

**INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH IN ZAGREB (ISRZ), Croatia**

**SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT on the Implementation of a Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) incorporating the Charter and the Code**

**April 2014**

**1. The Institute for Social Research in Zagreb (ISRZ) - brief description**

The Institute for Social Research in Zagreb (ISRZ) is a public research institute founded in 1964, which makes it the oldest research institute in the field of sociology and related disciplines in Croatia. Today its main fields of research are social structure and stratification, youth, space, education, science and technology, culture, religion and gender. Apart from carrying out fundamental and applied social research, the Institute's staff is involved in teaching on undergraduate and postgraduate courses at several Croatian higher education institutions. The Institute also regularly hosts and organizes national, regional and international scientific conferences and professional meetings, seminars and workshops. Publishing activities, including the Institute's journal *Sociology and Space*, as well as its monograph edition *Science and Society* (with more than 50 volumes), are another important activity contributing to the Institute's national and international visibility. The Institute hosts a library collection of 35000 items (books and journal volumes) in the field of general sociology, special sociologies and related disciplines which is open to members of the academic community. The Institute nurtures international mobility, especially of young researchers and has an active role in several EU social science networks (AISEC, TEPE, CIDREE).

## 2. The HRS4R background

ISR recognised the process of developing a Human Resources Strategy for Researchers incorporating the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers as an opportunity to assess its own strengths and weaknesses against principles it recognised as valuable, as well as approach the enhancement of its strengths and the overcoming of weaknesses in a structured manner. The Code and Charter were signed in 2010 after which activities were undertaken in order to develop the Institute's HR strategy, the overall goal being to further institutional quality.

## 3. The approach and methodology applied for the development of HRS4R

| Main activities  |
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| 1. Informing all ISRZ employees about the Charter and Code                                   |
| 2. Forming a working group for questionnaire development and implementation                  |
| 3. Questionnaire data collecting and analysing   |
| 4. Drafting the HR strategy based on questionnaire responses and key institutional documents |
| 5. Discussing the proposed HR strategy with ISRZ employees                                   |
| 6. Adoption of the final version of the HR strategy by ISRZ's scientific council             |

## 4. The steps in the development of the HRS4R

1. A representative of ISRZ took part in a workshop on December 7, 2010 on the implementation of the Charter and Code organized by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sport and the Agency for Mobility and EU Programs.
2. On December 14, 2010 a meeting of the ISRZ Scientific Council was held at which it was decided that a questionnaire would be developed and administered to ISR research staff in order to examine employees' level of agreement with certain aspects of quality in scientific and research work, and priorities for improving this, as set out in the Charter and Code, in order to create an evidence based Human Resources Strategy based on the principles of the Charter and Code. Research staff was informed about the Charter and Code.
3. A working group was established consisting of 3 members who developed the questionnaire in January 2011. The questionnaire was a modified version of the one implemented by the University of Rijeka in Croatia and consisted of items grouped under the following general areas covered in the Charter: I. Ethical and professional responsibility of researchers; II. Recruitment; III. Working conditions; IV. Research career training and development. The respondents evaluated each statement on a rating scale from 1 (completely disagree) to

- 4 (completely agree). After each set of items employees were invited to rate the 3 most important aspects as priorities for improvement. Because of anonymity it was decided that a questionnaire would be a more appropriate method of data collection than, for example, focus groups or interviews; however, in order to overcome the researcher effect as contained in the provided closed questions, the possibility for open ended commentary was also provided.
4. The questionnaire was administered on-line to all ISRZ research staff in line with ethical principles regarding the protection of anonymity and confidentiality. It was completed by 24 of the 32 scientists and researchers at ISRZ.
  5. In the period between March and May 2011, the collected questionnaire data was analysed, and a report was written on the findings. During that period, internal documents relevant for the application of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers were also analysed.
  6. In the period from June to December 2011, the ISRZ Human Resources Strategy for Researchers was developed following the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. The Strategy was drawn up using the results of the questionnaire, as well as existing ISRZ documents (strategy, external evaluation report). In the process of drawing up the Strategy, ISRZ researchers were included via electronic communications. The Strategy document was finalized through several rounds of discussions within the institution.
  7. The final version of the Human Resources Strategy was adopted and approved by the ISRZ Scientific Council in December 2011.
  8. On the basis of the Strategy, an Action Plan was defined in January 2012, which contains specific steps towards realizing the principles of the Charter and the Code.
  9. In February 2012 the relevant documents were translated into English and sent to relevant institutions.
  10. On 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2012 ISRZ received a formal acknowledgement by the EC to proceed with the implementation of the strategy and «HR excellence in research» logo was received and implementation of the strategy officially started.

## **5. Implementation of the *HR Strategy for Researchers 2012 -2014***

Implementation of the HR Strategy for Researchers has been mainly coordinated by the newly formed bodies *Quality assurance committee* and *Ethics Committee* which are directly responsible for the accomplishment of the majority of the issues regarding the human resources management. These bodies closely collaborate with other Institute's services and bodies (e.g. IT service, library, project management service, international projects committee). They periodically report about the progress of the implementation of the HRS4R to the Institute's management and governance bodies (Director and Institute's Council).

The reporting on the strategy implementation 2012-2014 has been assigned to the team consisting of the Institute's Charter coordinator and two researchers who are members of the Quality Assurance Committee.

## 6. The overview of the implementation of the HRS4R following the Action plan

### 1. ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL ASPECTS

| Tasks   | Responsible Bodies                | Implementation Period  | Status                 | Comment  |
|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|
| <p>1.1. Drawing up the Institute's Code of Ethics</p> <p><b>Content:</b></p> <p>2. <b>Introduction: basic ISRZ values</b></p> <p>3. <b>Ethics in research</b> (<i>research responsibility, planning and conducting research, participants' informed consent, reporting research results, authors rights, public dissemination, obligations toward sponsors</i>)</p> <p>4. <b>Ethics in employment procedures</b> (<i>Equity, Transparency, Effectiveness, Comprehensiveness</i>)</p> <p>5. <b>Ethics of organizational conduct</b> (<i>professional responsibility, equity and care about personal integrity of employees, avoidance of conflict of interests and attachments, readiness for cooperation, readiness for LLL, support for novices</i>)</p> <p>6. <b>Ethics in governance and management</b> (<i>open communication, participation in institutional bodies, impartiality and mediation of conflicts, advocacy of ethical conduct</i>)</p> | Ethics Committee                  | March-April 2012       | Accomplished           | Ethics Committee finalised the <i>Institute's Code of Ethics</i> which was approved by the Institute's council and has been posted on the Institute Intranet in April 2012. The <i>Rulebook for the Ethics Committee procedures</i> has been also developed. |
| 1.2 Providing continuous access to leading journals and on-line databases.  | Support Services (Library and IT) | 2012-2016 (continuous) | Partially accomplished | Library and IT service is giving a full support to the accomplishment of this goal, even with the recently limited funding provided by the Ministry.   |
| 1.3. Creating an IT package for ISRZ researchers containing regulations governing working/training conditions.  | Support Services (Legal and IT)   | May - October 2012     | Accomplished           | The package is posted on the ISRZ Intranet.  |

|   |   |                             |              |  |
|---|---|-----------------------------|--------------|--|
| 1.4 Standardizing the ISRZ database and enabling transparent access to databases.   | Quality Assurance Committee<br>IT Service                                       | September 2012 - March 2013 | In progress  | The main activity accomplished until now has been development of the general framework for the ISRZ database. One part of the database consisting the listing of all Institutes publications with full references for books, articles, reports as well as basic information on research conducted during Institutes 50 years of Institute's existence has been finalized. The step which is already underway is the creation of the repository with full texts of all the editions published by the Institute where electronic versions are available. The database with the original instruments and accumulated data will be developed during 2014/2015. |
| 1.5. Creating an IT package for ISRZ researchers with information on safe working procedures, including data saving.  | IT Service, Legal Service<br>Director,  | May - October 2012          | Accomplished | It package is being posted on the Institute's Intranet.  |
| 1.6 Creating and publishing the annual ISRZ Newsletter containing presentations of results of the work of researchers.  | Project leaders,<br>Professional Associate for<br>Projects and Public Relations | 2012-2016 (annually)        | Accomplished | Until now two <i>ISRZ Newsletters</i> have been posted on Institutes web pages and are available in English and Croatian. Another activity has also started i.e. in 2013 the Institute's Facebook page has been created.   |
| 1.7. Creating Quality Assurance documents:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ISRZ QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY,</li> <li>• RULEBOOK FOR QA MANAGEMENT</li> <li>• QUALITY ASSURANCE MANUAL</li> </ul> Content:<br>1. Introduction: Institute's mission and vision<br>2. Methodology for Manual development<br>3. Quality culture in ISRZ | Quality Assurance Committee   | March-November 2012         | Accomplished | The process of development of the quality procedures and indicators can be described as bottom-up and maximally democratic. The Quality Assurance Committee organized ALL staff in seven teams which respectively drafted the seven chapters of the Manual. Thus all employees participated in and contributed to the development of the QA  |

4. The Principles of QA management at ISRZ

5. The model of QA at ISRZ

6. QA areas (goals, activities, indicators)

- *Institute governance*
- *HR management*
- *Management of material resources*
- *Project management*
- *Research outcomes & impacts*
- *Educational activity*
- *Partnership and cooperation*
- *Publishing*

7. Appendices : Forms, instruments

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procedures and mechanisms.

It should be also noted that in 2013 the Institute's comprehensive self-evaluation was accomplished serving as the basis for the external evaluation conducted by the National agency for science and higher education. The evaluation report was very positive and the Institute has been successfully reaccredited for another 5 years.

## 2. RECRUITMENT

| Tasks  | Responsible Bodies  | Implementation Period  | Status       | Comment   |
|--|---|------------------------|--------------|---|
| 2.1 Expanding selection procedures for cases when several candidates meet the minimum criteria.  | Working group of Scientific Board, Quality Assurance Committee                          | March-May 2012         | Accomplished | These procedures are described in the documents:<br><i>Criteria for recruitment of research staff</i> (Part of the QA manual) and <i>Rulebook on jobs and positions</i>   |
| 2.2 Improving methods of informing candidates about the selection procedure.   | Selection Committees  | 2012-2016 (continuous) | Accomplished | The formal letter for informing all candidates in selection procedure has been in use in all selection procedures.  |
| 2.3. Regularly informing employees on possibilities of mobility  | Professional Associate for Projects and Public Relations                                | 2012-2016 (continuous) | Accomplished | Professional Associate for Projects and Public Relations informing employees on possibilities of mobility on day to day basis.  |
| 2.4. Developing an informational package for researchers on the procedure for recognition of academic and professional qualifications. | Quality Assurance Committee<br>Professional Associate for Projects and Public Relations | April-June 2012        | Accomplished | All relevant legislation regulating this area is available at the intranet. Also the Legal service regularly informs all employees on legal changes in procedures regarding recognition of academic and professional qualification. |
| 2.5. Developing indicators for evaluation of the overall (academic and professional) achievements of candidates.                       | Quality Assurance Committee   | April-June 2012        | Accomplished | This is evidenced by the following documents<br><i>Criteria for recruitment of researchers staff</i> (Part of the QA manual).   |

### 3. CONDITIONS OF WORK AND SOCIAL SECURITY

| Tasks   | Responsible Bodies   | Implementation Period  | Status       | Comment   |
|---|--|------------------------|--------------|---|
| 3.1 Revising Regulations on the Organization of Jobs and Positions  | Scientific Council of the Institute  | 2012-2016 (continuous) | Accomplished | This is described in the document <i>Rulebook on jobs and positions</i> .   |
| 3.2 Creating incentives for Institute employees (through training and information) to use EU funds.           | Professional Associate for Projects and Public Relations, International Projects Committee | 2012-2016 (continuous) | Accomplished | The researchers are regularly informed about the possibilities to apply for EU funds by IT networking and are encouraged by managers to participate in the trainings in order to strengthen their fundraising capacities. |
| 3.3. Endeavouring to create the appropriate number of positions for senior assistants according to ISR needs. | Scientific Council<br>Management Board<br>Director, Project leaders                        | 2012-2016 (continuous) | Accomplished | Professional Associate for Projects and Public Relations informing employees on possibilities of mobility on day to day basis.  |
| 3.4 Providing representation for both genders on selection and evaluation committees whenever possible        | Scientific Council,<br>Management Board<br>of the Institute<br>Ethics Committee            | 2012-2016 (continuous) | Accomplished | The issue of gender representativeness is always taken into account though it should be noted that 70 % of staff are women.   |
| 3.5 Establishing procedures for sending complaints/appeals to the Ethics Committee of the Institute           | Scientific Council   | March-May 2012         | Accomplished | This is evidenced by the following documents by the <i>Rulebook on Ethics Committee procedures</i> .  |



#### 4. PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

| Tasks   | Responsible Bodies                     | Implementation Period        | Status                                 | Comment   |
|---|--|------------------------------|--|---|
| 4.1. Establishing a mechanism for monitoring cooperation between doctoral candidates and mentors/supervisors.                                       | Quality Assurance Committee            | November 2012 - January 2013 | Accomplished                           | These mechanisms are described in the QA manual.  |
| 4.2. Drawing up instructions for the work of supervisors with young researchers in order to improve the competence of mentors.                      | Quality Assurance Committee            | November 2012 - January 2013 | In progress<br>Draft version available | The document is based on the qualitative research conducted within the Institutes young researchers. Their views and experiences have been the guidance for drafting the “ <i>ISRZ mentors’ manual</i> ” co-authored by two young researchers.<br>Content:<br><ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Socialization of the young researchers</li> <li>2. Role of the mentor and mentoring process</li> <li>3. The practical recommendation for day to day mentoring</li> </ol> Appendices:<br><ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Mentor’s self-evaluation form</li> <li>5. Mentee evaluation of mentor form</li> <li>6. Recommended sources</li> </ol> |
| 4.3. Organizing meetings of project teams once a year at which personal plans are considered for professional development and training researchers. | Scientific Council and Project leaders | 2012-2016 (annually)         | In progress                            | As the new project cycle just started only the kick off meetings have been held.  |
| 4.4. Encouraging cooperation between co-mentors.  | Project leaders                        | 2012-2016 (continuous)       | In progress                            | At this moment there are no cases of co-mentoring but recommendations will be given in the Mentor’s manual.   |

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