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OTM-R

Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment

Training European Network: Metabolic Dysfunctions associated with Pharmacological Treatment of Schizophrenia TREATMENT

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SUMMARY

Open, transparent and merit-based recruitment of researchers brings benefits to researchers, institutions and a country's research system. Specifically, OTM-R makes research careers more attractive, ensures equal opportunities for all candidates and facilitates mobility. Thus, it is possible to ensure the best person for the best job and promote the optimal circulation of scientific knowledge in the European Research Area.

- The rationale: Why is OTM-R essential?
- The principles and guideline: What a good OTM-R system should look like?
- A check list for institutions: How do the current practices rate?
- The toolkit: A step by step guide to improve the OTM-R practices

1. INTRODUCTION

Open, transparent and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R) is a top priority of the European Research Area (ERA) and it is one of the pillars of the European Charter for Researchers and in particular of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, launched in 2005. The Charter and the Code (C&C) contain, among other crucial issues related to professional aspects of a researcher's life, a set of principles and requirements that should be followed by employers and/or funders when appointing or recruiting researchers, first of all "employers and/or funders should establish recruitment procedures which are open, efficient, transparent, supportive and internationally comparable, as well as tailored to the type of positions advertised" https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter.

Moreover, OTM-R is an important component of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) which supports research institutions and funding organizations to put the policies and principles of the C&C into practice https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/hrs4r. All vacancies have to be published on the EURAXESS Jobs portal using the common profiles established in the European Framework for Research Careers and to fill research positions according to open, transparent and merit based recruitment procedures proportionate to the level of the position in line with the basic principles of the C&C and including non-EU nationals. There is a broad consensus among stakeholders and researchers that the lack OTM-R is one of the main barriers towards the achievement of an open labor market for researchers.

The costs for setting up a well-functioning OTM-R system are likely to prove to be value for money, at least in the medium-term, particularly when considering the cost caused by recruiting a candidate who is not the best person to carry out the job. It is recognized that

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institutions are subject to national legislation that may limit their scope to change their OTM-R practices. While examples of legislation have been identified, none prevent the establishment of an OTM-R system.

European Institutions are encouraged to carry out an initial review of their current system and all of them should have their OTM-R system. It is strongly recommended to develop and implement an OTM-R policy that encourages, in particular, external applicants by,

- Providing clear and transparent information on the whole selection process, including selection criteria and an indicative timetable
- 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.
- 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
- Considering the inclusion of explicit pro-active elements for underrepresented groups
- Keeping the administrative burden for the candidate (proof of qualifications, translations, number of copies required, etc.) to a minimum
- Reviewing, where appropriate, the institutional policy on languages

2. OTM-R POLICY

Each Institution should identify measurements (i.e. indicators and respective targets) of the effectiveness of its OTM-R policy which should be reviewed on a regular basis and, where necessary, adapted accordingly. The OTM-R policy should be published in an easily accessible place on the institution's website and should address a minimum set of requirements while respecting institutional autonomy and diversity. Quality control system is recommended to establish a quality control mechanism, including supervision of the whole recruitment process, to be administered by the designated staff. This should be combined with a periodical, external review by an independent observer.

To monitor and assess the extent to which the OTM-R system is being implemented, it is also recommended to adopt some form of internal reporting for all phases of the recruitment process, e.g., a standard, reporting template. Establish or adapt an internal OTM-R guide is strongly recommended to establish an internal guide setting out clear and explicit rules and procedures for the recruitment of all researcher positions. In this regard, it is recommended to use the European Framework for Research Careers which identifies four broad career profiles for researchers including the R1 First Stage Researcher (up to the completion of PhD).

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While the basic principles of openness, transparency and merit should apply to all positions, it is common practice to adapt the procedures according to the level, nature and type of position. The key point is to ensure that the various procedures or derogations are clear, objectively justified and transparent.

The guide should in principle address all the issues in the toolkit which sets out, in chronological order, the whole recruitment process, from the job advertising/application phase through to the appointment phase. In line with the principle "Recognition of qualifications" of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, the guide needs to provide for appropriate assessment and evaluation of the academic and professional qualifications, including non-formal qualifications, skills and competences of all researchers, as well as international and professional mobility.

The institution should ensure that appropriate training is provided to all those who are involved in the recruitment process. This should include training on how to brief members of the selection committees. If the job advertisement is published in English, this implies that staff needs to be trained to deal with processing and evaluating applicants and conducting interviews in English. Use of the OTM-R guide should be promoted throughout the institution.

3. OTM-R PACKAGE

The OTM-R Package is very usefully and includes principles and guidelines on what an OTM-R system should look like, a checklist or list of questions for institutions as a self-assessment tool to benchmark their current practices on the principles as well as a toolkit similar to a step-by-step guide to improve the organization's OTM-R practices. All the building blocks of the recruitment process, from the advertising phase to the appointment phase can be scrutinized in a simple way. The resulting revised recruitment process has to be made public.

OTM-R System				
	Open	Transparent	Merit-based	Answer: ++ Yes, completely +/-Yes, substantially -/+ Yes, partially -- No
1. Have we published a version of our OTM-R policy online in English?				
2. Do we have an internal guide setting out clear OTM-R procedures and practices for all types of positions?				
3. Is everyone involved in the process sufficiently trained in the area of OTM-R?				
4. Do we make use of e-recruitment tools?				

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5. Do we have a quality control system for OTM-R in place?				
6. Does our current OTM-R policy encourage external candidates to apply?				
7. Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to attract researchers from abroad?				
8. Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to attract underrepresented groups?				
10. Do we have means to monitor whether the most suitable researchers apply?				
Advertising and application phase				
11. Do we have clear guidelines or templates (e.g., EURAXESS) for advertising positions?				
12. Do we include in the job advertisement references/links to all the elements foreseen in the relevant section of the toolkit? [see Chapter 4.4.1 a) of the OTM-R expert report2]				
13. Do we make full use of EURAXESS to ensure our research vacancies reach a wider audience?				
14. Do we make use of other job advertising tools?				
15. Do we keep the administrative burden to a minimum for the candidate? [see Chapter 4.4.1 b) 45]				
Selection and evaluation phase				
16. Do we have clear rules governing the appointment of selection committees? [see Chapter 4.4.2 a) 45]				
17. Do we have clear rules concerning the composition of selection committees?				
18. Are the committees sufficiently gender-balanced?				
19. Do we have clear guidelines for selection committees which help to judge 'merit' in a way that leads to the best candidate being selected?				
Appointment phase				
20. Do we inform all applicants at the end of the selection process?				
21. Do we provide adequate feedback to interviewees?				
22. Do we have an appropriate complaints mechanism in place?				

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Overall assessment				
23. Do we have a system in place to assess whether OTM-R delivers on its objectives?				

The step by step guide comprises:

- The preparatory block (advertising positions, assembling panels, etc.)
- Evaluation/selection block (defining 'merit' and designing the procedures accordingly)
- The 'OTM routine' block (training staff, briefing panels, limiting bureaucracy to the minimum)

In order to avoid discriminating against candidates based on their geographical location and/or financial means, it is strongly recommended to consider using "e-recruitment", drawing on the experience of existing platforms and tools. Advertisements should give a broad description of knowledge and competencies required, and should not be so specialized as to discourage suitable applicants. It should be included a description of the working conditions and entitlements, as well as career development prospects. Moreover, the time allowed between the advertisement of the vacancy or the call for applications and the deadline for reply should be realistic.

The selection committees should bring together diverse expertise and competences and should have an adequate gender balance and, where appropriate and feasible, include members form different sectors (public and private) and disciplines, including form other countries and with experience to assess the candidate. Candidates should be informed, prior to the selection, about the recruitment process and the selection criteria. They should also be informed after the selection process about the strengths and weaknesses of their applications. The selection process should take into consideration the whole range of experience of the candidates. While focusing on their overall potential as researchers, their creativity and level of independence should also be considered.

This means that merit should be judged qualitatively as well as quantitatively, focusing on outstanding results within a diversified career path and not only on the number of publications. Candidates should be allowed to submit evidence-based CVs, reflecting a representative array of achievements and qualifications appropriate to the post for which application is being made. Any mobility experience, e.g. a stay in another country/region or in another research setting or a change from one discipline or sector to another, whether as part of the initial research training or virtual mobility experience, should be considered as a valuable contribution to the professional development of a researcher.

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