

HR STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS AND ACTIONPLAN

A **4X4 action plan** was defined with focusses on 4 priorities with each time 4 actions:

1. **Recruitment and Selection**

Goal: Attract and hire global research talent to strengthen the VITO workforce

2. **FIT@VITO**

Goal: Optimal performance of people and organisation due to a "fit" on several aspects

3. **Talent Mobility**

Goal: Increase flexibility, agility and talent mobility

4. **Sustainable employability**

Goal: Talent and career development

1.1. DEFINITION OF THE ACTION PLAN

During the assessment versus the Charter and Code, a large number of suggestions and ideas for actions to improve the policies and procedures currently valid at VITO were collected. All these ideas were prioritised and aligned with the HR strategy that was defined in 2014 to support the overall VITO strategy. The selected actions are fitted in a larger action framework that forms the VITO HR strategy for Researchers.

1.2. THE VITO STRATEGY LEADS THE HR STRATEGY

The HR strategy supports the organization's strategy and contributes to the operationalization of it. As a consequence the key principles of the VITO strategy form the base for the HR framework.

VITO introduced as a strategic concept, the explicit "research life cycle" with the aim to accelerate the technological innovation and growth to market application(s). The active use of the research cycle concept from the definition of a research theme will allow the effective deployment of resources and the definition of targeted choices at the right timing. The focus of the VITO strategy on excellence in research, commercialization and valorisation of the research and internationalisation are the key principles that need attention in the course of the research life cycle.

The "Lifecycle of Applied Research" figure showed further combines all these ideas and illustrates the ways in which VITO creates value.

The cycle starts with employees exploring new domains within the chosen strategic themes and carrying out innovative research aimed at future applications for the market.

Teams are formed gradually around themes and technologies, taking research to a higher level while innovating and valorising together. Throughout the cycle, employees create ‘value’ in highly diverse ways and this is how our KPIs are achieved: networks, data, SCI papers, contract research, licences, solutions, consultancy, etc. These mature, self-managing teams generate results that have an economic and social impact on both a local and a global level as they move towards the market.

From the business processes, a previous cycle can be restarted or a completely new cycle initiated on the basis of strategic basic research. Even themes and technologies that end up outside of the VITO lifecycle are still capable of generating value, in the form of a spin-off, tech transfer or an independent entity. In other words, various routes are possible within a lifecycle.

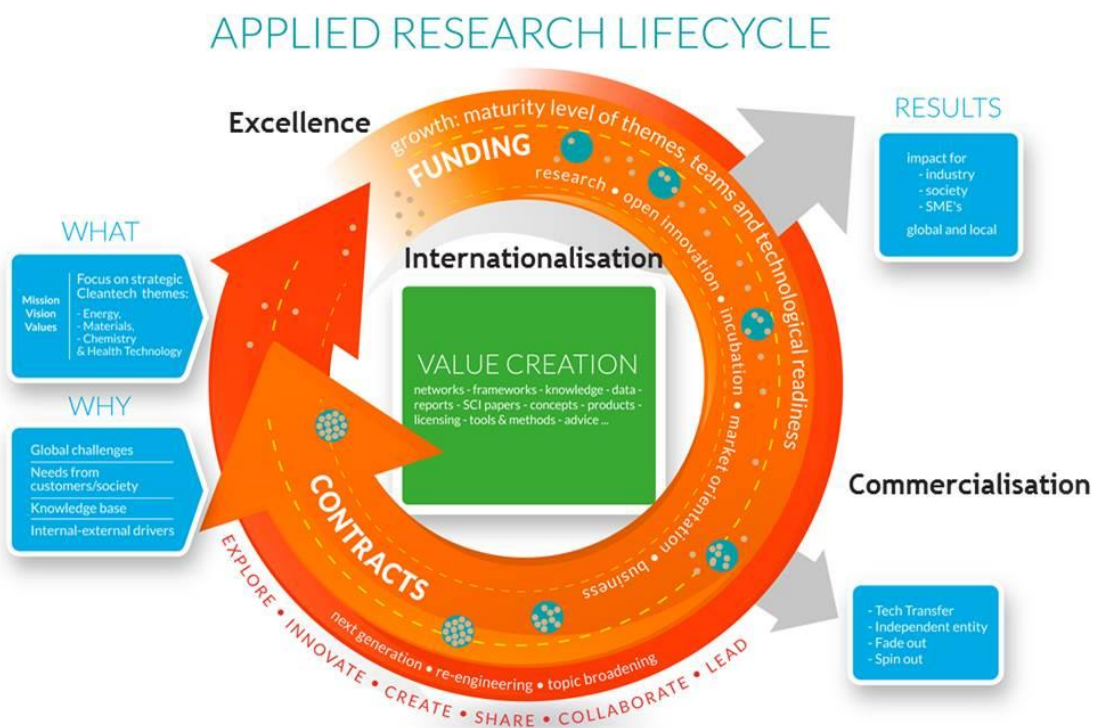


Figure: The applied research lifecycle in VITO

1.3. AN IMPACT FRAMEWORK FOR THE HR STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS

The Applied Research Lifecycle is strongly leading the development of the HR Strategy within the “Vision 2018”. This resulted in a very broad plan with HR actions and projects in all the different HR domains. The action & project plan was the basis for the design of the HR Strategy for Researchers. For certain HR topics a specific approach is recommended for the Research Community within VITO. Based on the assessment and the result of the questionnaire, we defined a specific framework with actions formulated in 4 “key” areas; Recruitment & Selection, Talent Mobility, Sustainable Employability and “FIT@VITO”.

The strong link with the VITO & general HR Strategy, and with the needs detected in the assessment, will guarantee a positive impact.

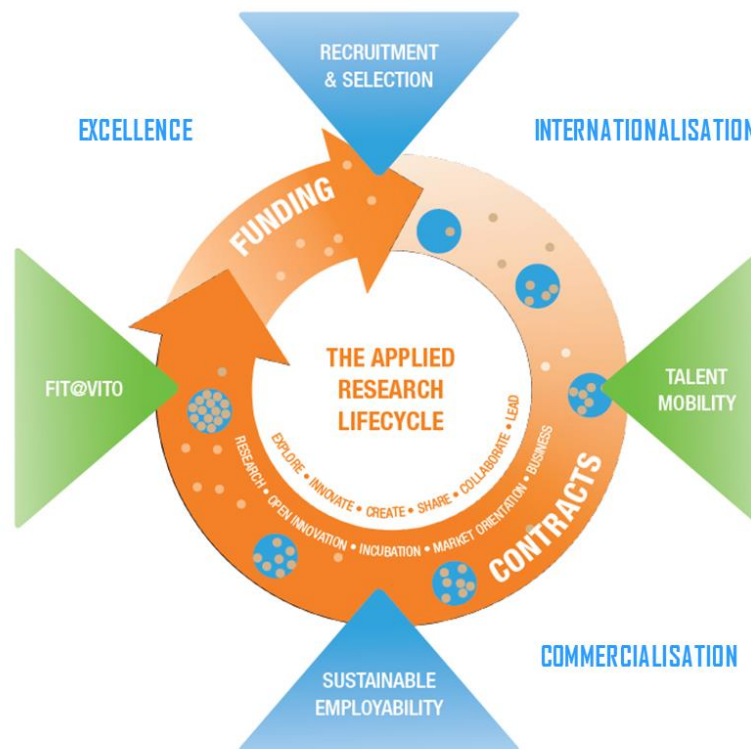


Figure: The applied research lifecycle and the four key areas

1. Recruitment and Selection

Attract and hire global research talent to strengthen the VITO workforce

VITO aims to attract the best talent from all over the world by offering a high-quality working environment where people can further develop their skills and discover interesting career opportunities. To achieve the ambitious goals in our renewed strategy, it is necessary to strengthen our workforce with international talent. The Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers is a reference in the HR process and the personnel policies and practices.

The Applied Research Lifecycle with a dominant focus towards internationalization, commercialization, and excellence in research has a significant impact on the hire needs, job and competence profiles and selection criteria. Together with the hiring managers we want to maximize the impact of VITO's talent acquisition process because new hires can really leverage a new strategy.

A clear visible employer brand is required to communicate the change and the new possibilities towards applicants from all over the world. We have to expose our job offers, facilities, (career) guidance programs and interesting opportunities to grow (personal and professional).

With an onboarding and mentoring program we want to facilitate the socialization and integration of newcomers in the organization. In these programs special attention goes to international candidates and intercultural actions.

2. FIT@VITO

Optimal performance of people and organisation due to a "fit" on several aspects

Because we care for the well-being of our staff we wanted to gain insight in their well-being perception. As a first step in the process, a questionnaire on that theme was rolled out in the

organization. After analysing and discussing the results, a “FIT@VITO” framework was created in 2015 to ensure that actions are set up in the organization. The “fit” refers to a fit on a mental and physical level, on the context of the person itself, the jobcontext, the relation with the management and the fit with and within the organization. We strongly believe that all aspects are necessary for an optimal job experience and performance.

The FIT@VITO framework covers all types of actions; “Analytics”, “FIT4All” (diversity & inclusion,...), “Mental FIT and Health” (stress management,...), “Employability”, “Work environment” (Activity Based Work), “Fun@Work” & “Empowerment”.

Communication and information are important too in this context. When the information need fits the information offer, availability and accessibility (the right info at the right time), it will contribute to better performance. This is important in every career stage; when entering the organization (e.g. in introduction programs) or further in the career path.

3. Talent Mobility

Increase flexibility, agility and talent mobility

At VITO we put a lot of emphasis on flexibility and talent mobility given its importance in open innovation and co-creation in research. Mobility creates the opportunity for the VITO researchers to learn about the way of working in other companies, to exchange ideas and collaborate with internationally recognised researchers from different culture background and to open their view and expand their skill set. By attracting international researchers and welcoming visiting researchers from all over the world VITO strives to expand a diverse international talent pool. Hence, VITO experiments with all kind of mobility pilot projects related to exchange of knowledge; within the organization, exchange with industrial partners, exchange in an international context with other RTO's,.... It is also important that we keep the contacts with the network in an Alumni community.

Inbound and outbound (employment) flows will be supported from a central support office. In this way we want to further promote and facilitate exchange and mobility in an international context.

4. Sustainable employability

Goal: Talent and career development

The Applied Research Lifecycle enlightens new competence needs for managers and researchers. Not only new hires will fill these needs, supplementary we need to develop the skill set of current employees and co-workers. A renewed talent development offer will focus on leadership development, commercial development and development of the researcher portfolio.

Job descriptions, competence profiles and career paths will be adjusted in line with the new strategic needs. The change in the organization requires flexibility. A succession planning strategy and process for key positions will ensure the longer term stability and continuity in the changing context.

A virtual VITO Talent Center will align the offer and demand of personnel needs VITO wide. This internal flexibility and mobility will contribute to the agility of the organization and the sustainable employability of the employees.

VITO continuously stimulates its employees to actively steer their career and to make conscious choices. VITO supports this with complete and balanced training, development and guidance programmes in order to increase the employee's resilience and employability in a broader labour market beyond the VITO organisation.

1.4. 4X4 ACTION PLAN FOR RESEARCHERS.

A 4X4 (Four by four) action plan based on the HR priorities was designed to ensure impact.

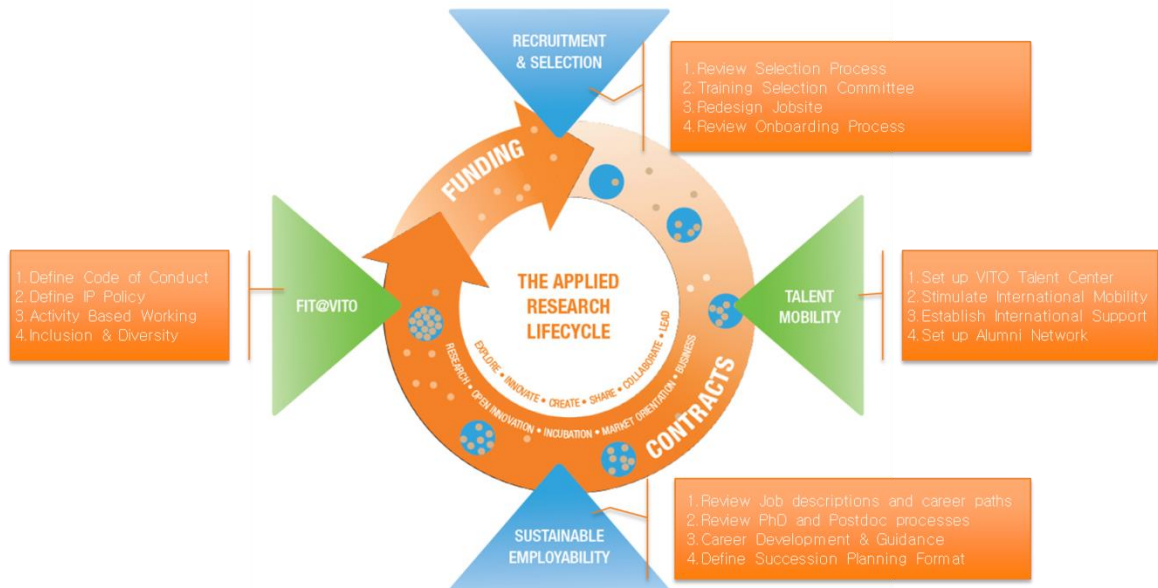


Figure: 4X4 action plan

1. Recruitment and Selection

Attract and hire global research talent to strengthen the VITO workforce

ACTION 1: REVIEW OF THE SELECTION PROCESS

Since a good selection impacts the efficiency and effectivity of hiring the appropriate talents at the very beginning, it was decided to evaluate the current selection process in depth with all stakeholders with respect to criteria, testing tools, KPI, etc. The goal is to improve selection success and to align the process with the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. An action plan will be decided and implemented.

Reference clauses: 14

Owner: HR Business partners

ACTION 2: TRAINING OF THE SELECTION COMMITTEE

The recent strategic choices of VITO also impact the talents and skills needed in the organisation to realise the VITO goals. To align the recruitment process with these strategic choices the selection committee should be aware of the changed need in competences. Furthermore the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers is an essential guideline in attracting the best talents. The training program for the members of the selection committee will be therefore supplemented with the topics of the Charter and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and the strategic VITO choices, such as mobility, relevant for recruitment. Clear guidelines about judging merit (scientific knowledge, skills and experience) and the use of the non-chronological CV will be foreseen in the training programme. All hiring managers will be trained in the new training format and evaluation criteria will be defined to follow up the quality and impact of the training action.

Reference clauses: 12, 16, 17, 18

Owner: HR Training & Development

ACTION 3: REDESIGN OF THE JOB WEBSITE

Since the job page is often one of the first visited pages by potential employees, it is a very important page with an eye toward employer branding and attracting talents. These 'Join us' pages on the VITO website will be redesigned in line with the Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers. Overall a renewed employer brand will be created in line with the corporate branding. In a first step the relevant job and career information will be listed. Special attention will be paid to transparent information about recruitment and selection procedures for all types of jobs including PhD and Postdoc positions, information about working conditions and career opportunities at VITO. The current job pages will be updated with the relevant information but thereafter a totally new job site will be designed to also meet all criteria of the renewed employer brand.

Reference clauses: 13

Owner: HR Communication

ACTION 4: REVIEW OF THE ONBOARDING PROCESS

To render the recruitment and selection a success, the onboarding process can be crucial. This process starts already the moment the potential VITO employee is exploring the VITO job possibility. This onboarding process will be assessed from selection to the first period of job performance, above all to improve the alignment with VITO strategic choices and the Charter and Code and secondly to improve the integration in the VITO community and the knowledge of the VITO way of working.

The introduction/training sessions will be modified and the introduction session for international people will be supplemented with dedicated information material for this group. International mentoring will be installed for 'soft landing' aspects with training of the international mentors. Special attention will be paid to fluent co-operation with other processes (QSE, IT, ...) and to the equal treatment of the different types of starting VITO people: employee, PhDs Postdocs, visiting researchers, ..

Reference clauses: 10

Owner: HR Training & Development

2. FIT@VITO

Optimal performance of people and organisation due to a "fit" on several aspects.

ACTION 1: DEFINITION OF A CODE OF CONDUCT

The definition of a Code of conduct that summarises and emphasis the main values and principles VITO stands for will allow clear and easy communication of the VITO ethical way of working. Currently many different policies are in place but are scattered over too many different places, rendering it difficult for researchers to find them. A first step is thus to collect all available codes and policies. The main principles will be summarised in a code of conduct that can be further specified as per target group. The missing policies have to be made explicit such as the Confidentiality policy including the measured taken for personal data protection regulations. Embedding attention for the Code of conduct and thus also personal data protection in the VITO processes is a following step to ensure the living up to the Code of conduct.

Reference clauses: 2,3,7

Owner: HR Projects

ACTION 2: DEFINITION OF IP POLICY POSITIONED IN THE BROADER VALORISATION PROCES

Since IP is very important in the process of valorisation, a special action is defined to improve the information about IP and valorisation and the access to this information for researchers. An IP policy will be made explicit with guidelines on how to deal with contractual obligations about IP. This policy will be placed on the intranet and be positioned in the total valorisation process. Communication and awareness raising efforts will continue. In a further step a focus group will be established to Investigate how the protection of ideas can be stimulated in order to improve the chances of valorisation and to implement the appropriate actions.

Reference clauses: 8, 31

Owner: IP Service

ACTION 3: CREATE AN 'ACTIVITY BASED WORKING' FORMAT

For both the organization and the employee, it is important that "time" is used optimal as well as that the work organization and place of working follow logically out the nature of the activities to be performed and results to be achieved. VITO wishes to introduce the 'activity based working' concept that allows employees to work where and when they want in accordance with the nature of their work and the agreed on objectives. This would allow the employees to balance their work and personal life even better. However this concept requires training and infrastructural support and self-management in an agreed on framework that focuses on a good collaboration in the teams.

A pilot will be set up to experiment with the new principles and work arrangements and to assess the necessary support. It offers the opportunity to gain learning experience to develop a policy before implementing the concept further.

Reference clauses: 24

Owner: HR business partners

ACTION 4: INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

In a context of internationalisation, inclusion and diversity require continuous attention. The aim of this action is mainly to investigate how a real culture shift to inclusion and diversity (also in gender equality) can be established in both the mind-set of the organization as in the mind-set of all individual employees. As a first step, VITO will look for best practices regarding inclusion and diversity and integrate relevant inputs in policies, daily practices, development activities, recruitment criteria,...If the application of a H2020 proposal (September 2015) is successful, it would be possible to join knowledge, experience and efforts of different European Research organisations in a structural way. This will be clear in the first months of 2016.

Reference clauses: 10, 27

Owner: HR Coordinator

3. Talent Mobility

Increase flexibility, agility and talent mobility.

ACTION 1 : SET UP OF A TALENT CENTER TO FACILITATE INTERNAL TALENT MOBILITY

The setup of the VITO Talent Center is intended to bring talent and job/assignment opportunities in the organization together, enabling the deployment and employability of employees. Doing so the strategic personnel (need) planning can be optimized.

The Center will focus on developing initiatives for the individual (self-management, self-branding, strategic competence development that contribute to employability), coaching and internal career guidance. A new concept that will be developed further is 'grow assignments' intended to develop competences and/or skills in a new job.

The shaping of this Talent Center will be done in co-creation with the different stakeholders and will be started in a pilot format.

Reference clauses: 29

Owner: HR Training & Development

ACTION 2: STIMULATE INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY

The low number of VITO-researchers visiting other organisations during a longer period suggests the existence of important obstacles. The first goal of the taskforce that will be set up is to analyse the business case of outgoing mobility for VITO, cost and benefits. The second goal is the recommendation of a range of measurements in alignment with the findings to take away the obstacles for outgoing mobility today. Last but not least the taskforce will define promotion actions for the outgoing mobility that VITO wishes to increase. Once confirmed by the higher management the recommended plan can be implemented in the form of a pilot. To support the taskforce, a pilot for exchange of HR people in a mentoring program is already started in the framework of EARTO. It is believed that the real life experience will be very valuable in detecting obstacles and understanding practical difficulties.

Reference clauses: 29

Owner: HR Coordinator

ACTION 3: ESTABLISH INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

To support as well the outgoing as incoming international researchers all support that is already given in the framework of the Euraxess network will be centralised and promoted as a one-contact point. This support offer will be evaluated and modified if required.

The information regarding international mobility such as practical information about VISA, housing, administration (address, taxes,...) and information about the culture differences will be centralized and the accessibility will be increased.

The introduction programme for international researchers will be supplemented with specific relevant topics. The establishment of a multicultural and diverse community will be encouraged through supportive actions coordinated through the international support centre in close collaboration with the international community at VITO.

Reference clauses: 10, 29

Owner: Euraxess contact point

ACTION 4: SET UP OF AN ALUMNI NETWORK

Through incoming mobility the VITO community and network is expanded tremendously. This network opens opportunities to exert more impact on worldwide sustainable development. Therefore VITO wants to keep in contact with all researchers that ever

worked at VITO and extend the good cooperation beyond the visiting period. VITO believes that an Alumni network can be more than just a LinkedIn page and will develop an Alumni concept with benefits for both parties i.e. Alumni researcher and the VITO organisation.

After fine tuning the scope of the Alumni networking, an Alumni programme will be defined. The set up with listing of Alumni members will be performed after the appointment of an Alumni responsible.

Reference clauses: 29

Owner: Euraxess Contac point

4. Sustainable employability

Talent and career development

ACTION 1: ALIGNING JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND CAREER PATHS WITH THE STRATEGIC VISION OF VITO

The most important HR instrument in the context of job description and possible career paths is the job description book of VITO which was defined around 2010.

The desired role dynamics and the pursuit of "flexible" and temporary assignments in an R&D environment are currently missing in the job structure. Career ladders are sometimes too long or incomplete in the description. A custom format for career opportunities, matching the applied research lifecycle of research topics is necessary. Therefore the reviews foreseen in the job description book maintenance process will focus in the future on including the new and changed skillsets and their evaluation criteria and on clarifying career possibilities in the changing VITO organisation.

Reference clauses: 11, 28

Owner: HR Coordinator

ACTION 2: ACTION 2: ALIGNEMENT OF THE PHD/POSTDOC AND THE EMPLOYEE TREATMENT

At some points the processes for PhDs, Postdocs and employees differ, possibly resulting into discrimination in one way or another. To ensure that no unintended discrimination occurs, the different HR processes will be evaluated on this topic. Moreover an in depth evaluation of the VITO post doc career policy is planned since this is the least developed one. Updates of the procedures with clear and transparent information will be certainly among the resulting measures. For example to explore the extension of the training offer to PhDs and Postdocs, to revise the recruitment and selection process for non-employees and to foresee a mentor for postdocs at VITO are measures that was already proposed during the Charter and Code base assessment.

Reference clauses: 11, 21,28, 36, 39

Owner: Scientific Coordination

ACTION 3: CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND GUIDANCE

An new strategic training programme aligned with the new VITO strategy and the associated skillset shift and cultural values will be defined. As R & D is "the core" of the organisation, an "R & D Competence Portfolio" will be developed in which training of various skills are offered to the R & D population. It will be focused on the development of personality and team work, business & financial awareness, R & D skills and VITO-specific tracks. This renewal will happen gradually and will be evaluated and updated yearly.

VITO Talent Center is the "Center" that will safeguard the development of 'strategic' talent and will provide formats for career guidance to support employees in their growth with the organizational goals in view.

Once the evolutions for succession planning and the Talent Centre are clear the training programme can be accurately supplemented. Coaching and customised initiatives will get their rightful place in the training offer.

Reference clauses: 30, 38

Owner: Training & Development

ACTION 4: DEFINE SUCCESSION PLANNING FORMAT

Succession planning is a way for targeted career guidance. A first step is the identification of key positions in the organization with the aim to proactively secure the internal succession of these important positions. The next step is to screen the potential of the present population in order to map the "next generation potential". Finally VITO staff will be developed for a targeted career path, thereby promoting internal mobility and value increase and employability increase of the employee. This planning overcomes the dramatic effect of loss of key personnel by allowing rapid internal rotation.

Reference clauses: 29

Owner: HR Business partners

1.5. FOLLOW UP OF THE ACTION PLAN

A responsible coordinator is assigned for the follow up of the total action plan. The follow up per action is performed by dedicated action owners. The overall timeline is visualised in the figure further. Some tasks can be started immediately, others will be shaped further during the discussions in taskforces.

ACTION 1: INFORMATION AND AWARENESS ACTION ABOUT CHARTER AND CODE

The results of the survey among the researchers showed there were several topics in the C&C that were not clear to the researchers. They answered the question with no opinion either because it was not clear to them what was meant, either because they had no idea what was the policy of VITO. It was therefore decided to make more/better information available about the relevant VITO policies for these specific clauses. Additionally it was decided to foresee in the action plan a general action to increase the awareness and knowledge about the Charter and Code clauses.

ACTION 2: REPEATED SURVEY AMONGST THE RESEARCHERS

The survey, that was organised to support the assessment of the VITO policy versus the Charter & Code, will be repeated each 2 years to evaluate the improvement of general awareness and the improvement of the VITO situation with regard to C&C compliance according to the VITO researcher.

ACTION 3: ACTION FOLLOW UP

The owner of each action will be asked to formulate a more detailed plan with definition of the necessary steps and envisioned timing. They will report each year end about the progress and modifications in the plan to the action plan coordinator.

ACTION 4: YEARLY MANAGEMENT REVIEW OF THE ACTION PLAN

The action plan coordinator will report about the progress of the total plan to the HR director during the yearly management review. Priorities and modifications to the plan will be decided. A midterm reporting will be filed to the EC.

4X4 ACTIONPLAN

1. Recruitment and Selection

Goal: Attract and hire global research talent to strengthen the VITO workforce.

- ACTION 1: REVIEW OF THE SELECTION PROCESS
- ACTION 2: TRAINING OF THE SELECTION COMMITTEE
- ACTION 3: REDESIGN OF THE JOB WEBSITE
- ACTION 4: REVIEW OF THE ONBOARDING PROCESS

2. FIT@VITO

Goal: Optimal performance of people and organisation due to a "fit" on several aspects.

- ACTION 1: DEFINITION OF A CODE OF CONDUCT
- ACTION 2: DEFINITION OF IP POLICY POSITIONED IN THE BROADER VALORISATION PROCES
- ACTION 3: CREATE AN 'ACTIVITY BASED WORKING' FORMAT
- ACTION 4: INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

3. Talent Mobility

Goal: Increase flexibility, agility and talent mobility

- ACTION 1: SET UP OF A TALENT CENTER TO FACILITATE INTERNAL TALENT MOBILITY
- ACTION 2 : STIMULATE INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY
- ACTION 3: ESTABLISH INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT
- ACTION 4: SET UP OF AN ALUMNI NETWORK

4. Sustainable employability

Goal: Talent and career development

- ACTION 1: ALIGNING JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND CAREER PATHS WITH THE STRATEGIC VISION OF VITO
- ACTION 2: ALIGNEMENT OF THE PHD/ POSTDOC AND THE EMPLOYEE TREATMENT
- ACTION 3: CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND GUIDANCE
- ACTION 4: DEFINE SUCCESSION PLANNING FORMAT

Project management

- ACTION 1: INFORMATION AND AWARENESS ACTION ABOUT CHARTER AND CODE
- ACTION 2: REPEATED SURVEY AMONGST THE RESEARCHERS
- ACTION 3: ACTION FOLLOW UP
- ACTION 4: YEARLY MANAGEMENT REVIEW OF THE ACTION PLAN

ACTION PRIORITIES	Action owner	2016				2017				2018				2019			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Recruitment and selection																	
ACTION 1: REVIEW OF THE SELECTION PROCESS	HR Business partners								evaluation								
ACTION 2: TRAINING OF THE SELECTION COMMITTEE	HR training&development												evaluation				
ACTION 3: REDESIGN OF THE JOB WEBSITE	HR communication	comply C&C			plan new site							implementation new jobsite	evaluation				
ACTION 4: REVIEW OF THE ONBOARDING PROCESS	HR training&development		review		roll out new				evaluation								
FIT@VITO																	
ACTION 1: DEFINITION OF A CODE OF CONDUCT	Scientific Coordiation	compiling			communication												
ACTION 2: DEFINITION OF IP POLICY POSITIONED IN THE BROADER VALORIZATION PROCES	IP&legal				definition		taskforce										
ACTION 3: CREATE 'ACTIVITY BASED WORKING' FORMAT	HR business partners	Pilot Energyville							roll out format								
ACTION 4: INCLUSION & DIVERSITY	HR coordinator																
Talent Mobility																	
ACTION 1 : SET UP OF A TALENT CENTER TO FACILITATIE INTERNAL TALENT MOBILITY	HR co-ordinator				Start taskforce			Talent center Pilot								programme def	
ACTION 2: STIMULATE INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY	Euraxess contact point					start taskforce				pilot int. Mobility						programme def	
ACTION 1: ESTABLISH INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT	Euraxess contact point	centralise support															
ACTION 4: SET UP OF AN ALUMNI NETWORK	Euraxess contact point				definition and preparation					official start event							
Sustainable employability																	
ACTION 1: ALIGNING JOBS AND CAREER PATHS WITH THE STRATEGIC VISION OF VITO	HR Coordinator	Major review							yearly review				yearly review				yearly review
ACTION 2: ALIGNEMENT OF THE PHDS/ POSTDOC AND THE EMPLOYEE TREATMENT	Scientific coordination		review procesess			Post doc strategy											
ACTION 3: CAREER DEVELOPMENT & GUIDANCE	HR training&development	new offer			review offer				review offer				review offer				review offer
ACTION 4: DEVELOPMENT OF SUCCESSION PLANNING	HR coordinator				potential mapping				devl programme								evaluatio
Charter and Code -evaluation																	
ACTION 1: INFORMATION AND AWARENESS ACTION ON CHARTER AND CODE	Action plan coordinator																
ACTION 2: REPEATED SURVEY AMONGST THE RESEARCHERS	Action plan coordinator																
ACTION 3: ACTION FOLLOW UP	Action plan coordinator	year plan			review				review				review				review
ACTION 4: YEARLY MANAGEMENT REVIEW OF THE ACTION PLAN	HR director								EC report								Ec audit

Provisional time table

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