by employing scientists from all over the world, whose work is financed from the funds of the projects carried out at the University.

Weaknesses:

- restrictive and limited employment opportunities due to lack of funding,
- uncompetitive salaries in the science system, regulated by national regulations with the introduction of additional restrictions to limit excellence,

- uncompetitive, 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;
- lengthy procedures for obtaining the right to a tax number, social and health insurance and other necessary public services when hiring foreign researchers,
- legal barriers to the recognition of scientific and scientific-teaching titles and / or length of work abroad.

3. WORKING CONDITIONS

Strengths:

- promoting and funding research by providing resources for research and disseminating research results to all researchers, especially younger researchers at the beginning of their careers,
- rewarding scientific productivity and excellence in research work and supporting applications for research projects,
- the competent Ministry's support to research work (grants for the Horizon projects, for the organization of scientific meetings, for the popularization of science projects),
- supporting the institution in applying for and implementing projects by setting up the Office for Projects and Technology Transfer,
- the relevant Ministry's support to scientific organizations in the implementation of the Charter and the Code.

Weaknesses:

- lack of national funding for research lab equipment and toolkits,
- research at the University is still carried out by a limited number of researchers,
- teaching commitments often prevent a greater commitment to scientific work.

4. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

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,
- covering of all costs for postgraduate studies of young researchers and support for research work and training,
- introduced obligation to appoint advisor mentors to younger researchers to assist and guide them in their research work.

Weaknesses:

- motives for advancement and development of competences are in some cases limited to meeting the statutory requirements and not motivated by genuine research interest,
- researchers are unable to improve their skills abroad due to teaching commitments,
- PhD students regularly enrol in studies outside the institution and outside Dubrovnik, thus making the communication with mentors difficult.

II.2. ACTION PLAN

No.	Activities	Areas and principles of the Strategy and the Code	Indicators	Objectives	Relevant bodies	Start time	Completion time
ETHICS							
1.1	Educating researchers on current regulations governing research ethics and freedom of research (through public consultations, workshops, published documents, etc.).	I. (1,2)	List of events held Number of participants attending these events List of published documents	At least one training / workshop a year on current regulations governing the issue of research ethics and research freedom At least 20% of scientific and teaching staff participated in trainings / workshops At least one new document published annually regulating the issue of research ethics and research freedom	Ethics Committee	Continually	
1.2	Educating researchers about the importance and principles of open science and the FAIR principle	1,2,3,4,7	List of events held Number of participants who took part in the events	At least one training/workshop per year (live or online) on the importance and principles of open science and the FAIR principle At least 30% of the scientific and teaching staff have taken part in training courses/workshops	Ethics Committee, Vice-Rector for International Relations and Science	Continually	
1.3	Adoption of a new Code of Ethics	2	A new Code of Ethics was drawn up and adopted	The Code of Ethics published on the University's website	Ethics Committee	Q1 2024	Q2 2025

SUPPORT TO RESEARCHERS							
2.1	Continue the cooperation with the local community for the purpose of employee housing	23, 24	The number of employees whose housing problem has been solved	Solution for the provision of housing for university staff (e.g. use of flats owned by the City of Dubrovnik or similar)	The Rector's Office	Continually	
2.2	Organisation of regular meetings and workshops in the constituents for the purpose of exchanging experiences (from lower to higher functions), aimed in particular at younger researchers	23,24,28,30	Number of meetings and workshops per constituent	At least 2 meetings per year and component.	Heads of constituents	Continually	
DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCHERS							
3.1	Introduction of external evaluations to obtain specialized certificates in certain fields (e.g. EPAS) aimed at improving research activities and a stimulating work environment at the University	11	List of certificates obtained Number of external evaluations of the University	At least 1 specialized certificate obtained	The Rector's Office, Senate, the University councils	Continually	
3.2	Promotion of interdisciplinarity and application to joint projects between different organisational units	7	The number of such projects.	At least 2 interdisciplinary projects applied for per year.	Heads of constituents, Vice-Rector for Science	Continually	
3.3	Adoption of additional criteria at constituent level for the first appointment in the academic system and for promotion to higher positions	5,12,13,14,15,21,24,28	Ordinances adopted for all constituents	Ordinances adopted for all constituents	Heads of constituents, Senate	Q1 2024	Q2 2025

OTM-R							
4.1	Drafting of an OTM-R manual containing the specifics of all positions of researchers (R1-R4) in accordance with the Charter and the Code, its publication on the UNIDU website and dissemination among staff.	12-22, 34, 35	OTM-R manual drafted	Published and disseminated manual containing clear instructions for selecting and recruiting researchers in accordance with the OTM-R procedure.	The Human Resources Office, Quality Assurance Office	Q2 2024	Q1 2025
4.2	Update and adaptation of UNIDU procedures in accordance with OTM-R	12-22, 34, 35	List of adapted procedures	All procedures related to the selection and recruitment of researchers adapted to OTM-R	The Human Resources Office, Quality Assurance Office	Q2 2024	Q1 2025
4.3	Development and procurement of an online tool for the electronic implementation of a researcher recruitment phase in accordance with the Croatian regulations	12, 13	Development and procurement of an online tool for conducting the researcher recruitment phase	Researchers are recruited via an online tool	IT Support Centre, Public Procurement Office	Q2 2024	Q1 2025
INTERNATIONALIZATION							
5.1	Encourage further internationalization through mobility and participation in the knowledge transfer projects (Twinning, Capacity Building, etc.).	18, 20, 29, 39	Increase in number of incoming and outgoing mobility. Increase in number of researchers involved in the knowledge transfer projects.	Increase mobility by 20% Increase the number of researchers involved in knowledge transfer projects by 30%	Vice-Rector for international cooperation and science, the Office for international relations and research projects, Office for Projects and Transfer of Technology	Continually	
5.2	Encourage doctoral students to continue education abroad	29, 38, 39	Increase the number of doctoral students studying abroad.	At least 2 doctoral students per year who continued education abroad	The Rector's Office, the University councils	Continually	

VISIBILITY AND COMMUNICATION							
6.1	Raising awareness of the importance of the Charter and the Code through the continuous publication of documents and information on the UNIDU website (submenu HRS4R) and social networks, and through the organization of workshops.	All	List of available documents on the website List of organized workshops Number of participants who attended these workshops	At least one workshop held on the importance of the Charter and the Code At least 30% of researchers attended workshops on the importance of the Charter and the Code	Human Resources Strategy Implementation Committee	Continually	
6.2	Continue with the redesign of the UNIDU website with relevant information available in Croatian and English related to research careers at UNIDU to make the information more accessible to the Croatian and foreign researchers	15, 28	News dissemination in English Dissemination of useful links for national and international researchers	Relevant information about a research career can be found on the Croatian and English versions of the website	The Public Relations Office, the Human Resources Office the Office for international relations and research projects	Continually	
6.3	Introduction of intranet to improve internal communication at the University	23	Intranet introduced	At least 2 new modules developed for the existing Lapis system	IT Support Centre	Q1 2025	Q4 2027

OTM-R POLICY

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's first 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 first 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 for the first recruitment 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 might be 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, among others, include:

1. Adjustment of the existing recruitment procedures to the OTM-R rules,
2. Further digitalization of recruitment process at the university,
3. 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>,
4. Participation in national and international workshops, trainings and info-days regarding HR issues.