



INSTITUTE OF MECHANICS - BAS

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Director of IMech-BAS

Strategy for Researchers

Introduction

The *Institute of Mechanics* is a part of the *Bulgarian Academy of Sciences* (IMech-BAS), where researchers perform fundamental and applied research in mechanics, and treat and solve problems posed by industry and society [1]. The IMech employees are 137 persons by the end of 2014 comprising 97 researchers and 40 members of technical and auxiliary personnel [2]. The IMech researchers published 139 papers in 2014, including 67 of them in journals with Impact factor and/or SJR ranking [2].

In March 2005, *The European Commission* adopted a “*European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*”, [3]. *The European Charter for Researchers* is addressed to researchers as well as to employers and funders in both the public and private sectors. These are the key elements in the European Union's policy to make research an attractive career, which is a vital feature of its strategy to stimulate economic and employment growth... *The European Charter for Researchers* addresses the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers and their employers or funding organisations. It aims at ensuring the relationship between these parties and contributes to successful generation, transfer and sharing of knowledge, and career development of researchers. *The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers* aims to improve recruitment, to make selection procedures fairer and more transparent and proposes different means of judging merit: Merit should not just be measured by the number of publications but on a wider range of evaluation criteria, such as teaching, supervision, teamwork, knowledge transfer, management and public awareness activities. Note that useful information on these issues can be found in [4].

In the summer of 2014, the Managing Board of BAS undertook an initiative to popularize those principles among its institutes. The development of a “*Human Resource Strategy for Researchers*” is an important step in support of research institutions and funding organisations to implement the Charter & Code Principles (CCP) in their policies and practices. The related EC award “*HR Excellence in Research*” would identify IMech as providing and supporting a stimulating and favourable working environment. Being eventually awarded, the IMech-BAS may add the “*HR Excellence in Research*” icon to its logo using it to highlight its commitment to implementing fair and transparent recruitment and evaluation/appraisal procedures for researchers, [4].

Methodology

Having discussed the necessity and advantages of the initiative, the IMech Governing body addressed the EC in 2014 with its approval of the CCP and an engagement to adopt a procedure for their implementation, [5]. The procedure comprises the following steps, [4]:

1. *Internal gap analysis* performed within the institute for juxtaposing the existing IMech policies and practices to the *Charter & Code* principles;
2. Development of an original IMech *strategy*, based on the results of the analysis, which includes a specific *action plan*. Official publication of these documents in Bulgarian and English in the IMech's website.
3. Approaching the EC with a request for their consideration and recognition. As said above, upon **approval** IMech-BAS may add the „*HR Excellence in Research*“ icon to its logo.
4. ***Self-assessment in two years' time*** of the progress of *strategy* and *action plan* implementation;
5. An ***external audit*** is carrying out once in every four years.

Results

A 6-member *working group* (WGCC) was formed in the IMech in December 2014 with a task to carry out some tasks following those steps necessary to align the professional behavior of the institute and its employees with the principles of the *Charter & Code*.

The internal gap analysis is shaped as a distinct document that contains the necessary actions to align IMech policies with some of the principles.

In addition to the gap analysis, a survey was conducted among researchers at the Institute of Mechanics for their opinion about Charter and Code Principles. The inquiry form contains short explanation of each principle and two questions: “**Do you agree with this principle?**” and “**How much do you think this principle is respected in IMech?**” Individual responses are numerical, with meanings: 5-definitely yes; 4-rather yes; 3-no opinion or an average opinion; 2-rather not; 1-definitely not. Participation is anonymous and voluntary. All researchers of IMech were invited to participate. The answers are given in 4th column of the table in the Gap Analysis.

Short description of the survey results

All *Charter&Code* principles were highly approved by the participants, where the grade of Principle 11 is 4.3 while that of the other ones is 4.5 or higher.

Grades of the **second question** vary within wide ranges. The lowest grade (2.7) is that of Principle № 26 (Funding and salaries), i.e. participants considered its observation to be incomplete. There is a group of principles (№№ 3, 8, 9, 11, 14, 16, 22, 23, 25, 28 и 31), with grades ranging between 3 and 3.9, i.e. the principles have been satisfactorily observed but there is more to be done. The standard deviation of the mean for that group is about 0.3. The largest group of principles (№№ 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 15, 18, 19, 20, 24, 27, 29, 30, 33, 34, 37, 39 и 40) is specific with grades between 4 and 4.4, i.e. those principles are observed but improvement is possible. The grades of the last group (principles №№ 1, 13, 17, 21, 32, 35, 36 и 38) are 4.5 or higher, i.e. the principles are completely observed. The standard deviation of the mean grades is about 0.2 for this group.

Conclusions from the Internal Gap Analysis

The measures that have been identified by the WGCC for implementation are shown in the third column of the table with principles, considered during the Gap Analysis.

It is desirable, in the action plan to be planned for implementation measures relating to those principles, №№ 3, 8, 9, 11, 14, 16, 22, 23, 26, 28 and 31, which have assessment below 4.0 on the second question. The survey participants find the IMech-BAS practices to be in fairly good conformity with the other *Charter & Code* principles.

References

- [1] Rules for the Structure, Activity and Internal Order of the Institute of Mechanics at BAS / January 28, 2014.
- [2] IMech-BAS report for 2014.
- [3] Enhancing the HR strategies for researchers: the European strategy. Information note, EC, 2013 (available at EURAXESS Rights site, <http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/>)
- [4] EURAXESS Rights site, <http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/>.
- [5] Declaration of commitment by IMech-BAS approving the *Charter & Code* principles, <http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/charterAndCode#B>.

Action Plan

The action plan contains two tables: 1. *Activities with set durations* and 2. *Activities, which should be performed upon the occurrence of specific conditions*. Responsible is listed for each activity. The first table has a column "Progress" where the extent of implementation of this plan will be reflected at 30/Sept./2018 and 30/June/2020. The listed in second table activities are executed at the Institute of Mechanics, more or less, but some of them are not regulated in writing and it is desirable that this shall be done while improving the regulations of the Institute of Mechanics!

Action Plan

№	1. Activities having deadlines Description	Responsible!	Progress	Time!															
				2016		2017				2018				2019				2020	
				Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2												
1	Internal Analysis Conducting analysis for the presence of discrepancies between Charter and Code Principles and existing policies and practices, of state and institute level.	WGCC	Completed 07.2016																
2	Strategy for Researchers with an Action Plan Development of a strategy for convergence of IMech's policies and practices with Charter and CODE Principles, containing a specific action plan.	WGCC	Completed 07.2016																
3	Self-assessment Checking implementation of the action plan and report to the IMech's Director.	WGCC										*							*
4	External Evaluation Checking progress of the action plan and report to the European Commission (EURAXESS Rights).	WGCC																	*
5	Ethical Code of IMech-BAS Development and adoption of an Ethical Code for employees of the Institute of Mechanics at BAS, in connection with principles No 2 and 3.	EC-IMech	Completed 04.2015																

№	Activities having deadlines (cont.) Description	Responsible!	Progress	Time!															
				2016		2017				2018				2019				2020	
				Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2
6	Joint seminar about CCP Seminars at the Institute of Mechanics in order to clarify the principles of the Charter and Code, as well as related to them laws and regulations.	WGCC		*				*				*			*		*		
7	Rules for the Internal Labour Policy Updating the Rules of Internal labour Policy at IMech as much as necessary for principles 1, 5, 7, 23, 27, 28, 36, 37 and 40.	Director		*	*	*						*	*						
8	Rules for the Structure, Activity and Internal Order Updating the Rules for the Structure, Activity and Internal Order of the IMech at BAS, in connection with 5 th and 31 th principles.	Director			*	*	*												
9	Intellectual Property Rights and Commercialisation of Results Development and adoption of regulation(s) for Intellectual Property Rights of IMech-BAS and for Commercialisation of the Results, in relation with principles No 1, 7, 8 and 31.	Prof. K. Kostadinov, Assoc. prof. D. Ignatova		*	*				*										
10	Professional Development Amending the Rules on the Conditions and Order for acquisition of Scientific Degrees and Academic Positions at IMech in relation with principles №№ 14, 28, 29 and 39.	Vice Director							*	*									

№	Activities having deadlines (cont.) Description	Responsible!	Progress	Time!															
				2016		2017				2018				2019				2020	
				Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2												
11	Package of guidelines The package of guidelines for participation in competitions to be available in both Bulgarian and English, see 12-th principle.	Vice Director			*	*													
12	Salaries Amending the Internal Rules for Salaries, in relation with principles 26 and 33.	Chief Accountant, HR			*								*						
13	Facilitating access Facilitating access for people with disabilities by building a ramp or lifting device, № 24.	Assistant Director					*	*											
14	Others Clarification and taking actions in conjunction with other principles, such as these with numbers 1, 16, 17, 18, 20, 23, 25, 39.	Director, HR					*								*	*			

Legend

Q – Quarter of the year

* – Designation of a scheduled duration.

Director – Prof. D.Sc. Vasil Kavardjikov

Vice Director – Prof. D.Sc. Nikolay Vitanov

Assistant Director – Assistant Prof. Sergey Ranchev

HR – Human Resources office at IMech – Mrs Vera Boiadjieva

EC-IMech– Ethics Committee at Institute of Mechanics – Assoc. Prof. Svetoslav Sl. Nikolov

WGCC– Working Group for carrying out the work needed for the unification the behaviour of IMech and its employees with Charter and Code Principles – Assoc. Prof. Rumen Krastev

№	2. Activities, carried out under specific conditions Description	Responsible!	Conditions for applying the activities!
1	Updated Information Updating the website of IMech_BAS with current information about the conditions for training and work, in relation with 5 th and 9 th principles.	Responsible for the internet page; Scientific secretary; Human Resources	Regularly and on demand.
2	Transparency Announcement of vacancies in external websites in Bulgarian and English, according to 15 th principle.	HR office	When announcing vacancies.
3	Consultations Advice from HR office about recruitment, in relation with principle № 30.	HR	On demand.
4	Quality and Continuity Introduction of young scientists to the ways for carrying out research activities in accordance with principles № 4 and 39.	Supervisors of the young scientists	Upon job appointment and if it's necessary
5	Competent Selecting Committees Competent scientists to be selected in the juries selecting people in accordance with Act for Development of Academic Staff and related regulations, see 14 th principle.	Department leaders; Scientific Council of IMech-BAS	When selecting members of the scientific juries.
6	Job Descriptions Mention in the job descriptions of the specific, for the position, rights and obligations, see 5 th principle.	HR	Upon job appointment or updating job descriptions.
7	Labour Contracts The laws and regulations, related to the job, should be pointed out in the labour contracts, in relation with 3 th and 5 th principles.	HR	Upon job appointment.
8	Ethical Control Controlling the ethical behaviour of researchers through the work of EC-IMech, in connection with principles 3 and 14.	EC-IMech	Upon receipt in the ethical committee of signals for violations.
9	Relations with Journalists Interviews, popular publications and others to promote the Institute of Mechanics at BAS, according to principle 9.	Vice Director	On demand or two times a year at least.