

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

4th cohort of the HRS4R

2023/12 Update

Content

- 1. Foreword..... 1
- 2. HR Strategy: The path in ACHUCARRO..... 2
- 3. Action Plan for 2024 – 2027 1

1. Foreword

Achucarro Basque Center for Neuroscience (ACHUCARRO) is one of the nine BERC (Basque Excellence Research Centres) RPOs fostered and recognised by the Basque Government to develop excellent scientific research in strategic areas.

ACHUCARRO is committed with excellent research and management and therefore adopted and develops international standards. Regarding talent management (we do not use the term HR, our process is called “People” and summarised the concept to management and development of talent) we endorsed the “European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers” (2013), launched Equality, Equity and Diversity Plans (2018), and have an active role in the career development of our personnel.

ACHUCARRO defines strategic 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 current Plan goes from 2022 to 2025. Since the implementation of the principles of HRS4R in Achucarro started in 2013, and have followed the periods established by this framework, the next Action Plan is for the period 2024-2027.

Our management model is 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.

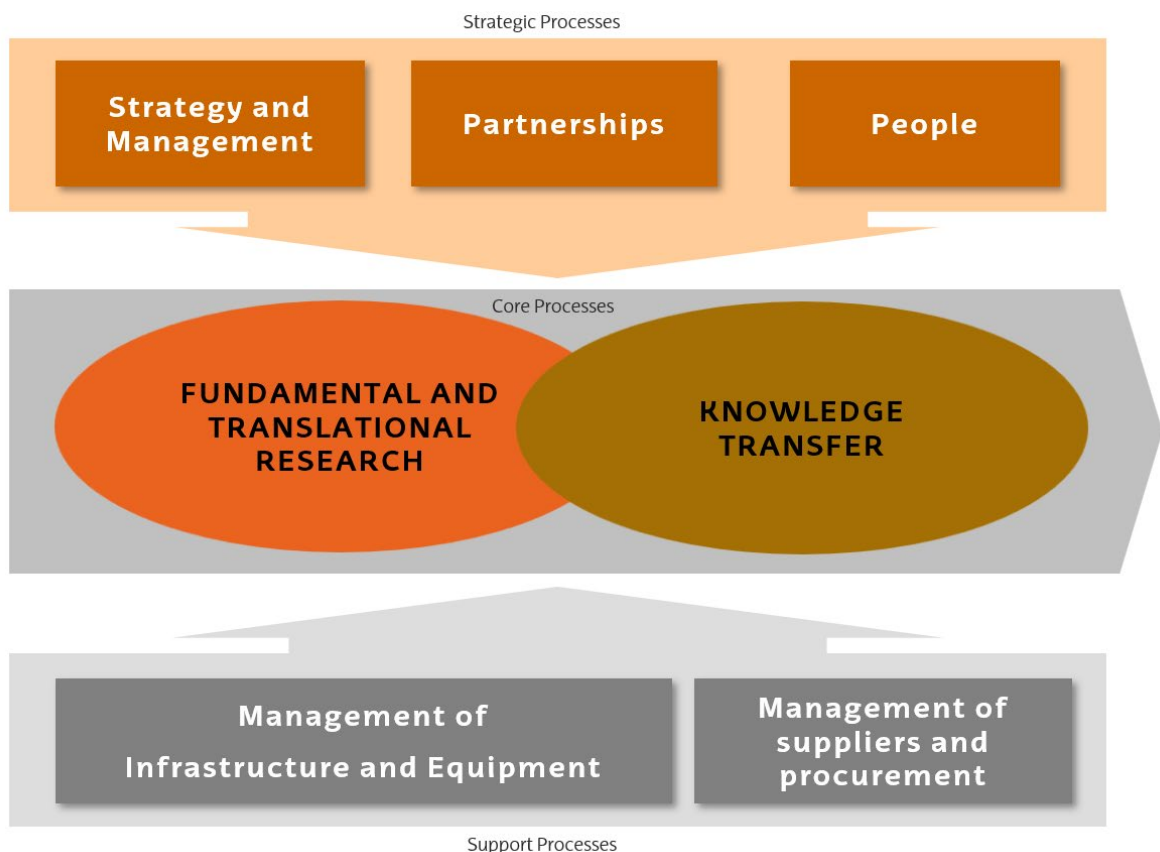


Fig 1. Current Process Map of ACHUCARRO.

2. HR Strategy: The path in ACHUCARRO

One of our Trustees, Ikerbasque - the Basque Foundation for Science 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 among the R&D agents within the Basque region.

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

ACHUCARRO was created in April 2012 and started operating in July 2012. The Board of Trustees of ACHUCARRO, at the first meeting of the board decided to endorse **the Charter and the Code** and entrust the newly appointed Direction to implement their principles. In the year 2013, ACHUCARRO underwent a first internal analysis to assess our position according to the principles of the Charter and the Code.

For us, the first relevant aspect that we faced when started reflecting about HRS4R principles was that, according to our structure and organisation model, we 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. Check this schematic to realise our different employers structure, and therefore, the need to differently tackle some of the principles and recommendations.

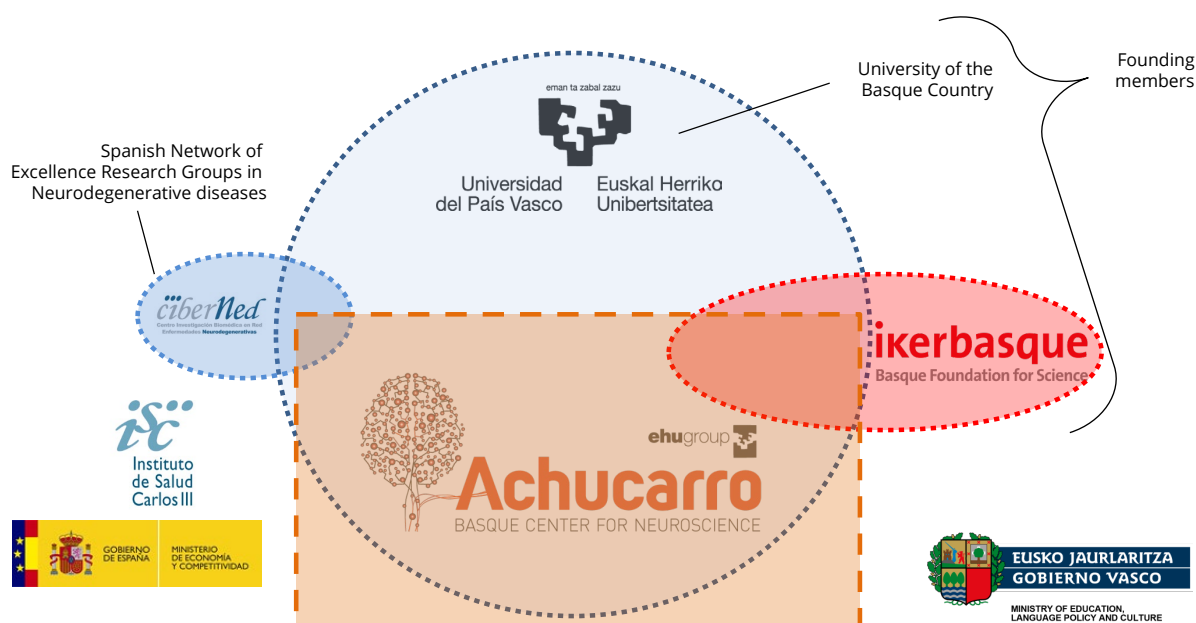


Fig 2. Schematic of entities hiring ACHUCARRO appointed personnel.

When we launched the initial assessment in 2013, we identified the 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. 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 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)

Since that, some of the laws have updated, while the main cornerstones of the law remain mainly stable, so we do not foresee any deep impact in our policies and plans.

Therefore, considering the idea behind the creation of a research structure like ours, and the orientation of the Directorate (Scientific and Operations) of ACHUCARRO, we decided to set a common and general framework of policies with rights and obligations, regardless the employer.

MILESTONES

2013. First Internal Analysis process and the Action Plan

https://www.achucarro.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Achucarro_HR_Strategy_2013.pdf

2015. We reviewed the implementation and re-assessed our approach.

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.
2. Close collaboration with strategic partners.
3. Stable structural funding.
4. Support to career development

https://www.achucarro.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/2015-12_Achucarro-HRS4R_2Y_self-assessment.pdf

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. It was an action plan in continuity with the previous one, given that some of the objectives and actions were current, or not concluded, and it was planned to continue delving into them.

https://www.achucarro.org/wp-content/uploads/Achucarro-HR_Strategy-2019-22.pdf

2020. Revised the AP and extended it one year more, until 2023.

https://www.achucarro.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Achucarro-HR_Strategy_AP_2020-23.pdf.pdf

2023. At the end of this year, when the previous action plan reached to its end, we carried out a new reflection process on the principles of HRS4R towards the creation of our next Action Plan.

This new period of reflection coincided with the outcome report of the external evaluation of the panel of experts, and with the proposals to update the HRS4R strategic framework from the European Commission, so the next Action Plan strives to implement the learning we have achieved during these 10 years of life of ACHUCARRO and implementation of policies and adapt the objectives and activities to the period of maturity that our organization already has.

The 40 principles of the C&C are listed under 4 subject areas:

- a) Ethical and professional aspects
- b) Recruitment and selection
- c) Working conditions and social security
- d) Training and development

The management model (processes and process management) and the organisations and functional structure (Board of Trustees, Directorate Board, Steering Board, Equality Committee) of ACHUCARRO provided the environments to reflect and assess the ideas supported by HRS4R.

Considering all the above, our new AP integrates the 4 subjects of the C&C in two big strategic objectives:

1. Further develop a culture for ethically responsible excellent research.
2. Excellent recruitment, working conditions and career development.

By establishing these groupings and this way of defining the challenges, we aim, on the one hand, to adapt to the degree of development of our organization, and on the other, to favour the integration of these actions in our annual management plans. The first major objective is related to actions at an organizational and collective level, and the second to personal, individual actions, or career stages and functions represented in our centre. Expected results and activities in both strategic objectives follow the principles of the PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) cycle.

In October 2023 we also updated our Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment policy.

<https://www.achucarro.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/E-03-01-Policy-OTM-R-2023.pdf>

3. Action Plan for 2024 – 2027

OBJECTIVE 1: Further develop a culture for ethically responsible excellent research.

OBJECTIVE 1: Further develop a culture for ethically responsible excellent research								Objective	Result	Objective	Result	Objective	Result	Objective	Result
RESULTS	ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBLE(S)	2024	2025	2026	2027	INDICATORS	RESPONSIBLE(S)	2024	2025	2026	2027			
R1.1. Further develop the framework for excellent and responsible research	A1.1.1 Establish and develop regulatory obligations and recommendations surveillance channels	General Manager					IR1.1.1. % of policies meeting legal standards (Compliance)	General Manager	100%		100%		100%		100%
	A1.1.2 Assessment and implementation of new or revised policies according to regulatory changes	General Manager					IR1.1.2. Annual number of regulatory compliance non-conformities or ethical gaps	General Manager	0		0		0		0
	A1.1.3 Internal and external communication of policies and advocacy activities for integration	General Manager					IR1.1.3. Formal communication or refresh of policies at Steering Board meetings	Scientific Directorate	4		4		4		4
R1.2. Deploy high quality research and developing a healthy working culture	A1.2.1 Periodic refresh the internal principles towards balanced scientific excellence	Scientific Directorate					IR1.2.1. Research excellent, equality and ethics are fostered in the internal meetings of Research programmes	Programme Coordinators	100%		100%		100%		100%
	A1.2.2 Assessment to scientific outcome to ensure the alignment with internal principles	Scientific Directorate					IR1.2.2. % of publications with high impact potential	General Manager	80%		80%		80%		80%
	A1.2.3 Be an active agent in our regional and sectorial environment to foster and advocate for ethic and high quality research	Scientific Directorate					IR1.2.3. Number of publications with sex/gender perspective	General Manager	3		4		5		6
	A1.2.4 Manage potential conflict situations	Scientific Directorate					IR1.2.4. % of managed/mediated conflicts (scientific and inter-personal)	General Manager	100%		100%		100%		100%
R1.3. Be recognised by our organisational culture of that fosters ethical principles, transparency and co-responsibility	A1.3.1 The Basque Government maintains its trust in ACHUCARRO and keeps the BERC recognition	Scientific Directorate					IR1.3.1. ACHUCARRO keeps the BERC recognition and improves its qualifications	Scientific Directorate	-		100%		-		-
	A1.3.2 Emakunde maintains the recognition of "Organisation working towards Equality"	General Manager					IR1.3.2. ACHUCARRO keeps the Emakunde recognition and is an active agent towards Equality	General Manager	-		-		100%		-
	A1.3.3 Apply to external recognitions for our work	General Manager					IR1.3.3. Success in the application to external recognitions to our strategy, commitments, organisation and culture	General Manager	-		100%		100%		-

OBJECTIVE 2: Excellent recruitment, working conditions and career development.

OBJECTIVE 2: Excellent recruitment, working conditions and career development								Objective	Result	Objective	Result	Objective	Result	Objective	Result	
RESULTS	ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBLE(S)	2024	2025	2026	2027	INDICATORS	RESPONSIBLE(S)	2024	2025	2026	2027				
R2.1 Develop an active recruiting strategy based in openness, merit and advanced assessment standards	A2.1.1. Publish all our positions openly in reference platforms of our sector	General Manager					IR2.1.1. % of positions published (at least) in Euraxess, ScienceCareers.eu and website	General Manager	100%		100%		100%		100%	
	A2.1.2. Provides adequate feedback to all our applicants and staff	General Manager					IR2.1.2. % applications and assessments with feedback	General Manager	100%		100%		100%		100%	
	A2.1.3. ACHUCARRO warrants balanced support to recommendations letters to support equity, equality and diversity	Scientific Directorate					IR2.1.3. % of recommendation for under-represented collectives	General Manager	50%		50%		50%		50%	
	A2.1.4. ACHUCARRO fosters balanced, shared and inclusive leadership dynamics	General Manager					IR2.1.4 % of Women Principal Investigators	General Manager	50%		50%		50%		50%	
	A2.1.5. ACHUCARRO fosters DORA principles as the framework for scientific evaluation	Scientific Directorate					IR2.1.5 Number of communications about DORA principles	Scientific Directorate, Programme Coordinators	3		3		3		3	
R2.2. Foster career development opportunities and improved working conditions	A2.2.1. Actively develop the Mentoring Programme	Scientific Directorate, Mentoring Programme Coordinator					IR2.2.1. % of participants in the Mentoring Programme	Mentoring Programme Coordinator	80%		80%		80%		80%	
	A2.2.2. Researchers in training (R1) and postdocs (R2) propose training activities	R1 & R2 representatives					IR2.2.2. Number of career development activities organised by ACHUCARRO, suggested by R1 & R2	General Manager	3		3		3		3	
	A2.2.3. ACHUCARRO provides training based on the outcome of internal dynamics (HRS4R, Surveys, etc)	General Manager					IR2.2.3. Number of training activities organised by ACHUCARRO	General Manager	2		2		2		2	
	A2.2.4. ACHUCARRO implements the improved working conditions legally established	General Manager					IR2.2.4 Assessment of working conditions at the General Satisfaction survey is high	General Manager	70%		70%		70%		70%	