

The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

**“A Human Resources Strategy For Researchers Incorporating the Charter and Code”**

**Achucarro Basque Center for Neuroscience**

**4<sup>th</sup> cohort of the HRS4R**

2020/02 Update

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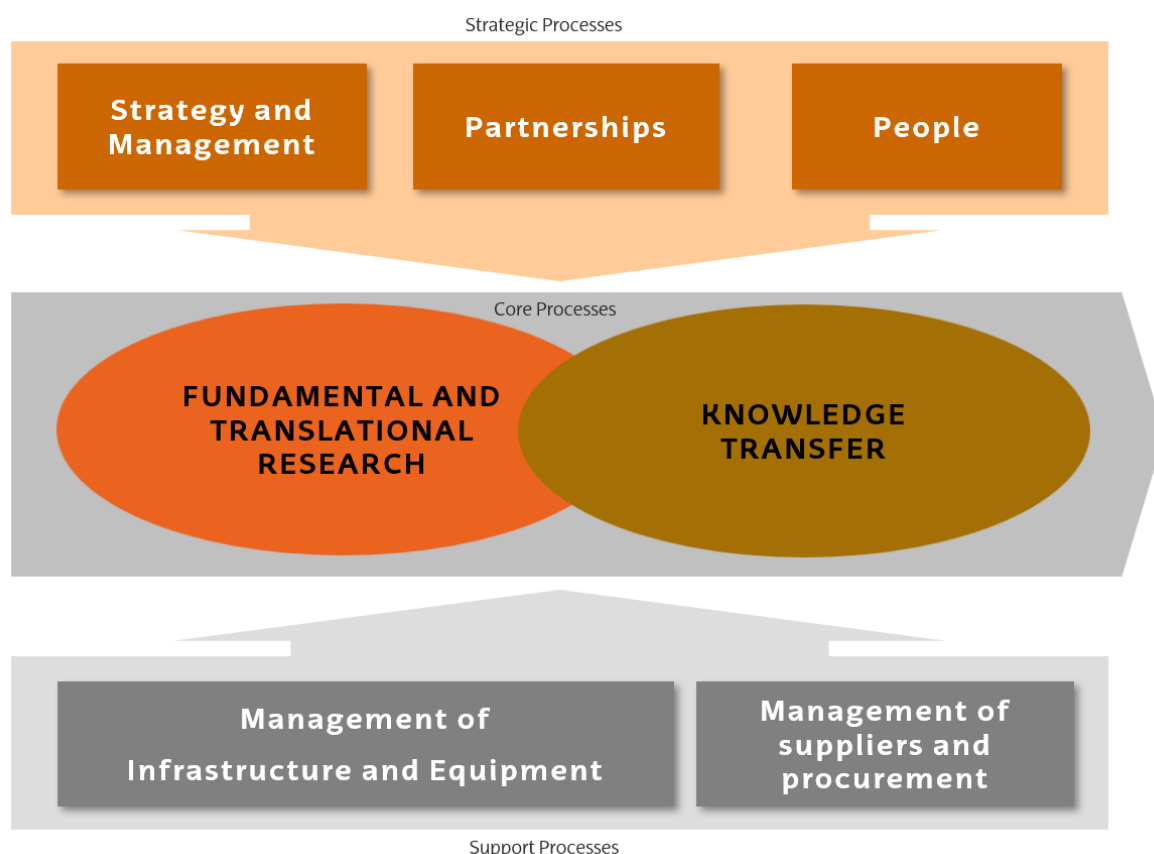
## 0. Foreword

Achucarro Basque Center for Neuroscience (ACHUCARRO) is one of the BERC research centres fostered and recognised by the Basque Government to develop excellent science in strategic areas of research for the Basque Country and Europe.

The strategy of ACHUCARRO is designed and deployed in periods of 4 years, aligned with the periodicity of the BERC Programme of the Basque Government, a funding scheme that provides structural funding of the BERC centres. The first Plan covered the 2014 to 2017 period, and the current plan extends from 2018 to 2021. At the end of 2021 we will design the next Strategic Plan for the period 2022-2025.

ACHUCARRO is committed with excellent research and management and therefore adopted and develops international standards. Regarding talent management (Management of and with People) we endorsed the “European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers”, launched Equality, Equity and Diversity Plans, and have an active role in the career development of our personnel.

ACHUCARRO developed a management model inspired by the principles of EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) and the *local* “Advanced Management Model” (MGA) by Euskalit to deploy the Strategic Plans. This model is based in the definition of management processes and the operations are deployed in process oriented continuous improvement cycles.



*Fig 1. Current Process Map of ACHUCARRO.*

## 1. HR Strategy: The path in ACHUCARRO

Ikerbasque, the Basque Foundation for Science is one of the Trustees of ACHUCARRO. Ikerbasque endorsed the *“European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers”* in 2011 and fostered the adoption and endorsement of this strategy in the Basque Country.

<https://www.ikerbasque.net/eu/about-us/hrs4r>

The Board of Trustees of ACHUCARRO, in the initial launching meeting of the Foundation, decided to endorse *the Charter and the Code* and entrust the newly appointed Direction to implement their principles.

**The UPV/EHU is currently developing their approach to HRS4R.**

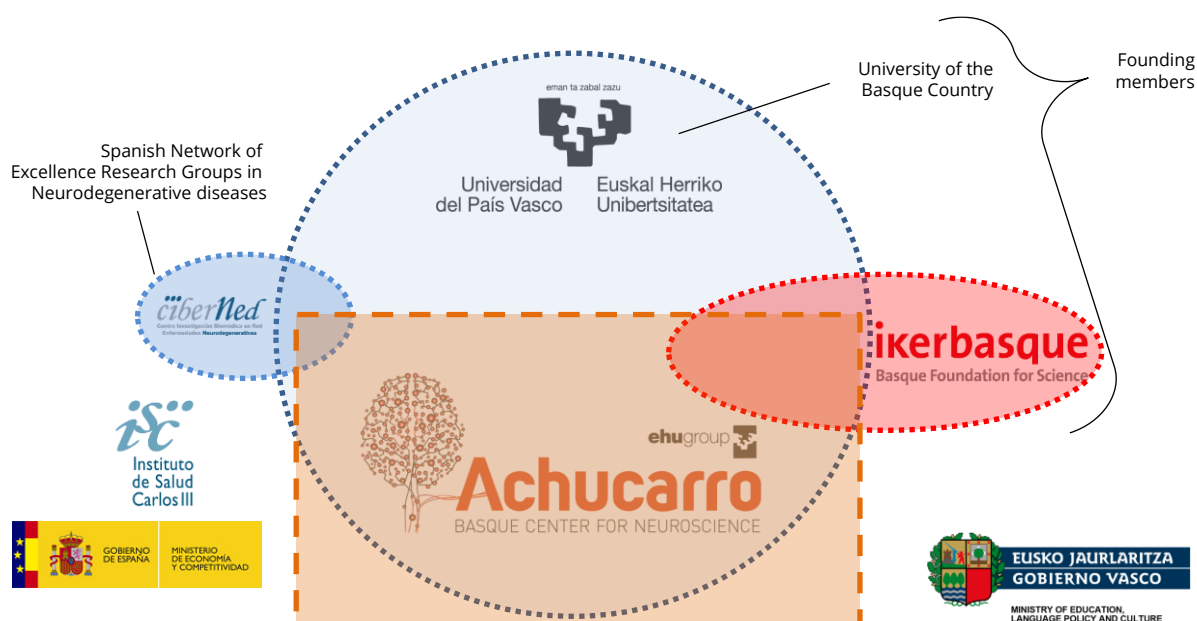


Fig 2. Schematic of entities hiring ACHUCARRO appointed personnel.

In the year 2013, ACHUCARRO underwent a first internal analysis to assess our position according to the principles of the Charter and the Code.

The first relevant aspect that we realised was that, according to the structure and organisation model defined by the Board of Trustees, ACHUCARRO would have to clearly define general and specific policies and procedures, since the personnel appointed to the centre would be hired by, at least, 3 different legal entities: ACHUCARRO itself, Ikerbasque and the UPV/EHU. In this sense, ACHUCARRO is a mixed research organisation (as many other centres in the Spanish Science system), where research personnel from different employers share the premises of any of the science-based legal entities (typically, CSIC, Universities, and more recently, Foundations fostered by the different national or regional administrations).

At that time, we identified the main laws (Legal Framework) related to recruitment and contracting of workers in the Science sector in Spain, and in particular in the biomedicine/biosciences sector, to assess if there were legal limitations to implement the principles. The outcome was positive, so no action had to be taken in this area. The laws that we identified where:

1. Spanish Constitution: Articles 44.2, 20.1, 20.4 and 149.15
2. Spanish Law on Science, Technology and Innovation (14/2011)
3. Spanish Law on Biomedical Research (14/2007)
4. Spanish Law on the Statute of Public Officials (7/2007)

Our Legal Framework established rights and obligations to employers and employees, and there are some differences in the employer is a public body (hiring public/civil servants).

The design idea and orientation of the Direction of ACHUCARRO was to set a common and general framework of policies with rights and obligations, regardless the employer.

ACHUCARRO is currently reaching a point of stability in our development and growth strategy. In the period from 2013 to 2019 we had increase of 77% in the number of people appointed to the centre. In the following lines we will summarise this evolution.

The details on the Internal Analysis process and the Action Plan defined in 2013 is accessible here:

[https://www.achucarro.org/documents/10180/99382/Achucarro\\_HR\\_Strategy\\_2013.pdf](https://www.achucarro.org/documents/10180/99382/Achucarro_HR_Strategy_2013.pdf)

In 2015 we reviewed the implementation and re-assessed our position. This report is accessible here:

[https://www.achucarro.org/documents/10180/99382/2015-12\\_Achucarro%20HRS4R\\_2Y\\_self-assessment.pdf](https://www.achucarro.org/documents/10180/99382/2015-12_Achucarro%20HRS4R_2Y_self-assessment.pdf)

The main action areas identified in both processes (expressed differently, but meaning the same, by the effect of the evolution of the organisation) were related to:

1. The need to define and develop an organisation model and internal culture to blossom excellent research.
  - To this aim, we identified the need to create a "Code of Conduct" or a set of "Guidelines" to set the basic rules of interaction between all the people appointed in ACHUCARRO.
  - Aligned with this strategic objective, we have recently approved a document entitled "Letter of Understanding" to be used in the relationships between supervisor and mentees.
2. Close collaboration with strategic partners.
  - The support and identification of common and shared objectives with the entities/partners that created ACHUCARRO was and is crucial for an organisation in its first stages of development.
  - This is even more important when employees of these entities and working together under the same roof, with common and shared objectives, and with different labour frameworks and conditions. These different conditions could also have an impact in the culture and atmosphere identified in the point 1 of this list.

3. Stable structural funding.
  - The political and financial environment that show the birth of ACHUCARRO complicated the original plans and delayed some actions and objectives (mainly the creation of the headquarters).
  - The funding from the BERC Programme of the Basque Government is a crucial resource for ACHUCARRO, that needs to be maintained, and secured, by performing excellently and attaining high quality results.
  - The Direction of the ACHUCARRO, the General Management in particular, in his capacity of financial officer, has to ensure the availability of resources to face the challenges of the organisation and the environment (delays in publication of calls, resolutions, launch programmes to retain talent, etc).
4. Support to career development
  - Launch a "Mentorship programme" to contribute to the personal and professional development of our personnel.
  - Assessment of different Mentoring actions and dynamics.
  - Extension of the initial objectives of the programme to cope with ideas like the identification of training in soft skills and personal abilities; potential identification of harassment situations, etc.
  - Jointly (Direction, Supervisors, Mentees) identify new subjects and areas that require specific training to adapt and update to changes in our sector and research area. In example, in 2013 we identified Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), in 2015 the standards and use of biostatistics, in 2017 reinforce the training on safety at work (due to the change of premises and the adaptation to new facilities) and scientific writing, and career options out of academia in 2019.

In 2019 we performed another internal analysis a new Action Plan for the period 2019-2022. Some of the actions defined for the first AP are concluded and some new challenges arose. The new AP is defined by four strategic objectives or working axis, with this summarised goals:

- 1. Continuously listen to the organisation. Maintain a healthy and vibrant work atmosphere.**
  - a) Keep reinforcing the internal participation and governance dynamics like the Group Leaders' meetings,
    - *Involved processes: E01 – Strategy and Management, E-03 People, O-05 Knowledge Transfer*
- 2. Close collaboration with strategic partners.**
  - a) The support and identification of common and shared objectives with the entities/partners that created ACHUCARRO was and is crucial for an organisation in its first stages of development.
  - b) This is even more important when employees of these entities and working together under the same roof, with common and shared objectives, and with different labour frameworks and conditions. These different conditions could also have an impact in the culture and atmosphere identified in the point 1 of this list.
    - *Involved processes: E01 – Strategy and Management, E-02 Partnerships*
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- c) The Direction of the ACHUCARRO, the General Management in particular, in his capacity of financial officer, has to ensure the availability of resources to face the challenges of the organisation and the environment (delays in publication of calls, resolutions, launch programmes to retain talent, etc).
- *Involved processes: E01 – Strategy and Management, E-02 Partnerships, O-04 Research, S07 – Management of Suppliers and Procurement*

#### **4. Support to career development**

- a) Launch a "Mentorship programme" to contribute to the personal and professional development of our personnel.
- b) Assessment of different Mentoring actions and dynamics.
- c) Extension of the initial objectives of the programme to cope with ideas like the identification of training in soft skills and personal abilities; potential identification of harassment situations, etc.
- d) Jointly (Direction, Supervisors, Mentees) identify new subjects and areas that require specific training to adapt and update to changes in our sector and research area. In example, in 2013 we identified Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), in 2015 the standards and use of biostatistics, in 2017 reinforce the training on safety at work (due to the change of premises and the adaptation to new facilities) and scientific writing, and career options out of academia in 2019.
- *Involved processes: E-02 People, O-05 Knowledge Transfer*

## 2. Revised Action Plan for 2020 – 2023

### OBJECTIVE 1:

Define and develop an organisation model and internal culture for performing excellent research

RESULTS	ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBLE(S)	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>R1.1 Reorganised organisational culture of trust, transparency and co-responsibility</b>	<b>A1.1.1</b> All the relevant information for the internal and external stakeholders is easily accessible on the website	General Manager				
	<b>A1.1.2</b> All the relevant internal information is accessible in the WIKI	General Manager				
	<b>A1.1.3</b> The Steering Board meets (former Group Leaders' meetings) every second month and contribute to the governance and leadership of the organisation	Directorate				
	<b>A1.1.4</b> Values of trust, transparency and co-responsibility are worked out in internal dynamics	Mentors, Supervisors				
<b>R1.2. Internal rules and policies contribute to a good working atmosphere</b>	<b>A1.2.1</b> Ethic Code, Internal Guidelines are reviewed annually	Scientific Director				
	<b>A1.2.2</b> Increase the dissemination and Awareness about the principles of the Charter and the Code (HRS4R)	Scientific Director				
	<b>A1.2.3</b> Review the OTM-R and adapt it to internal and external changes	Steering Committee				
	<b>A1.2.4</b> General Satisfaction survey is performed every second year (2021, 2023)	General Manager				
	<b>A1.2.5</b> Perform the next HRS4R Self-assessment and define challenges for the next Action Plan	General Manager				
<b>R1.3. The HRS4R Steering Group follows-up this Action Plan and reviews actions and objectives</b>	<b>A1.3.1</b> ACHUCARRO appoints a HRS4R Steering Committee to follow-up this Action Plan	General Manager				
	<b>A1.3.2</b> The HRS4R Steering Committee formally approved this Action Plan	General Manager				
	<b>A1.3.3</b> The HRS4R Steering Committee meets in June and December each year and review and re-orient (if needed) the Action Plan	General Manager				

INDICATORS	RESPONSIBLE(S)	2020	2021	2022	2023
IR1.1.1. Number of suggestions for missing information	General Manager	5	5	5	5
IR1.1.2. Number of complaints for missing information	General Manager	3	2	1	0
IR1.1.3. % of attendance to the Steering Board meetings	General Manager	95%	95%	95%	95%
IR1.1.4. % of LoU documents subscribed over the total possible	General Manager	90%	95%	100%	100%
IR1.2.1. Number of conflicts between supervisor/mentee managed	Scientific Director	0	0	0	0
IR1.2.2. Ethics Code is reviewed and updated (if necessary)	Scientific Director	Done	-	Done	-
IR1.2.3. OTM-R Policy is reviewed and updated (if necessary)	General Manager	Done	-	Done	-
IR1.2.4. Steering Board analyses the results of the Satisfaction survey and defines improvement areas	General Manager	Done	-	Done	-
				Done	
IR1.3.1. Steering Board is appointed with representative of all internal stakeholders and gender balance	General Manager	Done			
IR1.3.2. HRS4R Action Plan is communicated, after being approved after discussion within internal dynamics	Scientific Director	Done			
IR1.3.3. Number of novel approaches or innovations to the Plan identified within the Steering Committee analysis	General Manager	2	2	2	2



**OBJECTIVE 2:**  
Continuously develop mutually beneficial partnerships with Trustees and strategic allies

RESULTS	ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBLE(S)	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>R2.1 The collaboration with Trustees and strategic partner organisations is optimal</b>	<b>A2.1.1</b> Call periodic coordination meetings with Trustees	Scientific Director				
	<b>A2.1.2</b> Review and update formal collaboration agreement with Trustees and strategic partners	General Manager				
	<b>A2.1.3</b> Validation and approval of Strategic Plan 2022-2025	Scientific Director				
<b>R2.2. ACHUCARRO has an excellent network of partner organisations to extend our capabilities</b>	<b>A2.2.1</b> Assessment of current and potential partnerships and strategic objectives	Steering Board				
	<b>A2.2.2</b> Annually identify potential new partner organisations	Steering Board				

INDICATORS	RESPONSIBLE(S)	2020	2021	2022	2023
IR2.1.1 Number of meeting per year (ordinary and extraordinary)	Scientific Director	4	4	4	4
IR2.1.2 Number of suggestions of improvement in the relationships or internal policies governing inter-institutional collaboration	General Manager	2	2	2	2
IR2.1.3 Strategic Plan and financial framework for the BERC 2022-2025 Programme is formally approved	Scientific Director	-	-	-	-
IR2.2.1 % of new partners vs mature ones	General Manager	5%	5%	5%	5%
IR2.2.2 Number of partnering suggestions proposed by the Steering Board	General Manager	2	2	2	2

**OBJECTIVE 3:**  
Secure a stable financial status to support the development of HR policies.

RESULTS	ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBLE(S)	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>R3.1 ACHUCARRO has a good financial situation to foster the strategy on people management</b>	<b>A3.1.1</b> Manage the strategic projects and funding of ACHUCARRO to increase financial stability	General Manager				
	<b>A3.1.2</b> Increase the number and scope of tools to support personal and professional development	Steering Board				
<b>R3.2. The organisation is capable of increase the level of funding, according to its growth</b>	<b>A3.2.1</b> Identify and apply for funding sources to increase our operating capacity	Scientific Director				
	<b>A3.2.2</b> Keep improving the quality of research outcome to improve the reputation of ACHUCARRO	Scientific Director				

INDICATORS	RESPONSIBLE(S)	2020	2021	2022	2023
IR3.1.1 % of funding different from the BERC	General Manager	50%	45%	45%	40%
IR3.1.2 Volume of funding devoted to people management policies from the total budget	General Manager	15000	20000	25000	28000
IR3.2.1 % of international funding	General Manager	5%	5%	5%	5%
IR3.2.2 % of funding from private entities	General Manager	3%	4%	4%	5%
IR3.2.3 Number of prizes, awards or recognitions to ACHUCARRO	Scientific Director	2	2	2	2

**OBJECTIVE 4:**  
Contribute to career development and the improvement of professional qualifications

RESULTS	ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBLE(S)	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>R4.1 ACHUCARRO is an active socio-economic agent that contributes to create employment and develop talent</b>	A4.1.1. Keep developing the new research groups and increasing their size, aligning it with the Equality Plan	Scientific Director				
	A4.1.2. Improve the attractiveness of our environment for talented professionals in all the stages of their careers	Steering Board				
	A4.1.3. Continuously identify and assess training needs to adapt them to the evolving research field and job markets	General Manager				
<b>R4.2. Career development opportunities become a competitive advantage to attract talent</b>	A4.2.1. The Mentoring Programme is a key activity to support career development and the development of internal operations	Mentoring coordinator				
	A4.2.2. All the internal dynamics support the identification and deployment of career development	Mentoring coordinator, Steering Board, HRS4R Steering group				
	A4.2.3. ACHUCARRO provides training information and opportunities adapted to all the professional profiles of the organisation	General Manager				

INDICATORS	RESPONSIBLE(S)	2020		2021		2022		2023	
IR4.1.1. Number of new contracts over the year	General Manager	5		7		9		11	
IR4.1.2. % of foreign staff out of the total	General Manager	12%		13%		14%		16%	
IR4.1.3. % of graduates / alumni departing immediately to other jobs out of the total alumni	General Manager	99%		99%		99%		99%	
IR4.2.1. Assessment of Mentoring Programme is good (Satisfaction survey)	General Manager	-		7,5		-		8	
IR4.2.2. Number of career development activities organised by ACHUCARRO	General Manager	4		5		5		6	
IR4.2.3. The contents of the WIKI (Career opportunities) has an excellent evaluation (WIKI Assessment)	General Manager	8		8		8		8	