

**INSTITUTE OF GEOLOGICAL SCIENCES
POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES**



HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS

**Revised Strategy
and
Action Plan 2022-2024**



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

Warsaw, 2022

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1. Introduction

The Institute of Geological Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Pl: ING PAN; Eng: IGS PAS) was established in 1956 as the Research Centre of Geological Sciences in Warsaw. The Laboratory of Geology and Stratigraphy of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków (est. 1954) was incorporated into the Research Centre as its branch in Kraków. In 1979, a resolution of the Board of the Polish Academy of Sciences raised the Centre to the rank of Institute. Today, the Institute of Geological Sciences has three research centres located in Warsaw (headquarters), Kraków and Wrocław. The IGS PAS is a scientific institute whose main mission, defined in its statute, is conducting research in the area of Earth and environmental sciences, dissemination of results and education in the fields of expertise of the Institute. The Institute specializes in the studies of the age of rocks and minerals, their origins, evolution of orogens and reconstruction of palaeoenvironment. The fulfilment of our mission is to contribute to a better understanding of the geosystem, the use of this knowledge for the needs of modern society, through the input into technological innovation. The head of IGS PAS is the Director, who is responsible for the overall strategy and activities of the Institute. The advisory body is the Board of Directors. The Scientific Council also ensures a high standard of scientific activity. The Secretariate, the Scientific Information Office, the Chief Accountant, the Human Resources Officer and the Health and Safety Inspector report directly to the Director. The Director appoints the deputies: Deputy Director for Research, supervising research groups operating in three research centres, as well as PhD Studies and the Geological Museum in Kraków, and Deputy Director for Management, who is in charge of the Administrative and Economic Office and Archive.

On 14th of July 2015, the Institute of Geological Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences signed the Declaration of Commitment to adopt the European Charter and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers that endorsed the Recommendation of the European Commission 2005/251/EC on "*The European Charter for Researchers*" and "*The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*". In the Declaration, the Director of Institute, recognised the values of the Charter and the Code, and their influence on the development of the Institute and its staff. In 2017, the Institute was granted the HR Excellence for Research Award and is continuing its pursuit to fully implement all 40 principles included in Charter and Code.

The Open, Transparent, Merit-Based Recruitment Policy (OTM-R) defined in the "*European Charter for Researchers*" and in the "*Code of Conduct for Recruitment*" became one of the pillars of our HR strategy and we continuously pursuit to fully implement all 40 principles of the Charter and the Code.

The Institute of Geological Sciences recognises the importance of recruiting research staff adhering to the best practices and in compliance with national legal framework. We are aware that maintaining highest level of scientific research and constant development is impossible without a team consisting of the best staff and a broad exchange of knowledge in cooperation with foreign researchers.

For the renewal phase of our HR Excellence in Research Award in 2022, we prepared a new Action Plan which shows actual progress of the implementation of the actions declared in 2019. Colour-coding differentiates: actions that have already been implemented (completed and working), those which are in progress and we also add some new actions.

2. Internal Review – approach and methodology

The experience from the previous stages of HR Excellence in Research Award proved how time consuming another questionnaire could be and, thus, we have decided to base our 2022 survey on analysing the actual quality of the implementation of the actions. We divided all the actions into completed (implemented and functioning), in progress (and on-going), and extended. Of course, we added a few new actions as well. The survey also included suggestions and conclusions from the employees (researchers and administrative) articulated during annual conference discussion between the Director(s) and the Staff. We also gathered suggestions from the Scientific Council submitted during its meetings (app. five times per year).

In 2022, the IGS PAS prepared and started the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP), which was preceded by a questionnaire concerning our overall gender equality issues. We are, of course, aware that this survey, technically, was not a part of our Renewal Phase Internal Review, however, gender equality is a part of every HR strategy and recruitment procedures. This document specifies goals and tasks to fulfil for equality and inclusivity, in five key areas identified by the European Commission: gender equality in recruitment and career progression; gender balance in leadership and decision-making; integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content; work-life balance and organizational culture; measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.

Thanks to this survey, we were able to obtain interesting findings and use some of them to incorporate new aspects of equality and inclusivity to improve our working environment. We strongly believe that the community where nobody feels discriminated develops better communication and cooperation, which contributes to the improvement of the working environment. What every survey and discussion showed is that we need better communication within institution, both within research (dissemination of research results) and the area of exchanging information between researchers and administrative staff.

3. Internal review findings

3.1. Ethical and Professional Aspects

Institute of Geological Sciences (IGS PAS) gives full freedom of choice regarding the subject of research that is only limited by our statute. The Institute supports teamwork and projects involving a number of scientists on various level of their career. The plan of research funded from the Institute's subvention is annually approved by the Scientific Council.

Although the Institute has not abandoned the primary commitment to conduct basic research, the share of studies having a direct impact on the society has been continuously growing. The

importance of our research was spread and popularised during popular science events and some research results were published in the popular science magazines. Also, our scientists took part in the production of documentaries for the Discovery Channel.

The rules on intellectual property rights are strictly followed by the scientific staff of the IGS PAS. Internal regulations on property rights use, protection and administration were introduced.

Our employees are responsible for effective use of funds for research. Some stages of work previously indicated as time-consuming (looking for offers, open calls) were improved, i.e. tenders are sent by the Scientific Information Office, and shared by fellow-researchers. Although the Institute has no influence on procedures implemented by external science financing institutions (National Science Centre, National Centre for Research and Development), the internal rules are now clearer, and forms preparation reduced to minimum. Any uncertainty regarding rules of financing by public institutions are addressed by the director. Written responses from the institution is firstly send via e-mail to all employees and ultimately published in our Intranet. This is to improve our broadly understood internal communication and provide information to the staff.

The IGS PAS scientific staff cooperates with renowned state companies (KGHM, Lotos Petrobaltic) exploiting research results and advanced equipment for the benefit of the economy. We are taking part in EU-funded joint projects (INGA Synerga) in cooperation with the Department of Geology of the University of Warsaw.

In our three Research Centres, we employ numerous foreign researchers, thus we also established and follow standards for bilingual communication. Employment contracts are prepared in Polish and in English by a sworn translator (Polish – we are obliged by the Polish Language Act). The Scientific Information Office is obliged to send all e-mails in Polish and in English. The process of preparing internal documents and forms in English is still on-going due to the changing national regulations. Recently translated are the rules on statutory research and the extract for doctoral candidates from our doctoral appraisal procedures. We sustain our declaration to translate and publish all regulations in English.

In 2021, we carried out periodic assessment of scientific employees according to the new regulations adapted to the ministerial rules for the assessment of the Polish science (referred to as “evaluation”). Employees pointed out that the assessment form and some rules of evaluation are not transparent, thus the necessity of minor changes was postulated. In February 2022, a committee to prepare and implement necessary changes was appointed by the Scientific Council.

3.2. Recruitment and Selection

The regulations on competition for scientific positions are introduced and followed. Apart from being obliged by the Charter and the Code, we also abide by the national regulations i.e. the Labour Code, the Act on the Polish Academy of Science, and grant financing institutions’ rules. Our internal regulations determine the compositions of the selection committees, ways of advertising a job offer and the recruitment process itself.

The employment criteria introduced in 2018 were amended – on-going changes are introduced to the rules on remuneration due to changes on the national level (minimum wages, payment equity, special benefits, function-dependent bonuses). Changes are published in the IGS PAS intranet and accessible for all employees. Some employees pointed out that they are not always aware of the existence of internal regulations or that the regulations were amended. This brings the issue of informing employees and better spread of information, which may be included in a quarterly newsletter.

In the Action Plan 2019-2021 and the OTM-R policy, we committed to monitor and revise the recruitment process which was improved by ensuring that the job offers are published on the IGS PAS website, Euraxess, ministerial web pages and paid internet portals. Every offer includes detailed information about the position and contact person in case of questions. Offers are published in Polish and in English and there is a 30 day period for submitting an application. Only the documents readily accessible for the candidates are required to reduce administrative burden put on the Candidates.

3.3. Working Conditions and Social Security

In the previous (interim) assessment, our younger researchers indicated lack of recognition of their professionalism from older scientists. Although this area still needs improvement, some actions have already been implemented. Young researchers take part in every scientific projects we offer or which is available (external) - statutory research, research group works, grant open calls, publications co-authorship. In 2021, numerous young researchers (R1) from our staff prepared their first publications and obtained their scientific titles (10 PhDs since 2019 and 3 planned for 2022). Also, several of their employment contracts were renewed as they are viewed as professional and promising scientists.

The equipment and facilities in the Institute are available for all researchers. Due to ministerial funding, we were able to modernize our equipment. The scientists are strongly encouraged to cooperate with other institutions in order to stimulate the exchange of knowledge and to enable the access to equipment the Institute does not have at its disposal. There are several institutions (universities, research institutes) we successfully cooperate with on regular basis.

Internal seminars, lectures, trainings are strongly recommended and organized by Heads of Research Groups and Heads of Research Centres. Seminars are regular meetings with presentations, and discussions.

As far as health and safety policy is concerned, we are applying our internal regulations. The national policy in that area have not changed significantly. Main areas of focus in the field of health and safety involve:

- providing safety instructions for new employees (mandatory, instructions are given by our Health and Safety Inspector (general for specific positions) and Heads of Research Groups (detailed, important for the lab);
- monitoring risk factors for particular working positions;
- preparing, revising and updating equipment usage cards;

- modernizing the building: eliminating architectural barriers for people with disabilities (full accessibility), adjusting rest rooms to the needs of people with disabilities (both adjustments in Warsaw), installing safety showers with eye washes in chemical laboratories, extracting the space for chemical magazine to keep chemicals in special ventilated cupboards (in Warsaw and in Krakow).

In the previous survey, some employees admitted that they are not aware of the possibilities of flexible working conditions, thus the concise information about available options – remote work, flexible working hours, training leaves – was sent to the employees and is sent every time the situation requires (recently during pandemic-forced adjustments).

Employment contracts (temporary or permanent) depend on the performance rather than career stage. Nonetheless, young scientists (R1 level) are more often employed on fixed-time contract with a possibility of extension, if the employees proves to be promising. The majority of R1 level researchers' contracts were extended for the next period of employment.

As of 2022, we are introducing and implementing Gender Equality Plan 2022-2026 based on the survey carried out for this purpose. The results of the survey are compiled and as our priority we recognized the necessity for more and more inclusivity facilitating research cooperation. Diversity and inclusivity creates positive work experience which is crucial for effectiveness.

3.3.1. Gender Equality Plan

Previously introduced and strictly obeyed principle of non-discrimination is being now broaden in the light of inclusivity (as we are implementing our Gender Equality Plan). Our main goals in the GEP are:

Raising awareness of the importance of equality issues and prevent discrimination

In this area, we are planning to, firstly, publish our Gender Equality Plan 2023-2026, introduce a quarterly newsletter on the subject of equality and non-discrimination issues, introduce non-discrimination procedures allowing for reporting cases of discrimination and the methods of proceeding in the situation, and continuation of efforts to obtain funds for the adaptation of buildings of research centres for people with disabilities. We are trying to pay attention to the needs of people with disabilities when planning adjustments. However, the Krakow Research Centre is located in an old historic court of justice building, where any attempt of changes requires special funding and permissions from the Chief Conservator of Monuments, which prolongs the implementation of improvements. The Research Centre in Warsaw has been recently modernized (EU funded thermo-modernization 2019-2020 in cooperation with other institutes located in our building).

Continued monitoring to reduce disparities in equality and maintain a balanced gender level in recruitment, career development, and in decision-making bodies

In this area, we plan introducing a gender identity declaration by employees and doctoral students and the possibility of using it at work and during studies at the IGS PAS; mentoring people at the beginning of their professional career, coming from groups at risk of unequal

treatment, incl. informing about the possibilities of counteracting discrimination, indicating people helpful in solving specific problems, etc.; continuing awarding scientific scholarships of the Director of the IGS PAS to employees pursuing external doctorates and young, outstanding scientists with a doctoral degree; striving to improve the gender balance in the Scientific Council of IGS PAS; maintaining the gender balance in the IGS PAS decision-making bodies.

Facilitate a healthy work-life balance

- Conducting an information campaign on the possibilities of work-life balance, including the possibility of a flexible work system including remote/hybrid work outside the pandemic period;
- Introducing recommendations on the hours of business meetings conducive to the work-life balance;
- Developing a path for reporting current needs of employees and doctoral students.

Ensure integration of gender equality into the content of scientific and innovative research

- training of employees on the inclusion of gender equality aspects in research content.

All these actions are directly channelled to all employees (scientific and administrative) and doctoral students.

3.4. Training and Development

There is the GeoPlanet doctoral school at the IGS PAS educating doctoral students in the field of Earth and related environmental sciences. The students as well as other R1 level scientists also work in research teams and laboratories along with preparing their doctoral dissertation (rules specified in the Higher Education Act of 2018). The regulations on Doctoral School – recently amended in April 2022 - determine, among other things, the rights and duties of a doctoral student and the duties of a supervisor. Young researchers at the stage of training should establish a collaboration with their academic supervisor that will allow for optimal use of time and provide constant progress in scientific work. Previously, our surveys showed that the relationship between a young scientist and a supervisor depends to a large extent on their individual social predispositions. Therefore, some employees perceive that this principle is implemented very well, others that not at all. Nevertheless, between 2019-2021, we observe increasing number of doctoral titles conferred in the IGS PAS as well as an increase in the number of applications for GeoPlanet Doctoral School (from Polish and foreign candidates).

Young scientists have the opportunity to present their results and progress in a wider group during doctoral school and general research group seminars, institute seminars as well as during the annual conference.

Constant professional development is recognized as very important. The staff wishes to develop their competences. The Institute strives to provide (despite limited budget) access to training. Foreign researchers, who come to the Institute within the framework of projects carried out

together with our scientists, are always invited to attend a seminar and deliver a short lecture during their visit (invited lecture).

Of course, this area can be still improved, especially where the relations between young and experienced researchers (including doctoral students and supervisors) fail to work as they should. Actions are listed in the revised Action Plan.

4. Internal Review Conclusions and Suggestions

The employees of the IGS PAS would like their workplace to adhere to the rules of open recruitment specified in the Charter and Code, and also to the modern concepts of human rights and equality as set out by EU guidelines. They indicated the desire to work in a modern and friendly research environment developing their professional careers and also (in the GEP questionnaire survey) to have a possibility to declare their gender identity, have discrimination issues addressed, and continue seeking ways to strive for equality. Unfortunately, many aspects revealed in the questionnaire and during talks and meetings are related to a greater or lesser degree of disinformation. Consequently, some of our proposed activities (old and new) are based on the need for training to raise awareness and improve the flow of information.

5. OTM-R Policy

Our OTM-R checklist was obligatory during our first Internal Review for Interim Assessment (2019). We also prepared the OTM-R policy which was revised and updated in 2022 during Award Renewal. However, even during the preparation of the check list it was revealed that although the policy was not yet in place some of its principles were already functioning.

In our Revised Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2021, we emphasized the need to fully adjust to the C&C principles, provide adequate feedback to the interviewees and appropriate complaint mechanism, and also create remote recruitment tools to shift bureaucratic burden away from candidates.

Internal rules on competition for scientific positions are implemented and working. What may need improvement is regular information to the employees that all the necessary forms and regulations are available in our intranet.

In the recruitment procedure, we provide adequate feedback to the interviewees and appropriate complaints mechanism based on national law (Civil Code). Candidates are informed about the possibility of appeal within restricted time. However, there are no specific internal regulations stipulating complaint procedures.

According to findings obtained during the preparation of our Gender Equality Plan 2023-2025, we will be striving to incorporate gender equality (or in a broad sense – inclusivity) aspects any time it is possible to our recruitment procedures. Being aware that some of the actions carried out by geologists are field works in the hardly accessible terrains or works requiring significant

strength and in order not to exclude anyone from the employment possibility, we will be leaving it to the Candidate to decide whether to place his/her application.

6. Revised Action Plan 2022-2024

The complete Action Plan for 2022-2024 is available on the Institute's website in the tab dedicated to HRS4R strategy (on the main page, under the European Union flag icon placed to the upper right corner).

The summary below presents the Action Plan for years 2022-2024, including actions that will be continued and the new ones that were added.

The following Actions established in the previous Action Plan 2019-2021 will be continued:

- *A9. Improving the INGPAN server capabilities and website with anonymous discussion forum, FAQs related to internal procedures and regulations, data protection systems, INGPAN research news, opportunities for students and employees, etc.;*
- *A10. Construction of a lift in in the Research Centre in Kraków and making the Centre's building more disabled-friendly (funding-permitting);*
- *Rising salaries (especially of the young researchers) if the financial situation (dependent on the governmental subvention) permits;*
- *Revision of the regulation on competitions for research positions so that it is in line with new national law and with OTM-R policy;*
- *Development of a uniform form of job advertisement so that all necessary information needed for publication on various portals is provided;*
- *Organizing regular workshops improving qualifications and skills;*
- *Introducing of a conflict solving mechanism in case that employees cannot resolve it themselves;*
- *Developing good practices of the recognition of co-authorship of supporting employees taking active and creative part in the research;*
- *Increasing the accessibility to career counselling;*
- *Dissemination of information on mobility offers (on-going);*
- *Providing young scientists with advice on the preparation of grant applications.*

Some of the above enumerated actions are continued because we understand them as a process of on-going changes.

The list of new actions:

- *Refurbishment and replacement of used equipment in the Research Centre in Krakow along with expansion of laboratories – the target is to improve overall working conditions and better space management. In connection with Action A10., the Institute plans to gradually renew the Research Centre in Krakow. However, since acquiring funds for a general renovation is uncertain this action includes gradual renovation works according to the resources at the Institute's disposal.*

- Implementation of gender equality plan (GEP) - this action began with an anonymous employee survey. Based on the results, appropriate actions has been planned, focused on securing a balanced representation of males and females among research staff and management as well as providing protection to all minorities. Our main goal of the GEP is inclusivity. We are not only focusing on male/female equality, but also want to make the Institute more welcoming for our foreign staff (researchers, as well as PhD students). This is in connection to action 26. (on-going) – providing English versions (or side-by-side translations) of all necessary forms and regulations.
- Introducing solutions that allow research workers to work from home - based on experiences from the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Institute is planning to give research staff an opportunity to work from home. This solution will be primarily addressed to people taking care of small children or disabled people or commuting a large distance to work.
- Increase involvement of the Institute in popular science events, increasing the social awareness of sustainable development – this may appear as an action of minor importance. However, as recent ministerial evaluation proved, specialized high-quality research itself is not enough. Scientists must be aware that broad audience (national society, as well as international community) is one of the main beneficiaries of our work. We need to keep them informed. Our research results must be popularized in an easily-accessible manner. That is why the research staff plans to publish in popular science journals, give invited interviews for radio and TV, take part if popular science events.

6.1. Implementation and Monitoring of Revised Action Plan 2022-2024

The new Action Plan 2022-2024 will be published on the Institute’s website. Since the first Action Plan the execution of individual actions has been assigned to specific person(s) and/or departments. The Action Plan 2022-2024 uses a similar approach. The indicators and/or target groups were listed in the Plan to allow for a more productive assessment of the progress.

Implementation of the Action Plan will be monitored by both Working Group and Steering Committee. The Group will be responsible for monitoring timelines for activities declared in the Action Plan and ensure quality of actions taken to implement the Strategy.

The Group will analyse potential threats for the realization of the Plan in order to prevent problems. If for some reason independent of IGS PAS, one of the tasks cannot be implemented, the group will try to find another possible solution. It can suggest changing the order of actions carried out or propose actions not previously included in the plan.

The Group will hold regular meetings and when necessary (either face to face, or via ZOOM, since the members work in three different Research Centres). The objective is to monitor the current performance of tasks, adhering to the timelines, analysis of the effectiveness of undertaken actions and proposing (if necessary) means to improve the efficiency.

Once a year a meeting will be dedicated to analysing the achievements and possible problems with the Plan implementation during the year. The Group will use the indicators listed in the

Plan to assess the efficiency of actions. The perception of specific actions and awareness of the Strategy should be monitored as well. The selection of the most effective and least incriminating method of assessing overall satisfaction with the activities undertaken among the staff of IGS PAS is left to the Working Group. The conclusions of the annual analysis will be presented firstly to the Steering Committee and then to all employees.

If of any reasons any member of the Working Group is unable to perform his/her tasks within the group he/she will be replaced by another person selected by the director. It may also be any person who would wish to contribute to the Working Group activities.

In the 2nd quarter of 2022, we replaced 3 members of the Working Group. The previous members either no longer work in the IGS PAS and/or change their positions after acquiring scientific degrees/titles.

7. Final Remarks

From the very beginning, working on the implementation of the principles of the Charter and the Code allowed the Institute to gain experience on the process and to better understand how being in line with the principles can prove rewarding for the whole community of employees. The effort put and the experience gained during the implementation of the subsequent Action Plans and the preparations of internal reviews resulted – at the Initial Phase – in a diagnosis of (then) current situation and now contributes to the process of constant change and development in the HR area. The core of the process is not only improving working conditions in the IGS PAS but also preparing better to periodical assessments (phases in HR award) and revisions of Actions Plans providing information which actions still need to be continued and upgraded, looking for new solutions to mend the gaps and adding new actions to be realized in further perspective.

The Institute strives for excellence both as a research institution and an employer and the high scientific category conferred by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2022 evaluation procedure together with the HR Excellence in Research Award are proofs for that.