

## TEMPLATE 3: INTERNAL REVIEW

Name Organisation under review: VARNA FREE UNIVERSITY "CHERNORIZETS HRABAR"

Organisation's contact details: [www.vfu.bg](http://www.vfu.bg)

Web-link to published version of organisation's HR Strategy and Action Plan:

<https://www.vfu.bg/the-university/hr-excellence-in-research-logo-2.html>

Web-link to organisational recruitment policy (OTM-R principles):

<https://www.vfu.bg/the-university/hr-excellence-in-research-logo-2.html>

**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	278
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)	36
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation)	121
Of whom are women	151
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.	103
Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level	22
Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level	28
Total number of students (if relevant)	4 714
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff)	275
<b>RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)</b>	<b>€</b>
Total annual organisational budget	785 207
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)	502 963
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	71 142
<b>ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE (a very brief description of your organisation, max. 100 words)</b>	
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.	

<sup>1</sup>

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

VFU is *institutionally accredited* by the National Assessment and Accreditation Agency.

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

During the years, VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar" has been certified with the signs *DS Label* and *ECTS Label*. In 2012, VFU has been awarded with *HR Excellence in Research* logo by the European Commission.

The training at VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar" is organized in 50 programs for the educational and qualification degrees "Bachelor" and "Master" and in 29 PhD programs for the educational and scientific degree "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.

### Strengths:

- A university environment *for research activities* has been established *without any discrimination principles*. It includes organization of thematic seminars, development of project proposals, involvement in projects research teams, partnerships with the business, etc. A *New vision for market-oriented research and consulting activities* has been adopted. A *system for working in research projects* has been established and functioned.

- *Ethical Code for Research at VFU* (<https://www.vfu.bg/assets/userfiles/hr%20logo/et.kodeks.pdf>, [https://www.vfu.bg/assets/userfiles/hr%20logo/Et\\_kodeks\\_VFU\\_EN.pdf](https://www.vfu.bg/assets/userfiles/hr%20logo/Et_kodeks_VFU_EN.pdf)) has been created and implemented. All the academic staff and PhD-students are familiar with it.

- A *System for annual assessment of the VFU's academic staff* has been developed and implemented. The annual assessment of the research activity of each researcher is included as well.

### Weaknesses:

- Research topics are still not so strongly linked to the needs of business and practice. The *wake business interest to research development* could be mentioned as a reason. Such priority is included in the *Strategy for Development of VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar" 2018-2022*.

- Not enough international publicity of the research results. They are disseminated mainly on universities and national forums.

*Thematic area "Recruitment"*. All 5 actions are implemented.

### Strengths:

- VFU is following a *policy for open, transparent and merit-based recruitment for its academic staff and researchers*. There are clear and realistic criteria for recruitment described in *Ordinance #3 for Academic Staff at VFU* and published on the university web-site. The recruitment procedure – advertising, selection, criteria - strongly follows the national legislation.

- VFU is a part of the European network *EURAXESS*. There is a link to the *EURAXESS* web site from the university web site.

- *Mobility and specific skills* (as language competences, digital competences, etc.) are included as the basic criteria in the *System for Career Development of the Academic Staff at VFU*.

- There are signed contracts with representatives from Germany, Poland and Kazakhstan which provide opportunities for their researchers to work and do research at VFU. Active collaboration with researchers from the USA, Russian Federation, Italy, Germany, Israel, England and other countries as well.

#### Weaknesses:

- The attraction and recruitment of foreign researchers is still a major difficulty. Such priority is included in the *Strategy for Development of VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar" 2018-2022*.  
- It is still hard to motivate academic staff, researchers and PhD-students to participate in different mobility programs, even if it is a part of their annual assessment.

*Thematic area "Working Conditions"*. There are 13 actions, mentioned in the action plan. Ten of them have been adopted. 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 developing measures for protection of intellectual property. It was very important to promote them among VFU academics.

#### Strengths:

- There are clear and realistic criteria for recruitment of researchers at VFU, which are published on the university web-site. They are without any discrimination elements and include recognition of previous experience.  
- *Strategic Frame for Career Development of the Academic Staff at VFU 2012-2017*, *System for Career Development of the Academic Staff at VFU* and *Methodology* of its application were developed.  
- VFU provides good working conditions for the academic staff and researchers, including opportunities for career development and mobility. New research laboratories were created and the existing laboratories were renovated. An *Office for Technological Transfer* was established and operates.  
- Research activities at VFU are stimulated thought: ✓ two internal funds - fund "Scientific Research" and fund "Internationalization"; ✓ annual assessment of researchers and academic staff; ✓ more options for career development; ✓ training and scientific seminars, including seminars about the intellectual property rights.  
- Gender balance is achieved at VFU.

#### Weaknesses:

- The research infrastructure is still not at the level, which is attractive for researchers. Such priority is included in the *Strategy for Development of VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar" 2018-2022*.  
- The teaching activities of the academic staff at VFU are still determining for the type of the contract and the salary, without any priority of the research activities.

*Thematic area "Training"*. All five planned actions are implemented.

#### Strengths:

- Researchers and their supervisors work in a good collaboration. Permanently supervisors report about the progress or the difficulties of researchers, motivate and support them to participate in seminars and conferences, give them professional advice, etc.  
- Annual assessment procedure of researchers functiones at VFU.  
- Academic staff, PhD-students and supervisors have the opportunity to participate in training courses, professional and thematic seminars and workshops, conferences and others, which is closely linked with their professional development. It has to be mentioned 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. More than 150 Bulgarian and foreign PhD-Students have been enrolled during the six-year period after the HR-logo awarding.  
- Few of the graduated in VFU PhD-students have been recruited as lecturers.

#### Weaknesses:

- It is still hard to motivate most of the academic staff, researchers and PhD-students to participate in courses, workshops, conferences and seminars, even if it is a part of their career development and annual assessment. Such priority is included in the *Strategy for Development of VFU “Chernorizets Hrabar” 2018-2022*.

As a **conclusion**, it could be summarized that:

- 31 from 34 planned activities in the action plan had implemented in the period of self-assessment. Only three 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 the European Commission, GD “Research&Innovation” (9<sup>th</sup> of October 2014, Brussels, Belgium);

- VFU promote HR–logo at national level by participation in EURAXESS Roadshow 2014, which took place in Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” and at 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;

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

**Looking forward** VFU “Chernorizets Hrabar” is focused on:

- the *sustainable implementation of the principles of HRS4R and OTM-R policy*;

- the *re-awarding with the “HR Excellence in Research” logo* by the European Commission;

- the implementation of the main university strategic priority – to *attract and recruit prominent researchers* at VFU. We have the experience to collaborate with researchers as Prof. Dr. George Vredeveld, Prof. Dr. James O’Neil, Prof. Allan Rosenbaum, Prof. Jan Gehl, Prof. Vyacheslav Nikonov, Assoc. Prof. Henk Verhagen and other partners of the university.

- making the recruitment procedure more opened, transparent and public, especially for foreign researchers;

- developing a system to attract young and perspective researchers.

### 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. A <b>New vision for market-oriented research and consulting activities</b> has been adopted at VFU.</i>	<i>Completed and continuing</i>
<i>Organise seminars and workshops for researchers about the European good practices and research achievements</i>	<i>Yearly, starting in 2012</i>	<i>Vice-Rector R&amp;I, Scientific Secretaries, Experts in Research</i>	<i>VFU organized and was a host of more than 25 scientific seminars and international conferences with participation of foreign researchers. Yearly at least one international conference or seminar.</i>	<i>Completed and continuing</i>
<i>Develop an Ethical</i>	<i>June 2012</i>	<i>Human Resources</i>	<i>An <b>Ethical Code for Research at VFU</b> was</i>	<i>Completed</i>

Code and an Advisory Committee for Ethics in Research		Office, Vice-Rector R&I	developed and approved by the Academic Council (Protocol №11/17.08.2012). The Code has been already applied. It is published on the VFU web-site.	
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.	Yearly with annual reporting	Vice-Rector R&I, Branch trusteeships, Departments	<b>Conception for Research</b> has been developed. It was approved by the Academic Council on 20 <sup>th</sup> December 2013. <b>New vision for market-oriented research and consulting activities</b> (AC, Protocol №2/31.10.2014) has been adopted. 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. <b>Seven branch trusteeships</b> have been established and operated with the main aim to set scientific and applied tasks, needed in business. Increasing the number of implemented research and applied projects ordered by the business.	Completed and continuing
Publishing research results in prestigious scientific journals and scientific databases	Yearly with annual reporting	Vice-rector R&I, Deans, Scientific Secretaries, University Library, University Publishers	- Increasing the number of publications in international scientific journals – at least 50 papers per year; - Increasing citation of VFU's researchers - at least 50 citations per year; - till now yearly between 20 and 30 papers have been published in international scientific journals and nearly 35 were the citations of VFU's researchers.	Partially completed
Introduction of a policy of international openness: increase number of foreign researchers recruited	Yearly with annual reporting	Vice-Rector R&I, Human Resources Office	A campaign for popularization of VFU's HR Logo is provided abroad and as a result <b>contracts with representatives</b> from Germany, Poland and Kazakhstan have been signed. Since 2014 VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar" has been a member of the European network <b>EURAXESS</b> . <b>Foreign researchers have been recruited as consultants of PhD-Students.</b>	Partially completed
Posting on VFU's web-site useful links to another Bulgarian or foreign universities, institutes or research organizations in order to increase opportunities for foreign researchers and for work abroad.	Yearly with annual reporting	Vice-Rector R&I, Human Resources Office, Departments, Technological Institute	Information about research activities on the VFU's web-site. Link to the EURAXESS site. Publish advertisements in EURAXESS network.	Partially completed
Introduction and implementation of the OTM-R policy.	June 2017	Vice-Rector R&I, Human Resources Office, Departments, Technological Institute	Publish OTM-R policy on VFU's web-site. Put information about R&I on the VFU's web-site. Link with the EURAXESS web-site.	Partially completed
Motivation of PhD-Students to carry out mobility	Yearly with annual reporting	Vice-Rector in International Affair	Participation in mobility of at least 1 PhD-Student per year.	In progress

<i>Work out a strategy for career development of researchers in accordance with VFU's scientific and research priorities.</i>	<i>September 2012</i>	<i>Vice-Rector R&amp;I, Deans, Scientific Secretaries</i>	<i>A <b>Strategy for Career Development of the Academic Staff at VFU</b> (Rector's Order №1641/26.06.2012) was developed. A <b>Strategic Frame for Career Development of the Academic Staff at VFU 2012-2017</b> was developed and approved by the Academic Council (Protocol №3/21.12.2012). A <b>System for Career Development of the Academic Staff at VFU and Methodology of its application</b> were developed.</i>	<i>Completed</i>
<i>Keeping a balanced ratio between recruited men and women. Keeping a balanced ratio between men and women enrolled in doctoral programs at VFU.</i>	<i>Yearly with annual reporting</i>	<i>"Human Resources" Office Institute for Doctoral Education</i>	<i>Men/Women: 50%/50% Committee's gender balance - not less than one third of one gender in the committee.</i>	<i>Substantially completed</i>
<i>Publications in co-authorship with foreign researchers</i>	<i>Yearly with annual reporting</i>	<i>Vice-Rector in R&amp;I, Researchers</i>	<i>Publications in co-authorship with foreign researchers - 5 % from all publications, written by VFU researchers</i>	<i>Partially completed</i>
<i>Improvement of the university experimental research base.</i>	<i>Yearly with annual reporting</i>	<i>Vice-rector R&amp;I, Scientific Secretaries, PhD Supervisors</i>	<i>The university base is fully renovated. New research laboratories were established and the existing laboratories were renovated with own and external financing; An <b>Office for Technological Transfer</b> was established and operates at VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar".</i>	<i>Substantially completed</i>
<i>Improvement of the quality of supervision, especially of young researchers. Training researchers in contemporary teaching methods</i>	<i>Yearly with annual reporting</i>	<i>Vice-rector R&amp;I, Scientific Secretaries, PhD Supervisors</i>	<i>A System for annual assessment of research activity of the academic staff is applied. PhD-students are annually evaluated, which is an assessment of the PhD-supervisors as well. 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.</i>	<i>Substantially completed</i>
<i>Encouraging students to develop in research by proposing them attractive research topics closely linked to the business needs</i>	<i>Yearly with annual reporting</i>	<i>Vice-rector R&amp;I, Institute for Doctoral Education, Deans, Scientific Secretaries, Branch Trusteeships</i>	<i>Increasing the number of enrolled PhD-students – at least 10 new enrolled PhD students per year; Proposing attractive topics for PhD-dissertations; Yearly publication of information about alumni graduate PhD at VFU (on paper or on the university web-site)</i>	<i>In progress</i>

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” started the HRS4R process in 2012. Filled out OTM-R checklist is attached to the current self-evaluation form. Sixteen of the points are completely implemented, four – substantially implemented and three are not yet implemented. The specific points, described in OTM-R checklist that have not been implemented till now, are included in the updated action plan 2016-2020 and will be implemented.

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

The recruitment procedure is carried out by the “Human Resource” Office and is controlled by the President and the Rector of the VFU. It is guaranteed that the recruitment procedure is clearly described, transparent and merit-based.

#### **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 – Researcher. Information and annual reports prepared by the Faculties and Departments at the VFU were used. Summarized information from the Academic Council, the Council of Research, the Institute for education of Doctors and the Office “International Affairs and Projects” was used as well.

The first version of 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. The updated version is approved by the Rector and Vice-Rector of the VFU, and adopted by the Academic Council of VFU on October 25<sup>th</sup> 2018.

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

Yes. A 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, Borislava Hristova – Head of the “Human Resources” Office, Assoc.

Prof. Evgeniya Rakitina - expert R&I and Researcher, and Assoc. Prof. Velislava Nikolaeva, PhD – Researcher. The progress and the difficulties during the implementation of the HRS4R and the action plan are discussed regularly on the meetings of the Council of Research, which are at least three times per year.

- 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 *Strategic Plan for the Development of VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar" 2012-2017*, the *Strategy for Development of VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar" 2018-2022* and of the *Rector's Mandatory Program 2013-2017*. 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 documentation.

- 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.*