

## TEMPLATE 3: INTERNAL REVIEW

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| Name Organisation under review: VARNA FREE UNIVERSITY “CHERNORIZETS HRABAR”   |
| Organisation’s contact details: <a href="http://www.vfu.bg">www.vfu.bg</a>  |
| Web-link to published version of organisation’s HR Strategy and Action Plan:<br><a href="http://vfu.bg/en/hr_logo/">http://vfu.bg/en/hr_logo/</a> |
| Web-link to organisational recruitment policy (OTM-R principles): n.a.  |

**SUBMISSION DATE TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION:** JANUARY 2012

### 1. ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

Please provide an update of the key figures for your organisation. Figures marked \* are compulsory.

| <b>STAFF &amp; STUDENTS</b>   | <b>FTE</b> |
|---|------------|
| Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research  | 238        |
| Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)  | 48         |
| Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation)   | 67         |
| Of whom are women   | 127        |
| Of whom are stage R3 or R4 <sup>1</sup> = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor.   | 111        |
| Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level  | 13         |
| Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level  | 56         |
| Total number of students (if relevant)  | 5 293      |
| Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff)   | 300        |
| <b>RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)</b>   | <b>€</b>   |
| Total annual organisational budget  | 591 095    |
| Annual organisational direct government funding (block funding, used for teaching, research, infrastructure,...)  | 0          |
| Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)  | 482 620    |
| Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research  | 72 649     |
| <b>ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE (a very brief description of your organisation, max. 100 words)</b>   |            |
| <p>Varna Free University „Chernorizets Hrabar“ (VFU) is a private university in Bulgaria. It was established in 1991 and obtained a status of higher educational institution in 1995.</p> <p>VFU is institutionally accredited by the National Assessment and Accreditation Agency.</p> |            |

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[http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research\\_policies/Towards\\_a\\_European\\_Framework\\_for\\_Research\\_Careers\\_final.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research_policies/Towards_a_European_Framework_for_Research_Careers_final.pdf)

VFU is certified under the international standard ISO 9001:2015 and has been granted certificates from UKAS (UK) and ANAB (USA).

VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar" is certified with the signs *DS Label*, *ECTS Label* and *HR Excellence in Research* logo.

VFU organizes learning in 50 educational and 29 PhD programs for the education-and-qualification degrees "Bachelor", "Master" and "Doctor".

## 2. NARRATIVE (MAX. 2 PAGES)

Please consult the narrative on the strengths and weaknesses under the 4 thematic areas of the Charter and Code as provided in the initial submission of your organisation's HR Strategy. Have any of the priorities for the short- and medium term changed? Have any of the circumstances in which your organisation operates, changed and as such have had an impact on your HR strategy? Are any strategic decisions under way that may influence the action plan?

Please provide a brief commentary – not only looking back, but also looking forward.

*Thematic area "Ethical and Professional Aspects"*. All 11 planned actions are implemented. It has been developed and now is used a *System for the annual assessment of the VFU's academic staff* with a part *Annual assessment of Research*. *Mobility* is included as one of the basic criteria in the annual assessment. The academic staff is regularly appraised (according to the Bulgarian Law for Higher Education) with an accent on the research activity as well. It should be emphasized, that the *Ethical Code for Research at VFU* (<http://ejournal.vfu.bg/bg/pdfs/et.kodeks.pdf>), created by a VFU team, was used as a basis for development of the *National Ethic Code of Conduct for Carrying out Research*. The last one is still preparing by the Ministry of Education and Science. A *New vision for market-oriented research and consulting activities* has been adopted at VFU in 2014.

*Thematic area "Recruitment"*. All 5 actions are implemented. Selection criteria for recruitment were developed and described in *Ordinance #3* for Academic Staff at VFU. Moreover, VFU provides campaigns for popularization of the HR Logo in Bulgaria as well as abroad. The results are signed contracts with representatives from Germany, Poland and Kazakhstan which provide opportunities for their researchers to work and make research in VFU. There is an active collaboration with researchers from the USA, Russian Federation, Italy, Germany, Israel, England and other countries as well. The VFU's submission to the European network EURAXESS in 2014 was a part of implementation of this dimension. VFU hosted the *Euraxess Road Show 2015*<sup>2</sup> on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2015. The attraction and recruitment of foreign researchers is still outlining as a major difficulty. The team of VFU has experience in work in international research groups, but till now there is no one recruited researcher. The possible reasons could be that Bulgaria is not an attractive scientific research destination, lack of world-class developed research infrastructure and low salaries as well. It is recognized as a weakness the lack of direct links from the VFU web site to the EURAXESS site and the web-sites of other scientific networks, universities and institutes as well. It is still forthcoming the hard work on this dimension with the using of the experience, gained during the years.

*Thematic area "Working Conditions"*. There are 13 actions, mentioned in the action plan. Ten of them have been adopted. New research laboratories were established and the existing laboratories were renovated with own and external financing. An *Office for Technological Transfer* was established and operates at VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar". The number of research tasks, made in international teams, is increased. It has been worked on 15 international, 7 national and 3 regional projects in the period of self-assessment. During the self-

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<sup>2</sup><http://vfu.bg/en/news/5617b98807cf21>; <http://www.euraxess.bg/sites/default/files/science4/Programme%20VFU.pdf>

assessment period *more than 15 academic staff mobility* for exchange experience were realized in foreign universities in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, etc. More than 27 foreign professors and researchers from Italy, Latvia, Russia, Slovak Republic and from other countries have made their mobility at VFU in the period 2012-2016.

The other three actions were not in priority in the self-assessment period. The main efforts were focused on creation of internal university legislation for ethics and monitoring mechanisms of its application, and on develop of measures for protection of intellectual property. It was very important to promote them among VFU academics. The developing of monitoring system is laid down in the new action plan 2016-2020.

*Thematic area “Training”*. All five planned actions are implemented. It has to be noted that more than 120 persons from the university academic staff passed training courses to improve their skills for conducting of research, methodology of research, specialized English language, and digital competences. The implementation of this dimension was the reason to select and include VFU in the programme of the mutual learning seminar ‘**Sharing experience to better implement the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)**’, organized by European Commission, GD “Research&Innovation” and held on 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2014 in Brussels, Belgium. More than 150 Bulgarian and foreign PhD-Students have been enrolled during the self-assessment period. Nearly 60 of them have been already acquired the educational and scientific degree “Doctor of Philosophy” (PhD). PhD-students are annually evaluated (according to the Bulgarian Law for Higher Education), which is an assessment of the PhD-supervisors as well.

As a conclusion, it could be summarized that:

- 33 from 36 planned activities in the action plan have been implemented in the period of self-assessment. Only 3 actions were identified as non-priority for the period and are included in the actualized action plan 2016-2020.

- As a result of the implementation of *dimension IV “Training”*, VFU was selected to present its experience and good practice on the mutual learning seminar ‘**Sharing experience to better implement the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)**’, organized by European Commission, GD “Research&Innovation” (9<sup>th</sup> of October 2014, Brussels, Belgium);

- VFU promote HR–logo on national level by participation in EURAXESS Roadshow 2014, which took place in Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” and in Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, and in EURAXESS Roadshow 2015, which was held at VFU;

- **Ethical Code for Research at VFU** was used as a good practice for the **National Ethic Code of Conduct for Carrying out Research**, developed by the Ministry of Education and Science;

- It is established an environment at VFU, which increases motivation of researchers and academic staff to participate in international scientific projects, to develop research career and to realize mobility.

### 3. ACTIONS

Please consult the list of all actions you have submitted as part of your HR strategy. Please add to the overview the current status of these actions as well as the status of the indicators. If any actions have been altered, omitted or added, please provide a commentary for each action.

| <i>Title action</i>  | <i>Timing</i>                   | <i>Responsible Unit</i>   | <i>Indicator(s) / Target</i>  | <i>Current status</i>           |
|--|---------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------|
| <i>Update VFU’s research priorities taking into account national, European and international research priorities</i> | <i>Yearly, starting in 2012</i> | <i>Vice-Rector R&amp;I, Scientific Secretaries, Experts in Research</i> | <i>The research priorities have been updated each year.<br/>A <b>New vision for market-oriented research and consulting activities</b> has been adopted at VFU.</i> | <i>Completed and continuing</i> |

|   |                          |   |  |  |
|---|--------------------------|---|--|--|
| Organise seminars and workshops for researchers on European good practices and research achievements  | Yearly, starting in 2012 | Vice-Rector R&I, Scientific Secretaries, Experts in Research                              | VFU organized and was a host of more than 25 scientific seminars and international conferences with participation of foreign researchers.  | Completed and continuing               |
| Develop an Ethical Code and an Advisory Committee for Ethics in Research  | June 2012                | Human Resources Department, Vice-Rector R&I   | An <b>Ethical Code for Research at VFU</b> was developed and approved by the Academic Council (Protocol №11/17.08.2012). The Code is already applied. It is published and publicly available on the VFU web-site. ( <a href="http://ejournal.vfu.bg/bg/pdfs/et.kodeks.pdf">http://ejournal.vfu.bg/bg/pdfs/et.kodeks.pdf</a> )  | Completed                              |
| Relate project topics and research subjects with business sector and interests of the local communities. Involve researchers in cooperation with business, local and state authorities. | Permanent                | Vice-Rector R&I, Branch trusteeships, Departments   | It is developed a Conception for Research, which is approved by the Academic Council on 20 <sup>th</sup> December 2013.<br>It has been adopted a New vision for market-oriented research and consulting activities (AC, Protocol №2/31.10.2014).<br>Partnerships in the field of research and expert-consulting activities. Contracts for scientific service have been signed with the Municipality of Varna and with more than 15 companies in the region and the country.<br>Seven branch trusteeships have been established and operated with the main aim to set scientific and applied tasks, needed in business.<br>Increasing the number of implemented research and applied projects by order of business. | Completed and continuing               |
| Publishing research results in prestigious scientific journals and scientific databases   | Permanent                | Vice-rector R&I, Deans, Scientific Secretaries, University Library, University Publishers | - Increasing the number of publications in international scientific journals – at least 20 papers per year;<br>- Increasing citation of VFU's researchers - at least 10 citations per year;  | In progress                            |
| Introduction of a policy of international openness: increase number of foreign researchers recruited  | Permanent                | Vice-Rector R&I, Human Resources Department   | A campaign for popularization of VFU's HR Logo is provided abroad and as a result contracts with representatives from Germany, Poland and Kazakhstan are signed.<br>Since 2014 VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar" is member of the European network EURAXESS.<br>There are not recruited foreign researchers.   | In progress                            |
| Post on VFU's web-site useful links to another Bulgarian or foreign universities, institutes or research organizations in order to improve opportunities for work abroad.               | Permanent                | Vice-Rector R&I h, Human Resources Department, Departments, Technological Institute       | Information about research activities on the VFU's web-site.<br>Link to the EURAXESS site.   | Still not completed but in preparation |
| Introduction and implementation of the OTM-R checklist.   | June 2017                | Vice-Rector R&I, Human Resources Department, Departments, Technological                   | Publish OTM-R checklist on VFU's web-site.<br>Cover most of the 23 indicators of OTM-R checklist.<br>Put information about R&I on the VFU's web-site.<br>Link with the EURAXESS web-site.  | In progress                            |

|   |                | Institute   |  |                          |
|---|----------------|---|--|--------------------------|
| Motivation of PhD-Students to make mobility   | Permanent      | Vice-Rector in International Affair, Projects and Technological Development (IAPTD)                   | At least 1 PhD-Student at mobility per year.   | In progress              |
| Work out a strategy for career development of researchers in accordance to VFU's scientific and research priorities.                              | September 2012 | Vice-Rector R&I, Deans, Scientific Secretaries  | A Strategy for Career Development of the Academic Staff at VFU (Rector's Order №1641/26.06.2012) was developed.<br>A Strategic Frame for Career Development of the Academic Staff at VFU 2012-2017 was developed and approved by the Academic Council (Protocol №3/21.12.2012).<br>A System for Career Development of the Academic Staff at VFU and Methodology of its application were developed.   | Completed                |
| Keeping a balanced ratio between recruited men and women.<br>Keeping a balanced ratio between men and women enrolled in doctoral programs at VFU. | Permanent      | "Human Resources" Office<br><br>Institute for Doctoral Education                                      | Men/Women: 50%/50%   | In progress              |
| Publications in co-authorship with foreign researchers  | Permanent      | Vice-Rector in R&I, Researchers   | Publications in co-authorship with foreign researchers - 5 % from all publications, written by VFU researchers   | In progress              |
| Improvement of the university experimental research base.   | Permanent      | Vice-rector R&I, Scientific Secretaries, PhD Supervisors  | The university base is fully renovated.<br>New research laboratories were established and the existing laboratories were renovated with own and external financing;<br>An Office for Technological Transfer was established and operates at VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar".   | Completed and continuing |
| Improvement of the quality of supervision, especially of young researchers.<br>Training researchers in contemporary teaching methods              | Permanent      | Vice-rector R&I, Scientific Secretaries, PhD Supervisors  | It is applied a system for annual assessment of research activity of the academic staff.<br>PhD-students are annually evaluated, which is an assessment of the PhD-supervisors as well.<br>More than 120 persons from the university academic staff, including PhD-supervisors, passed training courses in methodology of research, advanced educational strategies and technologies, modern web-technologies, modern technical equipment for auditorium work, ICT tools for presenting etc. | Completed and continuing |
| Encouraging students to develop themselves in research through proposing of attractive research topics closely linked to the business needs       | Permanent      | Vice-rector R&I, Institute for Doctoral Education, Deans, Scientific Secretaries, Branch Trusteeships | Increasing the number of enrolled PhD-students – at least 10 new enrolled PhD students per year;<br>Proposing attractive topics for PhD-dissertations;<br>Yearly publication of information about alumni graduate PhD at VFU (on paper or on the university web-site)  | In progress              |

As the establishment of an Open Recruitment Policy is a key element in the HRS4R strategy, please also indicate how your organisation is working towards / has developed an Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment Policy. Although there may be some overlap with a range of actions listed above, please provide a short commentary demonstrating this implementation.

In case your organisation has entered the HRS4R process prior to the publication of the OTM-R toolkit and recommendations by the European Commission (2015), please fill out the OTM-R checklist<sup>45</sup>, attach it to this self-evaluation form, and provide a commentary on how you will (continue to) address these principles in the years to come.

Comment on the implementation of Open, Transparent, Merit-Based Recruitment principles:

VFU “Chernorizets Hrabar” starts HRS4R process in 2012. Filled out OTM-R checklist is attached to the current self-evaluation form. Four of the principles are completely implemented, eleven – substantially implemented, one – partially implemented and seven are not yet implemented.

The recruitment process for researchers (incl. selection procedure, selection criteria and committee composition) is regulated by the *Law for Academic Staff Development in Republic of Bulgaria*, the *Ordinance #3 for Academic Staff* and the *Ordinance #12 for acquiring of scientific and education degree “Doctor”, and scientific degree “Doctor of Science”*. VFU complies all requirements laid down in the national legislation and university legal framework.

The specific principles, described in OTM-R check-list, are included in the actualized action plan 2016-2020 and most of them will be implemented.

#### **4. IMPLEMENTATION (MAX. 1 PAGE)**

Please provide an overview of the expected implementation process. You can use the following questions as a guideline in your description:

- How have you prepared the internal review?

The internal review was written by Prof. Pavel Pavlov, PhD – Vice-Rector in Research, Assoc. Prof. Rositsa Petkova-Slipets, PhD – HR Logo Contact Person, Scientific Secretary of the Faculty of Architecture and Researcher, and Assoc. Prof. Velislava Nikolaeva, PhD – expert R&I and Researcher.

The report was adopted by the University Council in Research on April 6<sup>th</sup> 2016 and by the Academic Council of VFU on November 25<sup>th</sup> 2016.

- Do you have an implementation committee and/or steering group regularly overseeing progress?

Yes. Steering group regularly overseeing the process of implementation and the progress of the process is composed of: Prof. Pavel Pavlov, PhD – Vice-Rector in Research and the team leader, Assoc. Prof. Rositsa Petkova-Slipets, PhD – HR Logo Contact Person, Scientific Secretary of the Faculty

of Architecture and Researcher, and Assoc. Prof. Velislava Nikolaeva, PhD – expert R&I and Researcher.

- Is there any alignment of organisational policies with the HRS4R? For example, is the HRS4R recognized in the organisation's research strategy, overarching HR policy?

Yes. The principles laid down in HRS4R are main part of the *University Strategy for Development* and of the *Rector's Mandatory Program*. Most of the principles are included in the university ordinances (for example Ordinance #2, Ordinance #3, Instruction №5, Ordinance #12)

- How do you involve the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?

Regularly organize seminars, meetings and courses.

- How is your organisation ensuring that the proposed actions are also being implemented?

All proposed actions are very well considered and correspond with the university priorities. This guarantees their implementation.

- How are you monitoring progress?

1. Regularly hold meetings with academic and administrative staff to explain principles of the C&C and to check implementation process of actions in action plan.

2. Update documentations.

- How do you expect to prepare for the external review?

The external review is the most important and responsible step in the HR-process. The commitment to implement all requirements of the Charter and the Code is a continuous effort, consistently requiring attention and revision.

The preparation will be in few steps:

1. Update the self-assessment report / the last internal review;
2. Collect all materials for implementation of the planned actions and achieving indicators;
3. Organize and prepare researchers for interview with external reviewers;
4. Organize and prepare stakeholders for interview with external reviewers;
5. Organize the meeting with external review team.

*Please note that the revised HR strategy and Action Plan must also be published upon completion of the internal assessment.*