ASSESSMENT RESPONSE OF VICOMTECH'S HR STRATEGY

The Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)

OCTOBER 2023

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First of all, thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to re-present our HRS4R action plan. In response to the auditors' valuable feedback, we have implemented numerous enhancements and introduced fresh initiatives. Some of these improvements have already been executed and are incorporated into the action plan, while others are in progress and are outlined below.

In addition to the assessment provided by the audit team, the recommendations have been categorized into two distinct groups: those requiring immediate implementation and other recommendations.

1.- IMMEDIATE MANDATORY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Reshape the Action Plan:

New HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS & Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers document has been created: https://www.vicomtech.org/es/hrs4r

2. Clarify meaning of Actions 39, 42, 44, 45, 47, 48, 51:

Clarification and improvement of the actions will be reflected on the Euraxess platform's Action Plan Section. Here the modification of the recommendations:

- *Action 39: Creation of the Equality Committee and the new equality plan (2021-2025) approval.*
- *Action 42: Implementation of IKASI platform for training and new videos.*
- *Action 44: Improvement actions for data protection procedures, with internal training, internal policy and regulations and legislative external training so that the researchers are aware of all the legal matters regarding this aspect.*
- *Action 45: Creation of the Asset department (Digital Positioning department), so that Vicomtechs´scientific advances are well known by the society.*
- *Action 47: Employees´ environmental awareness according to ISO14001, internal training videos and annual carbon footprint report by the centre, so that all researchers are accountable and aware of the environmental impact Vicomtech has annually.*
- *Action 48: Business continuity certification (ISO 22301). Thanks to this certificate, we can prove the efficiency and profitability of the projects managed by Vicomtech, as well as we create awareness by the internal IKASI platform videos regarding the Business Continuity.*
- *Action 51: Constant review of the OTM-R procedure policy and actions so that improvement points are constantly identified.*

3. **Improve indicators of actions 36, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51:**

Clarification and improvement of the indicators will be reflected on the Euraxess platform's Action Plan Section. Here the modification of the recommendations:

- *Action 36 Indicator: Mentoring Processes carried out during 2020 and 2023:*
    - *Tesis: 43 (28 ongoing)*
    - *Incorporations: 208*
    - *Departmental movements: 33*
    - *Category change surveillance: 134*
- *Action 39 Indicator:*
    - *Equality committee created and periodic reunions are held.*
    - *Equality plan approved and published (2021-2025)*
- *Action 40 Indicator: Number of new procedures and policies updated and published in the ARGI integral management system.*
- *Action 42 indicator: Creation of the training internal platform IKASI. Currently, the following training videos are held in the internal platform:*
    - *Mandatory training:*
        - *Software Development Methodology*
        - *Vicomtech Values*
        - *Equality Plan*
        - *ISMS Information Security*
        - *Docker Essential*
        - *Code of Conduct*
        - *Business Continuity*
    - *Optional Training:*
        - *RGDP (General Data Protection Regulation) Course*
        - *Environmental Management at Vicomtech*
        - *Project Management*
        - *Dress Code*
        - *Vicomtech Welcome*
        - *Bitwarden Seminar*
        - *Intellectual Property Management - Licensing and Free Software*
- *Action 43 indicator: Ikasi training course: Proyect Management. 160 employees of Vicomtech have taken the training course.*
- *Action 44 indicator: Ikasi training course:*
    - *ISMS Information Security. 242 employees of Vicomtech have taken the training course.*
    - *Bitwarden Seminar. 42 employees of Vicomtech have taken the training course.*
    - *RGDP Course. 259 employees of Vicomtech have taken the training course.*
- *Action 45 indicator: Department creation and hiring:*
    - *Department Director was hired in 2020*
    - *Staff hired: 1 in 2021 and 2 in 2023*
    - *Staff relocated from other departtments: 4 (2020)*

- *Action 47 indicator:*
  - o *Acquisition of the ISO 14001 certificate*
  - o *IKASI training course: Environmental Management at Vicomtech. 102 employees of Vicomtech have taken the training course.*
  - o *Annual Carbon footprint report of Vicomtech available for all the employees*
  - o *Notice that the actions objective or target itself is to acquire the certification of the ISO 14001. It's a qualitative indicator.*
- *Action 48 indicator:*
  - o *Acquisition of the ISO 22301 certificate*
  - o *IKASI training course: Business Continuity. 257 employees of Vicomtech have taken the training course.*
  - o *Notice that the actions objective or target itself is to acquire the certification of the ISO 22301. It's a qualitative indicator.*
- *Action 49 indicator:*
  - o *Annual monitoring and search of training pills*
  - o *Internal training courses in IKASI: Software Development Methodology, Intelectual Property Management - Licensing and Free Software courses.*
- *Action 50 indicator:*
  - o *Equality committee created and periodic reunions are held.*
  - o *Annual monitoring of new implementations regarding equality by CE.*
- *Action 51 indicator:*
  - o *Steering Groups´ periodical meetings*
  - o *HR departments´ periodical meetings*
  - o *Equality Committee, Quality Committee and Innovation Committee periodical meetings.*

4. **New action about how to reach an open and international recruitment:**

Vicomtech has divided into three actions how to reach an open and international recruitment. In addition to carrying out an open and transparent selection process in order not to exclude any candidate under any kind of discrimination, the following actions have been developed:

- *Offer the opportunity to be trained in 3 languages (English, Spanish, Basque) completely free of charge by Vicomtech. These trainings are annual and are carried out by an external company called **INKOR FORMACIÓN**.*
- *We have created a new Accommodation document in Argi called Arriving In San Sebastian. This document contains information regarding: Flat Search, Registration of Address, NIE process, Bank Account Opening, Health Insurance, Social Insurance Number, Car Matriculation, Public Transport, Spanish Lessons Advice, School for Children, Mobile Phone, Internet Connection, Leisure Time, Sports, and Useful Information Numbers.*
- *Finally, we have agreed to evaluate new ways of attracting foreign profiles that do not know Spanish.*

5. **New action about communication of how to report ethical breaches:**

New ethical communications channel and procedure were announced on the RIM of September 2023.

6. **New action to train researchers about intellectual property opportunities and potential revenues:**

*External trainings have been carried out by **Iurismatica Abogados SLP** in September 2022 and September 2023 on IPR Training for researchers. Lecturer: **Jorge Campanillas**.*

7. **Coherence between the proposed actions from the AP and the identified issues (gaps):**

New HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS & Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers document has been created, containing a mayor explanation of the processes, actions and results so that there is a better understanding of the meaning behind each action: https://www.vicomtech.org/es/hrs4r

8. **Integrate HR strategy as well as O-TMR in a single distinct document:**

HRS4R and OTM-R policies published and integrated in one document: https://www.vicomtech.org/es/hrs4r

9. **Ensure visibility to the logo and accessible links to the HRS4R documentation in the Vicomtech's website**

Digital Positioning department has created a new visible area for HRS4R on the website: https://www.vicomtech.org/es

10. **The steering group and the working groups should be formally created (and obviously include researchers):**

During the RIM convened in September 2023, the inauguration of three pivotal groups was announced:

- ***Steering Committee:*** *The Steering Committee for the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R), led by Dr. Edurne Loyarte, Director of Organisational Strategy, plays a crucial role in overseeing the implementation of this initiative. This committee regularly monitors progress and serves as the main channel for sharing information and promoting HR policies in alignment with our Action Plan for 2023-2025.*
- ***Working Group:*** *We have established a Working Group with members from different units within Vicomtech. This group includes Mikel Maiza (a Senior Researcher) and Egoitz Bizkarguenaga (Equality Committee), Lara Idoeta (Quality Committee), Ane Elizalde (Digital Positioning department), and Mikel Agirre and Jaione Santos (HR team). This Working Group operates under the guidance of the Steering Committee.*
- ***Focus Groups:*** *In September 2023, a Focus Group has been established. The selection of this group has been made with the idea of including as many spectrums as possible, including people of different genders, nationalities and professional experience and career stage. Members: Fátima Saiz (G2), Ainhoa Lizaso (G4), Camilo Cortes (G2), Emma O´Brien (G4).*

2.- OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **As Vicomtech has international vocation, and it is difficult for foreign researchers to learn either Basque or Spanish language, the culture of speaking English as a working language should be developed and become an organizational value.**
   - *We have started the process to translate every Onboarding process and document need in the first weeks by the new incorporations to english. This process will be carried out through the end of 2023 and 2024.*
   - *We will review other ways to ensure the integration of foreign researcher as well as how to create a new culture of speaking English as a working language.*

2. **The information gathering would be more efficient if Vicomtech would use an internal survey in conjunction (doubled) by focus groups, and I suggest Vicomtech to think about an annual internal survey + a number of focus groups on specific areas which would improve and guide the data collection process.**
   - *We have officially created and announced the new Steering, working and Focus group creation. From now on, periodical meeting will be carried out by the Focus Group (as well as by the other two groups) to gather information and suggestions to understand the needs of researchers.*

3. **Improve communication on IP policy and IP revenues opportunities for researchers.**
   - *External trainings have been carried out by **Iurismatica Abogados SLP** in September 2022 and September 2023 on IPR Training for researchers. Lecturer: **Jorge Campanillas**.*
   - *We are working on a new IP policy procedure that will be published in our internal platform ARGI.*

4. **Better explain the system to calculate salaries to young researchers.**
   - *A new public document will be published on our ARGI platform to make our salary audit system more transparent for our researchers.*

5. **Improve communication on mechanisms to handle ethical complains.**
   - New ethical communications channel and procedure were announced on the RIM of September 2023.
   - This new communication system will be under surveillance to ensure that the ethical channel is well known among our employees.

6. **Mentoring should be done in the right way, and Vicomtech must ensure it is not confused with advice received from superior staff or direct supervisor.**

- *The mentoring process is an official procedure of Vicomtech, where time frame of actions and recommendations are made by the mentor to the mentee with a constant and registered feedback in our EKHI platform.*
- *We will review the mentoring process and policies so that they can be more differentiated from a supervisor advice.*

7. **Organise social events with the whole community of researchers.**
   - *A social event has been announced for February 2024 to celebrate Bilbao headquarters new location.*