

HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY IN EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

The last two decades of the history of Europe are characterized by unprecedented mobility of all kinds of resources, including knowledge, and human resources in higher education institutions. Essentially, the mobility of human resources in higher education institutions is an expression of a broad process of internationalization. The internationalization of European universities is not only a direct effect of globalization but also an institutional response to global competition. Articulated responses need to provide opportunities and imperatives of globalization have led both universities and European transnational institutions to develop policies conducive to increased competitiveness in the education sector. European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers aim to ensure the same rights and obligations of researchers and teachers in European education and research institutions.

This article presents the results of a longitudinal study, carried out in two stages (2012 and 2017) at "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi. This study sought to assess the implementation of the principles of the Charter and Code in policies and practices in terms of university teachers and researchers.

Keywords: human resources, internationalization, higher education institutions, research

Résumé

Les deux dernières décennies de l'histoire de l'Europe se caractérisent par une mobilité sans précédent de toutes sortes de ressources, y compris les connaissances et les ressources humaines dans les établissements d'enseignement supérieur. La mobilité des ressources

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humaines dans les établissements d'enseignement supérieur est l'expression d'un vaste processus d'internationalisation. L'internationalisation des universités européennes n'est pas seulement un effet direct de la mondialisation, mais aussi une réponse institutionnelle à la concurrence mondiale. Les réponses articulées doivent fournir des opportunités et des impératifs de la mondialisation ont conduit à la fois les universités et les institutions transnationales européennes à développer des politiques favorables à une compétitivité accrue dans le secteur de l'éducation. La Charte européenne des chercheurs et le Code de conduite pour le recrutement des chercheurs visent à garantir les mêmes droits et obligations des chercheurs et des enseignants dans les établissements européens d'enseignement et de recherche.

Cet article présente les résultats d'une étude longitudinale, réalisée en deux étapes (2012 et 2017) à l'Université « Alexandru Ioan Cuza » d'Iasi. L'étude visait à évaluer la mise en œuvre des principes de la Charte et du Code dans les politiques et pratiques en termes d'enseignants et de chercheurs universitaires.

Mots-clés: ressources humaines, recherche, établissements d'enseignement supérieur, internationalisation

Rezumat

Ultimele două decade ale istoriei Europei sunt caracterizate de o mobilitate fără precedent a tuturor tipurilor de resurse, inclusiv a cunoștințelor, dar și a resurselor umane din instituțiile de învățământ superior. În esență, mobilitatea resurselor umane din instituțiile de învățământ superior este o expresie a unui amplu proces de internaționalizare. Internaționalizarea universităților europene este nu doar un efect direct al globalizării, ci și un răspuns instituțional oferit competiției globale. Necesitatea oferirii unor răspunsuri articulate oportunităților și imperativelor globalizării a determinat atât universitățile, cât și instituțiile transnaționale europene, să elaboreze politici care să conducă la creșterea competitivității în sectorul educațional. *Carta europeană a cercetătorilor și Codul de conduită pentru recrutarea cercetătorilor* urmăresc să asigure aceleași drepturi și obligații cercetătorilor și cadrelor didactice din instituțiile de cercetare și învățământ european.

Acest articol prezintă rezultatele unui studiu longitudinal, desfășurat în două etape (2012 și 2017) în Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași. Studiul a urmărit evaluarea gradului de implementare a principiilor cartei și codului în politicile și practicile din perspectiva cadrelor didactice și cercetătorilor universității.

Cuvinte cheie: resurse umane, instituții de învățământ superior, internaționalizare, cercetare

1. Institutional background

The European Commission had recommended in March 2005 (2005/251/CE) that Member States endeavor to undertake the necessary steps to ensure that employers or funders of researchers develop and maintain a supportive research environment and working culture, where individuals and research groups are valued, encouraged and supported, and provided with the necessary material and intangible support to enable them to fulfill their

objectives and tasks. Within this context, particular priority should be given to the organization of working and training conditions in the early stage of the researchers' careers, as it contributes to the future choices and attractiveness of a career in Research and Development. Therefore, the Member States – as they formulate and adopt their strategies and systems for developing sustainable careers for researchers – take duly into account and are guided by the general principles and requirements, referred to as *The European Charter for Researchers* and *The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*. In 2014 a report on *Open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment of researchers (OTM-R)* was issued for European Commission. The “OTM-R Package” was built as a set of practical and useful tools for implementing Open, Transparent and Merit-based recruitment practices in research organizations and Higher Education Institutions. The “OTM-R Package” 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.

On the 29th March, 2011 “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, represented by Rector, Prof.dr. Vasile Ișan and Vice Rector for Research and Inovation, Prof.dr. Gheorghe Popa, sign the Declaration of commitment to *The European Charter for Researchers* and *The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*. The University starts a five step process of implementation of *The Human Resources Strategy for Researches* as member of the second cohort together with 61 other European organizations. Internal analysis is the first step of this process.

Following the proposals of the steering committee on the review of the human resources strategy of the „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași and the action plan, on 10 April 2014 the university received the Human Resources Excellence in Research award from the European Commission. Thus, the European Commission recognizes that the University's regulations and practices are converging with the principles laid down in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. In November 2017, 936 European institutions and organizations have endorsed the Charter & Code principles and only 405 have received the HR Excellence in Research award. „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi is the only public higher education institution in Romania that is awarded with Human Resources Excellence in Research logo.

2. Research Methodology

During November 2017 at the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași an internal analysis was conducted with regard to the 40 general principles and requirements of *The European Charter for Researchers* and *The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*. The present analysis is also related to the internal analysis conducted in February-March 2012 in the university.

The research instrument. In order to carry out the internal analysis a questionnaire was build based on the 40 general principles and requirements of *The Charter* and *The Code* distributed on four dimensions: (1) Ethical and professional aspects; (2) Recruitment; (3) Working conditions and social security; (4) Training. Each general principle or requirement was converting in a statement. The respondents were asked to rate the statement form 1 (totally disagree) to 10 (totally agree). Additionally, five independent variables (respondent's faculty, respondent's position, seniority in the University, age and gender) were added.

The target group & the sample. The aimed target group was the staff involved in research activities (academics, researchers, PhD students and post-doctoral students) at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi. A proportional non-probabilistic sample (convenience samples type) was build base on the number of researchers in every Faculty. The 2012 sample size was 253 cases and the 2017 sample size was 249 cases.

3. Results

The European Charter for Researchers is a set of general principles and requirements which specifies the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers as well as of employers and/or funders of researchers. The aim of the Charter is to ensure that the nature of the relationship between researchers and employers or funders is conducive to successful performance in generating, transferring, sharing and disseminating knowledge and technological development, and to the career development of researchers. The Charter also recognizes the value of all forms of mobility as a means for enhancing the professional development of researchers.

The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers consists of a set of general principles and requirements that should be followed by employers

and/or funders when appointing or recruiting researchers. These principles and requirements should ensure observance of values such as transparency of the recruitment process and equal treatment of all applicants, in particular with regard to the development of an attractive, open and sustainable European labor market for researchers, and are complementary to those outlined in the *European Charter for Researchers*.

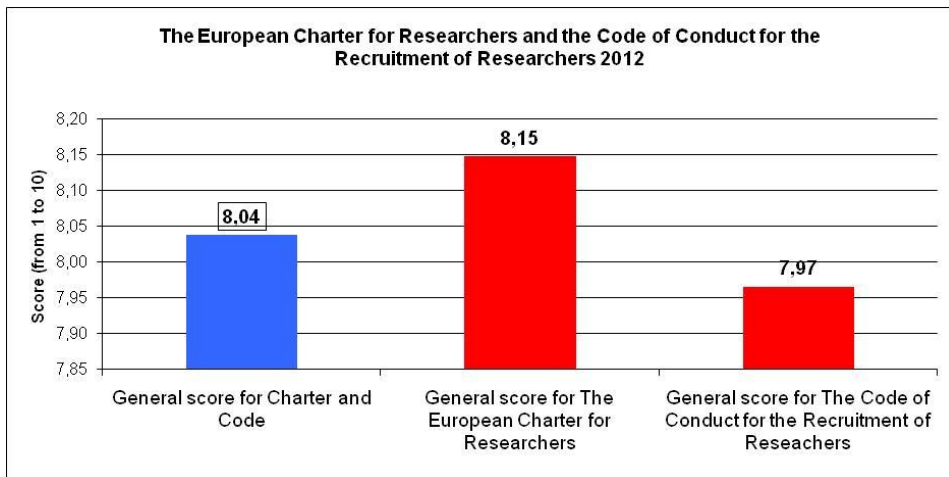


Fig. 1. General score for the European Charter for Researchers and for the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, 2012

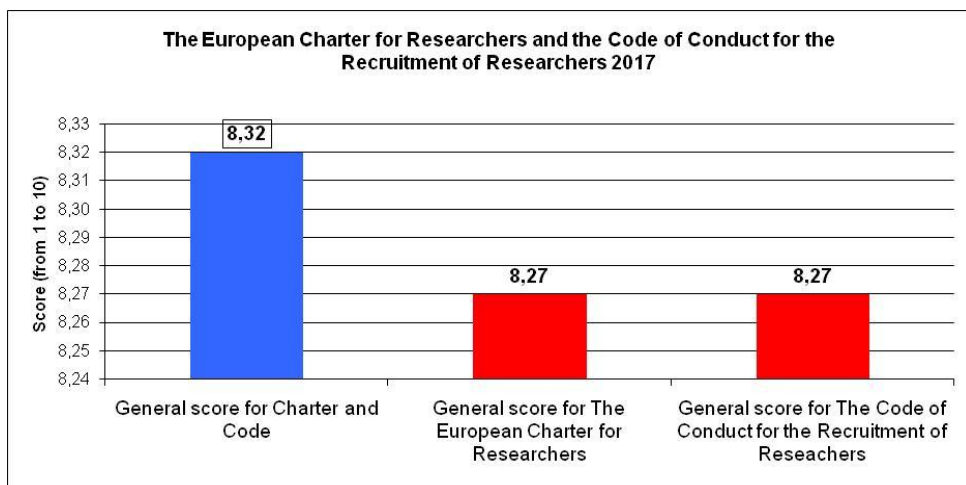


Fig. 2. General score for the European Charter for Researchers and for the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, 2017

Table 1. General score for the European Charter for Researchers and for the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

	Score 2012	Score 2017
General score for Charter and Code	8,04	8,27
General score for The European Charter for Researchers	8,15	8,27
General score for The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers	7,97	8,32

The total score recorded in last research wave after the assessment of all 40 principles and conditions was 8.32 (on a scale from 1 (minimum) to 10 (maximum)). The overall score for the principles and conditions underlying the *European Charter for Researchers* is 8.27. From all indicators of the *Charter*, the highest score was recorded by „ethics” – 9.75 and the lowest score was recorded for the „teaching” principle – 6.96. Moreover, these two indicators represent the extremes of all the 40 principles and conditions. The overall score for the *Code of Conduct for Researchers Recruitment* in 2017 was 8.27, being approximately equal with the one recorded by the *Charter*. The highest score of the *Code* was registered by „transparency” – 8.65, while the lowest was „merit evaluation” – 7.82.

On the whole, the scores of indicators in the analysis are higher than the scores recorded in the 2012 analysis. The overall score for all 40 principles rose from 8.04 in 2012 to 8.32 in 2017.

The general principles and requirements from *The European Charter for Researchers* are clustered into two categories:

1. General Principles and Requirements applicable to Researchers;
2. General Principles and Requirements applicable to Employers and Funders.

Table 2. General principles and requirements applicable to researchers and to employers and funders

	Score 2012	Score 2017
General score for The European Charter for Researcher	8,15	8,27
General Principles and Requirements applicable to Researchers	8,77	9,01
General Principles and Requirements applicable to Employers and Funders	7,53	7,81

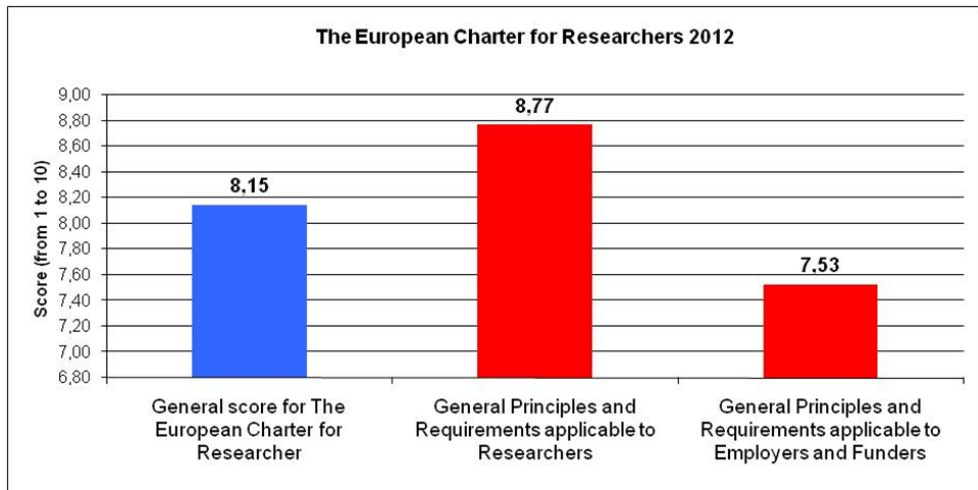


Fig. 3. General principles and requirements applicable to researchers and to employers and funders, 2012

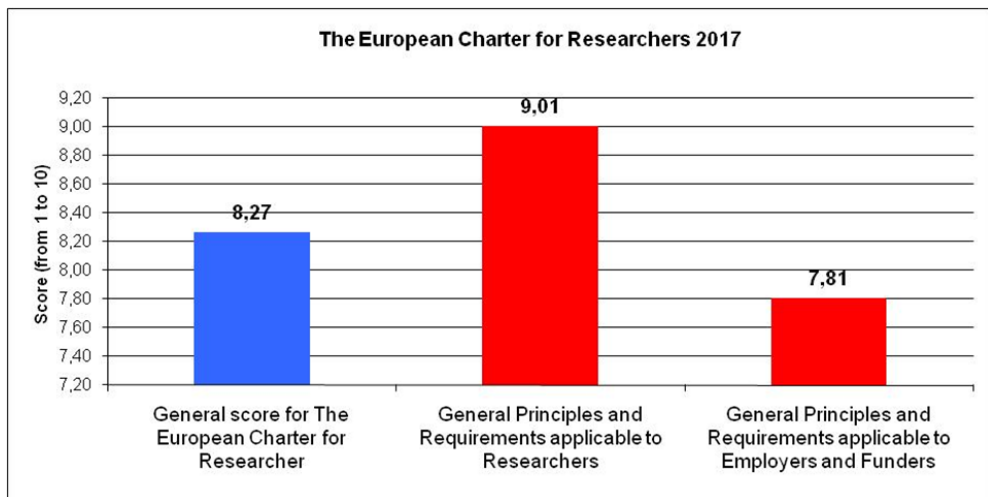


Fig. 4. General principles and requirements applicable to researchers and to employers and funders, 2017

The analysis of the *European Charter for Researchers*, depending on the addressability of the principles and the general terms, shows a significant difference between those aimed at researchers and those aimed at employers, both in the 2012 wave and in the 2017 wave. Thus, the general principles and conditions applicable to researchers recorded in 2017 wave a

higher score – 9.01, compared with the score recorded by the ones applicable employers and funders – 7.81. Of course, a discussion can be made towards a possible overbid, because in the case of the principles and general terms applicable to researchers, we are rather handling with a self-evaluation.

Even though the scores recorded in 2017 are higher than the scores recorded in 2012, the gap between employers and funders assessments, on the one hand, and self-evaluation of researchers, on the other hand, remained constant, about 1.2 points.

The European Charter for Researchers and The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers are based on four dimensions: (1) Ethical and professional aspects; (2) Recruitment; (3) Working conditions and social security; (4) Training.

Table 3. The dimensions for the European Charter for Researchers and for the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

	Score 2012	Score 2017
Ethical and professional aspects	8,77	9,06
Recruitment	7,97	8,30
Working conditions and social security	7,41	7,72
Training	7,99	8,09

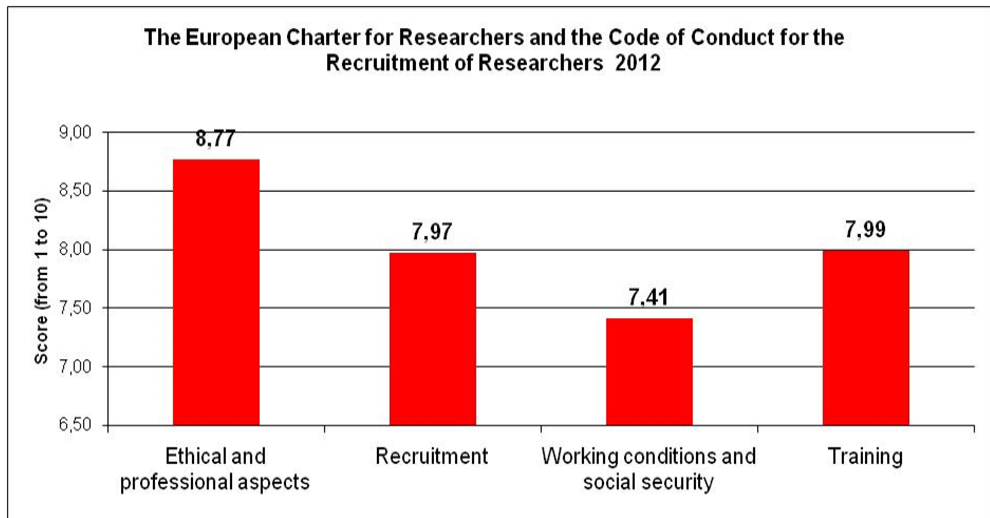


Fig. 5. The dimensions for the European Charter for Researchers and for the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, 2012

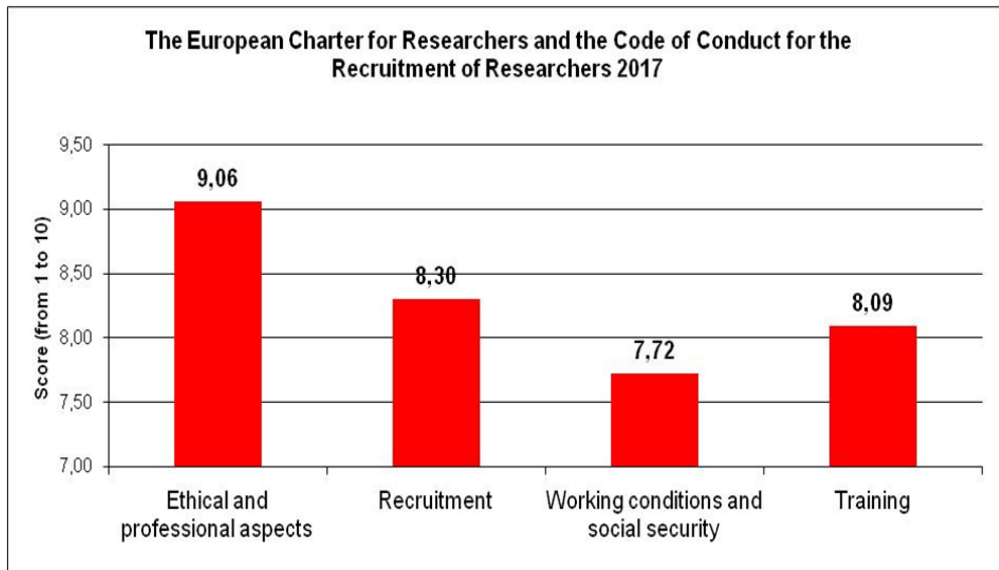


Fig. 6. The dimensions for the European Charter for Researchers and for the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, 2017

The scores recorded by the four dimensions underlying the *European Charter for Researchers* and the *Code of Conduct* are quite varied. The highest score recorded in 2017 wave was the „ethical and professional issues” – 9.06. Moreover, if we would rank all scores of the 40 principles and conditions, the top three positions would be occupied the indicators related to the „ethical and professional” dimension, while the last three places would be occupied by indicators related to the „working conditions and social security” with the lowest score – 7.72. The dimensions „recruitment” and „training” recorded relatively close scores, 8.30, 8.09 respectively.

Compared to the institutional research carried out in 2012, the indicators grouped in the „recruitment” dimension registered the highest increase, of 0.33 points, being followed by the indicators comprised within the dimension „Working conditions and social security” which registered an increase of 0.31 points.

Table 4. Top general principles and requirements for the European Charter for Researchers and for the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

Rank	General Principles and Requirements	Score 2012	Score 2017	Attributes
1	Ethical principles	9.62	9.75	The European Charter for Researcher Principles and Requirements applicable to Researchers Ethical and professional aspects
2	Professional responsibility	9.58	9.64	The European Charter for Researcher Principles and Requirements applicable to Researchers Ethical and professional aspects
3	Accountability	9.44	9.59	The European Charter for Researcher Principles and Requirements applicable to Researchers Ethical and professional aspects
...				
38	Funding and salaries	6,80	7.27	The European Charter for Researcher Principles and Requirements applicable to Employers and Funders Working conditions and social security
39	Access to career advice	6.84	7.16	The European Charter for Researcher Principles and Requirements applicable to Employers and Funders Working conditions and social security
40	Teaching	6.61	6.96	The European Charter for Researcher Principles and Requirements applicable to Employers and Funders Working conditions and social security

4. Conclusion

Following the 2017 wave assessment of all the 40 general principles and conditions which form the *European Charter for Researchers* and *The Code of Conduct for The Recruitment of Researchers* the registered score was 8.32, ranking the top quartile of the scale used in the evaluation (1 to 10). The overall score is 0.28 points higher than the general score recorded in the 2012 survey.

The highest score (9.75) was registered by the indicator „ethical principles”, circumvented to the *European Charter of Researchers*, as a principle applied to the researches and describing the „ethical and professional”

dimension. According to the Chart: „researchers should adhere to the recognized ethical practices and fundamental ethical principles appropriate to their discipline(s) as well as to ethical standards as documented in the different national, sectorial or institutional Codes of Ethics”.

By contrast, the lowest score (6.96) was registered by the indicator „teaching”, circumvented to the *European Charter of Researchers*, as a principle applicable to employers / sponsors and describing the „working conditions and social security” dimension. According to the Charter “teaching is an essential means for the structuring and dissemination of knowledge and should therefore be considered a valuable option within the researchers’ career paths. However, teaching responsibilities should not be excessive and should not prevent researchers, particularly at the beginning of their careers, from carrying out their research activities. Employers and/or funders should ensure that teaching duties are adequately remunerated and taken into account in the evaluation/appraisal systems, and that time devoted by senior members of staff to the training of early stage researchers should be counted as part of their teaching commitment. Suitable training should be provided for teaching and coaching activities as part of the professional development of researchers”.

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