

POLICY OF OPEN, TRANSPARENT AND MERIT-BASED RECRUITMENT OF RESEARCHERS AT RESEARCH AND INNOVATION CENTRE PRO-AKADEMIA

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1. Introduction

Research and Innovation Centre Pro-Akademia is a Polish non-profit research organisation active in the field of interdisciplinary research concerning sustainable energy and circular economy. Since its establishment in 1996 Pro-Akademia has successfully implemented over 200 research and advisory projects for EU institutions, Polish local and central authorities as well as industry. Pro-Akademia is a registered Public Benefit Organisation and satisfies the requirements of the ISO 9001 standard pertaining to provision of research and innovation services. Pro-Akademia's recent achievements include:

- ranked as the 2nd most effective Polish research organisation among all 963 Polish research organisations in terms of material effects of research activity in the last evaluation of all Polish research organisations by Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education (2017)
- recognized by the European Commission with the HR Excellence in Research Award (2018)
- ranked by the National Contact Point as the 4th most successful Polish research institution in H2020 (2015)

Pro-Akademia's main field of expertise is environmental engineering, sustainable energy, energy efficiency and delivering innovation to the market through applied research. In 2015 alone, Pro-Akademia has successfully assisted over 50 enterprises in the field of eco-innovation. Since 2007 Pro-Akademia has been coordinating the cluster 'Bioenergy for the Region' - a co-operation platform of over 80 companies, research institutions, local administration and business support institutions. The main aim of the cluster is sustainable energy development in Central Poland. In the context of climate change the cluster promotes innovative solutions in sustainable energy in local and regional dimensions.

As of June 2020, there are 7 Laboratories at RIC engaged in the industrial research and experimental development works:

- **Bioprocess Laboratory** oriented towards the development of the innovative technologies of gaining the gaseous and liquid fuels as well as applying bioelectrochemical systems to wastewater;
- **Biomass Laboratory** oriented towards the development of the innovative technologies of processing biomass for the energy purposes;
- **Solar Energy Laboratory** oriented towards RES investment preparation, including the use structure of its carriers and the possibilities of applying the complimentary solutions by means of RES, especially the solar energy;
- **Wind Energy Laboratory** oriented towards making services in complex RES investment preparation;
- **Energy Efficiency and E-mobility Laboratory** oriented towards energy auditing, building energy performance certification, reporting the ecological effects of the implemented enterprises and thermal imaging of building and devices, renewable energy storage solutions for electric vehicles;
- **Textronics Laboratory** oriented towards interdisciplinary research linking textile technologies with the new electronic systems applications;
- **Natural Products Laboratory** oriented towards research on novel natural bio-based products for food, agriculture and cosmetics applications.

The main mission of RIC Pro-Akademia, according to its Statutes is as follows:

„Conducting an interdisciplinary research, knowledge transfer, implementation of the actions for the entrepreneurs and for their cooperation with the research institutions, business environment institutions, non-governmental organisation and municipal administration on each of its levels; providing professional training, advisory and consulting services; domestic and abroad economical promotion, as well as environmental protection, dissemination of the rules of sustainable growth and of the corporate social responsibility”

The specific objectives of RIC Pro-Akademia are:

1. Technological and research activity supporting the development of technology, invention and innovativeness, as well as dissemination and implementation of the new technological solutions in the economic reality, especially in the realms of environmental protection & energetics;
2. Conducting the fundamental, industrial, technological and marketing research, or experimental development works, as well as dissemination of their outcomes through the educational activity, publication and technology transfer;
3. Support for the integration of the business and scientific circles in Poland, as well as making bilateral and multilateral scientific-industrial consortiums, particularly in the international dimension;
4. Conducting the editorial activity – issuing the scientific journal, monographs, publications, reports and other elaborations lying within its thematic scope.

RIC Pro-Akademia puts a particular emphasis on the international cooperation, which facilitates the transfer of knowledge and experience, as well as the science development. The Centre fulfils the PN-EN ISO 9001:2015 standard requirements in providing research and innovation support services.

On 21st August 2018, the European Commission awarded the HR Excellence in Research logo to RIC Pro-Akademia. We joined the elite group of 412 scientific institutions across the EU, which were awarded this distinction (as of 21/08/2018).

Open, transparent and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R) is one of the pillars of the European Charter for Researchers and, in particular, of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. OTM-R is an important component of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R), which supports research institutions and funding organisations to put the policies and principles of the Charter & Code into practice.

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. The focus of an OTM-R system is on ensuring that institutions always aim that all recruitment procedures are based on principles of equal opportunities for all candidates (including internal and external).

RIC Pro-Akademia hereby adopts the following *Policy of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment of Researchers*.

2. Objective of the policy

The objective of the OTM-R process at RIC Pro-Akademia is to attract and retain top-ranking scientists and promising researchers and keeping an attractive working environment. RIC Pro-Akademia is aware that open, transparent and merit-based recruitment of researchers increases the appeal of careers in research, ensures equal opportunities for all candidates and promotes mobility.

In referring to “researchers”, this policy refers to all researchers irrespective of their career stage (including early stage researchers, postdoctoral fellows, etc.) and/or their role and position at RIC Pro-Akademia. In line with the HR Excellence in Research Award, our OTM-R policy aims to build on the principles of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, providing more detailed information on the recruitment process for researchers and the various steps, from the job advertising/application phase through to the appointment phase.

The OTM-R policy of RIC Pro-Akademia aims to encourage, in particular, external applicants by:

- providing clear and transparent information on the overall selection process, including selection criteria and an indicative timetable;
- posting a clear and concise job advertisement or 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.

RIC Pro-Akademia's Management Board and HR services are aware that OTM-R is a condition precedent for strengthening its competitive position and excellence. The Centre is therefore committed to increasing the appeal of careers in research, promoting inter-sectoral, geographic, interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and virtual mobility, as well as mobility of researchers between the public and private sector, as one of the means of improving scientific discoveries, technology transfer, innovation and the career development.

The Centre is committed to implementing the non-discrimination principle and principle of equal treatment of candidates and staff. The Centre is also committed to continuing the integration of the principle of gender balance, in particular with regard to selection procedures, the composition of selection committees and decision-making bodies, recruitment, training, promotions, salaries and working conditions.

I. Basic principles

Following RIC Pro-Akademia's endorsement of the Charter and Code according to the "EC's Strengthened Process", the procedures applied for selecting and hiring personnel are governed by a set of basic principles that guarantee all persons equal access to employment in accordance with the constitutional principles of equality, merit and ability, while respecting the Polish (Labor Code, The Constitution for Science, Act on Associations, Act on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism) and international regulations in this area, specifically the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (C&C).

2.1. Criteria of research staff recruitment

Recruitment of staff of all categories is done through a competitive selection process to which the following criteria apply:

a) Publishing: Information about the open vacancies is published on the RIC Pro-Akademia's website. The job offers must include a broad description of the knowledge and competencies required, state the specific title of the position offered, the main functions to be performed, the criteria applied for evaluating the applications, and the deadline for application.

b) Transparency: The published job offers shall define the minimum requirements and evaluation criteria, and the relative importance of each of the requirements.

c) Equality: The job offer must ensure that no applicant is excluded, except when the requirements outlined in the offer itself are not met. All applications fulfilling the application requirements are reviewed, by not discriminating in any way the applicants' gender, age, ethnic, national or social origin, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation, language, disability, political opinion, social or economic status.

d) Merit and ability: The selection must be based on the evaluation of the CVs using predefined evaluation templates, scoring scale, interviews or any other system to ensure the objectivity of the process. Career interruptions or chronological variations of curriculum vitae are not penalized, but are considered as part of professional evolution and, therefore, as a potentially valuable contribution to the professional development of researchers towards a multidimensional career path.

2.2. Working conditions

RIC Pro-Akademia offers its employees working conditions in line with the Polish labor law and the principles of the C&C, with full social security coverage and the modern technologies to carry out high-quality research or technical activities. The Centre is committed to ensuring proper working conditions that allow for high quality and efficient performance of researchers and their well-being at work, ensuring that researchers are able to balance professional and family life, and striving for the stability of employment. RIC Pro-Akademia provides its employees with lifelong training opportunities and opportunities to strengthen skills and competencies.

2.3. Research staff categories

RIC Pro-Akademia research positions are divided into two categories of personnel directly involved in performing research activities:

- a. senior level positions (Principal Investigators, Heads of Laboratories) – R3/R4
- b. junior level positions (Postdoctoral researcher / adjunct, researcher) – R1/R2

Specific requirements, main duties and responsibilities for the given position are specified every time in the job advertisement and in the employment contract.

3. Recruitment process for research staff

There are three phases in the recruitment process for research at RIC Pro-Akademia:

1. Advertising and application phase.
2. Evaluation and selection phase.
3. Appointment phase.

3.1. Advertising and application phase

The job offer must be aligned with the RIC Pro-Akademia Strategy and RIC Pro-Akademia must ensure that counts with the economic resources, facilities or any other resource to guarantee the successful integration of the researcher in our Centre.

The deadline for the submission of applications: there should be at least a 1-month time limit for the submission of applications, as this will make it possible for a wide group of potential candidates to become

familiar with the notice and properly prepare their applications along with a complete set of the documents required.

Appointment profile: The appropriate advertising strategy and deadlines for the different stages of the recruitment process are drawn up together with the Head of Management Board Office. When preparing new recruitment, the Principle Investigator or Laboratory Head needs to prepare a draft appointment profile where specific duties and specific requirements in terms of assessment criteria are outlined.

Announcement: Decisions on announcing a vacancy are made by the Management Board.

All vacancies for research staff positions are being advertised both internally and externally. The job advertisement shall be published at least at RIC Pro-Akademia's website and www.pracuj.pl web portal, and if possible at Euraxess Jobs portal.

The Centre can extend the publication to other sources such as ScienceCareers.eu, AcademicPositions.eu, InSpire, etc. The appointment profile determines the way in which the advert is worded. When advertising, target group, language requirements and budget is taken into account.

For foreign candidates, job advertisements shall also contain information on conditions of employment and work at RIC Pro-Akademia.

In the job advertisement, candidates should be able to find information on the following matters, directly or as links to relevant websites:

- Organisation and recruiting unit;
- Job title, specifications and starting date;
- Researcher career profiles (early to experienced R1-R4) with the respective 'required' and 'desirable' competencies;
- Selection criteria, including knowledge and professional experience (distinguishing the 'required' and 'desirable');
- Number of available positions;
- Working conditions, workplace, entitlements (salary, other benefits, etc.), type of contract;
- Professional and career development opportunities (this element can be discussed in the interview stage)
- The application procedure and deadline;
- Reference to the Centre's OTM-R policy;
- Reference to the Centre's equal opportunities policy;
- Reference to the contact person competent to provide information on the vacancy.

Each candidate shall receive a note acknowledging the receipt of his or her application. All candidates will receive an email informing them of the various stages of the process.

3.2. Evaluation and selection phase

a) Selection committee

The selection committees should be established for all profiles (R1-R4), though the size and composition of the committees may differ according to the profile and type of contract. The selection committees are appointed in relation to particular job competition and they include typically at least three staff members: Principal Investigator, a person appointed by PI and a representative of the Management Board (one of

VicePresidents or the President). The size and composition of committees may differ, however, the following elements should be considered:

- a minimum of 3 members;
- independent;
- members should not have any conflict of interest;
- gender balance (at least 33% of each gender);
- the relevant experience, qualifications, and competencies to assess the candidate;
- the awareness of the HRS4R and OTM-R principles.

RIC Pro-Akademia is obliged to provide selection committee members with appropriate training and ensure conditions for committee members to attend relevant training. The Selection Committee ensures the appropriate assessment and evaluation of academic and professional qualifications, including non-official qualifications, especially in the context of international and professional mobility. Their decisions must be objective and evidence-based rather than based on personal preference.

b) Candidate evaluation and interviews

Depending 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, remote interviews by telephone or skype, face-to-face interviews. The process itself is transparent and made known to the applicants, including the various steps. The entire evaluation procedure shall be conducted in accordance with the principle of equal opportunities for all candidates who are subject to assessment. All applications are screened. The committee makes a list of candidates who fulfil the formal conditions and whose applications have arrived on time and are complete; organizes interviews with the candidates and conducts them in order to check their knowledge and skills.

With regard to scheduling face-to-face interviews with candidates who are not Polish residents, it shall take into account the time they need to make arrangements to take part in the interview (travel, preparation for interview). All candidates are evaluated in terms of them meeting the criteria and requirements set out in the job advertisement.

c) Evaluation of achievements

The evaluation criteria should be consistent with the requirements of the position as regards research, supervision or teaching competencies. The criteria for selecting researchers should focus on both the candidates' past performance and their potential.

The selection committee shall assess, both in qualitative and quantitative terms, all professional, research and teaching achievements of each candidate, focusing on the full potential of the candidate for the researcher post and taking into account his or her creativity and level of independence. Any career breaks or endeavours to develop a multidimensional career shall not be regarded as negatives, but rather as an evolution of a career and a potentially valuable contribution to the professional development of a researcher towards a multidimensional career.

The selection procedure is competitive and consists of two phases: first, assessment of the merits based on the application, and second, an evaluation of the skills based on personal interview. The second phase will not be necessary if the selection committee considers.

Merit Assessment Phase

Each offer establishes the minimum score in the first phase to access to the second one. The maximum score that can be awarded is the sum of the points obtained in each of the merits evaluated according to the offer's criteria.

For the selection of university graduates with a PhD degree or an MSc degree or equivalent, and of undergraduates with a BSc degree or equivalent, who are to carry out research, the application and curriculum vitae must be supplied together with the relevant documentary evidence, as well as letters of recommendation from researchers to enable evaluation of:

- the research career in the specialization area of the post;
- the scientific and/or technological contributions made;
- the active collaboration with research groups;
- the experience or stays in foreign research centres;
- the experience in organizing and managing research.

Judging merit

The selection process takes into consideration the whole range of experience of the candidates. While focusing on their overall potential as researchers, their creativity and level of independence are also considered. This means that merit is judged focusing on outstanding results within a diversified career path and not only on the number of publications, taking into account career breaks, lifelong professional development and the added value of non-research experience. Teaching, supervision, teamwork, knowledge transfer, management of research and innovation and public awareness activities are also taken into account. Candidates from an industrial background receive particular attention.

Recognition of mobility experience

Any mobility experience, e.g. a stay in another country/region or in another research setting (public or private) or a change from one discipline or sector to another, whether as part of the initial research training or at a later stage of the research career, or virtual mobility experience, are considered as a valuable contribution to the professional development of a researcher.

Skills Assessment Phase and interview

This will take place in Polish or English and will focus on any aspect related to the curriculum of the applicant and the post to be assumed. Interview questions should be connected to the appointment profile and the duties involved with the aim of determining whether the candidate has the competence and skills required for the position announced.

During the interview, the candidate's competence should be assessed as objectively as possible. An evaluation of whether the person in question matches the requirements and expectations of the Centre as a whole should also be made. The selection committee may seek to obtain any clarifications concerning the alleged merits it considers relevant or the appropriate presentations or seminars.

Candidates may submit photocopies of all documents during the selection phase, and the original documents will only be required when being selected and prior to the formalization of the contract. The request for supporting documents should be strictly limited to those, which are really needed in order to make a fair, transparent and merit-based selection of the applicants. Moreover, in cases where certain

documents are legally required, applicants should be allowed to make a declaration in which they engage to provide the proof after the selection process is concluded.

3.3. Appointment phase

In-line with the principle of "Transparency" of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, all applicants receive written or electronic notice at the end of the selection process, indicatively within one month and without any unnecessary delays. All applicants who were admitted to the interview are informed about the strengths and weaknesses of their application.

Other applicants, who did not make it to the final stages, receive a standard mail informing them of the outcome. All applicants are entitled to further feedback upon request.

The date of announcing the competition results: The competition notice should indicate the expected date for the results of the competition to be announced. This time limit should be so evaluated as to ensure that the competition procedures are conducted in a proper and reliable manner, including potential interviews with candidates and consultation of experts.

3.4. Complaints mechanism

After the result of the recruitment process, all candidates are given a 14-day deadline for filing a complaint. The Centre has established a procedure to deal with complaints made by applicants who believe that they have been treated negligently, unfairly or incorrectly.

4. Quality Control System

The Institute identified measurements of the effectiveness of the OTM-R Policy and they are reviewed on the regular basis. RIC Pro-Akademia has established a quality control mechanism, including supervision of the whole recruitment process, to be administered by the Director of Management Board Office or designated staff. It is combined with a periodical review. To monitor and assess the extent to which the OTM-R system is being implemented, RIC Pro-Akademia has adopted internal reporting scheme for all phases of the recruitment process.