

POLYMAT

Basque Center for
Macromolecular Design and Engineering

Implementation of the European Charter for Researchers & the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers



September 2016

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1. Overview of the center

The Basque Center for Macromolecular Design and Engineering, POLYMAT Fundazioa (Now on “POLYMAT”) is focused on use-inspired fundamental research on synthesis, assembly and processing of polymers.

1.1. Legal Status

POLYMAT, is a non-profit foundation fostered by the Basque Government and created by the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) and Ikerbasque (The Basque Foundation for Science).

The principal governing body of the foundation is the “Board of Trustees”, which is composed by:

Ikerbasque



University of the Basque Country



1.2. Scientific Program

Synthetic polymers are found in such a large variety of products that have shaped modern life. In the future, polymers will continue substituting other materials in established applications and will play a major role in the development of the technologies needed to address some of the 21st Century challenges such as energy, health care and sustainability.

POLYMAT is devoted to use-inspired fundamental research on synthesis, assembly and processing of polymers that in concert with theory and simulation enable addressing to these challenges.

Research Areas

- Polymer Synthesis
- Assembly and Processing
- Theory and Simulation
- Key Topics
- Energy/Sustainability
- Waterborne Dispersed Polymer
- Tuneable and Stimuli Responsive Membranes
- Polymers for Biomedical Applications
- Details about the research areas can be found in the Center web site www.polymat.eu.

1.3. Headquarters

POLYMAT is located at the Joxe Mari Korta building of the University of the Basque Country campus at Donostia-San Sebastian.

1.4. Mission, Vision and Values

Mission

To develop a vibrant use-oriented fundamental research on synthesis, assembly and processing of polymers to contribute to the development of polymers, enabling addressing some of the technological needs of the 21st Century in fields such as energy, electronics, health care and sustainability.

Vision

We strive to be recognized:

- By the Scientific Community, for our excellence in polymer research.
- By the University and Public Administration, for efficiently reinforcing the Basque Science System.
- By the Society, for helping to improve the quality of life with our research.

Values

- Search for Excellence in research, management and people development.
- Efficiency: Go beyond the objectives that we have set up for ourselves, optimizing the available resources.
- The promotion of Cooperation in the fields in which the Center competes, establishing an international network and also promoting teamwork inside the organization.
- The promotion of Innovation in Research and Management Processes, to achieve continuous improvement of the Center.

1.5. People

Currently, POLYMAT is structured in nine groups:

- Polymerization Processes
- Innovative Polymers
- Molecular and Supramolecular Materials
- Bionanoparticle
- NanoBioSeparations
- Science and Engineering of Polymeric Biomaterials
- Theory and Simulations
- Hybrid Materials for Photovoltaics
- Advanced Multiphasic Polymers

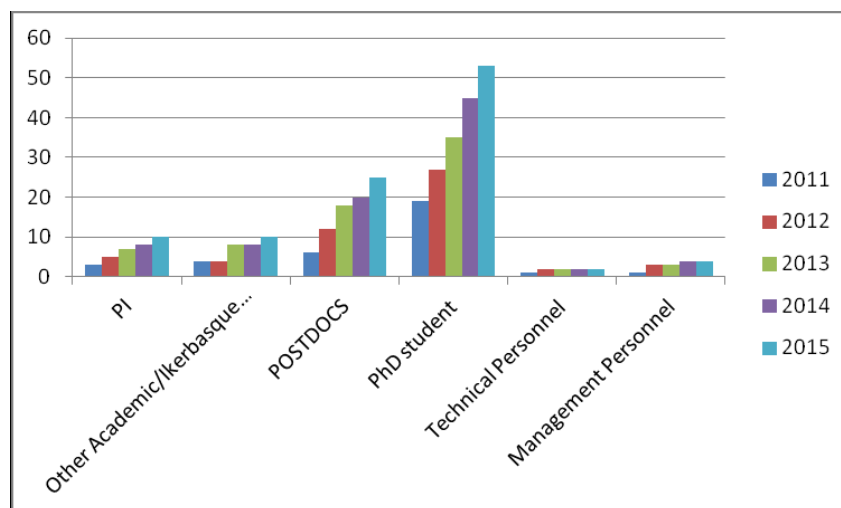


Figure 1. Evolution of personnel

2. HR Excellence process

2.1. The context

POLYMAT recognizes the importance of taking care of its key resource: people and it is aware of the fact that the competitiveness of the market and the complexities of the scientific environment make difficult the management of human resources.

People are the core value of POLYMAT, thus the organisation should attract and the retain talented people. In order to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Human Resources Process and to make this center an attractive and supportive place to work for researchers, POLYMAT decided to launch the **HR Excellence in research process** (including the implementation of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment). In addition, this process will provide international visibility to the center and promote European network between researchers and research organisations.

2.2. HR Excellence in POLYMAT – Charter&Code Implementation

POLYMAT decided to take part in the **HR Excellence in Research Process** in 2014

After the communication and approval processes, POLYMAT started to implement the tasks needed to implement the **European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment** according to the following calendar.

Tasks	Description	Resp.	Date
1	Internal analysis		
	Analysis of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers	MT*	May 2016
	Literature review and contacted with other Basque research centers with previous experience in the issue	MT	May 2016
	Approval of the initiative to implement the European Charter	MT	June 2016
2	Communication to POLYMAT employees		
3	Survey		
	Survey design	MT	June 2016
	Representative sample definition	MT	June 2016
	Anonymous survey delivery	MT	June 2016
4	Quantitative and qualitative survey analysis		
	Compilation of answers	MT	June 2016
	Data treatment	MT	June 2016
	Identification of strengths and weaknesses	MT	June 2016
	Results communication to employees	MT	June 2016
	Discussion group on quantitative data and action proposals	Researchers group	July 2016
	Compilation of qualitative and quantitative information and Action Proposals	MT	July 2016
5	Action Plan definition		
	Action prioritization	MT	July 2016
	Action definition, responsible/s and deadlines	MT	July 2016
6	Action Plan approval	MT	July 2016
7	Publication of the Action Plan to all POLYMAT employees	MT	Sept. 2016
8	Start Execution of the Action Plan	MT	Sept 2016

*MT: Management Team

Table 1. HR Excellence process - Tasks

Task 1: Internal gap analysis

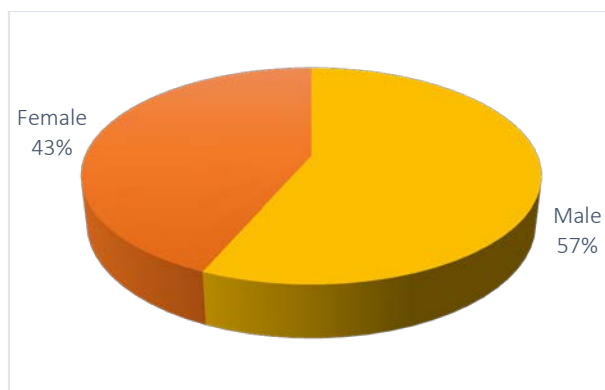
POLYMAT Management team internally analysed the European Charter for Researchers as well as the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. The organization also contacted with other Basque research centres that previously implemented the process. After the initial analysis, the initiative to implement the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers was approved by the Management Team.

Task 2: Communication to POLYMAT employees

POLYMAT informed all employees about the HR EXCELLENCE PROCESS, how it was going to be implemented and the outcomes of implementing this process.

Task 3: Survey

POLYMAT prepared the survey and sent it to half of the research community at the center (PhD students, postdoctoral researchers and group leaders = 23 researchers of the centre), considering all categories in the centre and also gender balance. 23 responses that represented well the whole researcher community were received.



Task 4: Quantitative and qualitative survey analysis

After the compilation of answers during two weeks, the data was treated in order to identify the average score in each principle and to discover the strengths and weaknesses of the organization.

These results were communicated to POLYMAT employees.

To know exactly what these quantitative results meant for the people, the Management Team decided to do a Focus Group.

A sample of 5 participants was chosen, representing employees at all levels at POLYMAT. They discussed about each quantitative results, bringing out why some principles were low valued and others not. This allowed obtaining key information in order to develop the action plan.

Task 5: Action Plan definition

Considering quantitative and qualitative data, POLYMAT developed an Action Plan aiming at improving the weak points. Actions were defined, establishing dates and responsible for each action.

Task 6: Action Plan approval

The Action Plan was submitted and approved by the Management Committee in July 2016.

Task 7: Publication of the Action Plan to all POLYMAT employees.

Once the Action Plan was approved, POLYMAT communicated it to all employees in September 2016.

Task 8: Execution start of the Action Plan.

The report was sent to the European Commission and POLYMAT started implementing the Action Plan in September 2016.

According to the five steps defined in HRS4R for the Implementation of European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment, POLYMAT is currently in step 3.

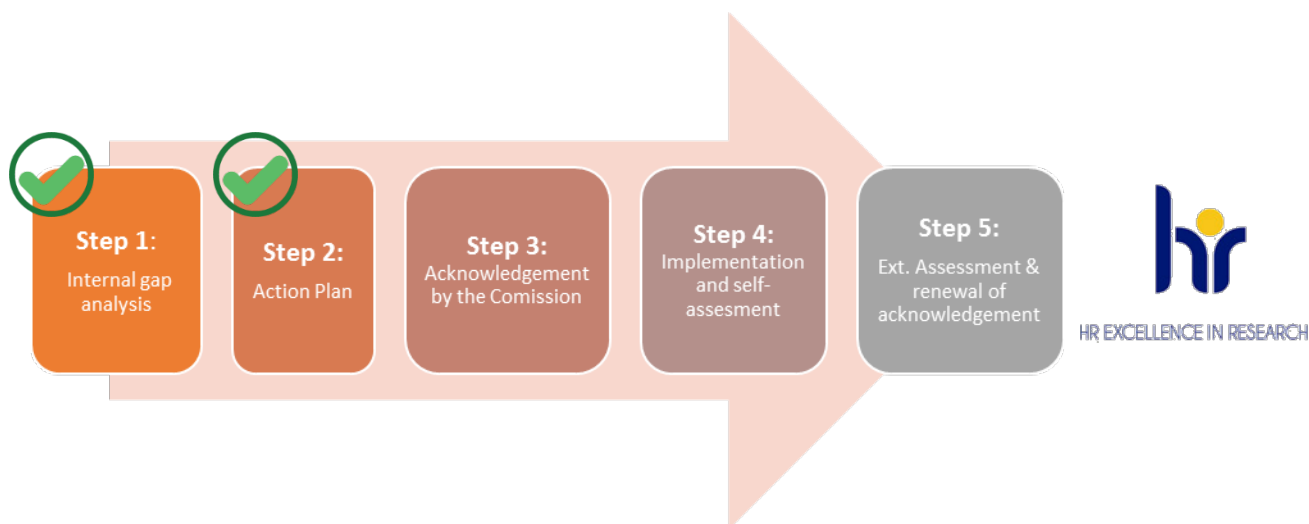


Fig 2. HR Excellence process - Steps

In the following sections, the steps related to the quantitative and qualitative data compilation and the Action Plan design are explained.

2.3. Questionnaire

The internal analysis is the first step of the implementation of the HR strategy for researchers. POLYMAT prepared a questionnaire that was sent to a representative sample of researchers through Google Forms. This questionnaire asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the 40 principles included in the code, according to this Likert Scale:

- 1: Strongly disagree
- 2: Disagree
- 3: Neutral
- 4: Agree
- 5: Strongly agree

The survey was sent to the 23 researchers of the centre, taking into account all the different POLYMAT's categories and committing with the gender balance.

2.4. Internal analysis and interpretation

2.4.1. *Quantitative analysis-General Assessments*

Based on the template provided by Euraxess POLYMAT asked for the 4 group of principles:

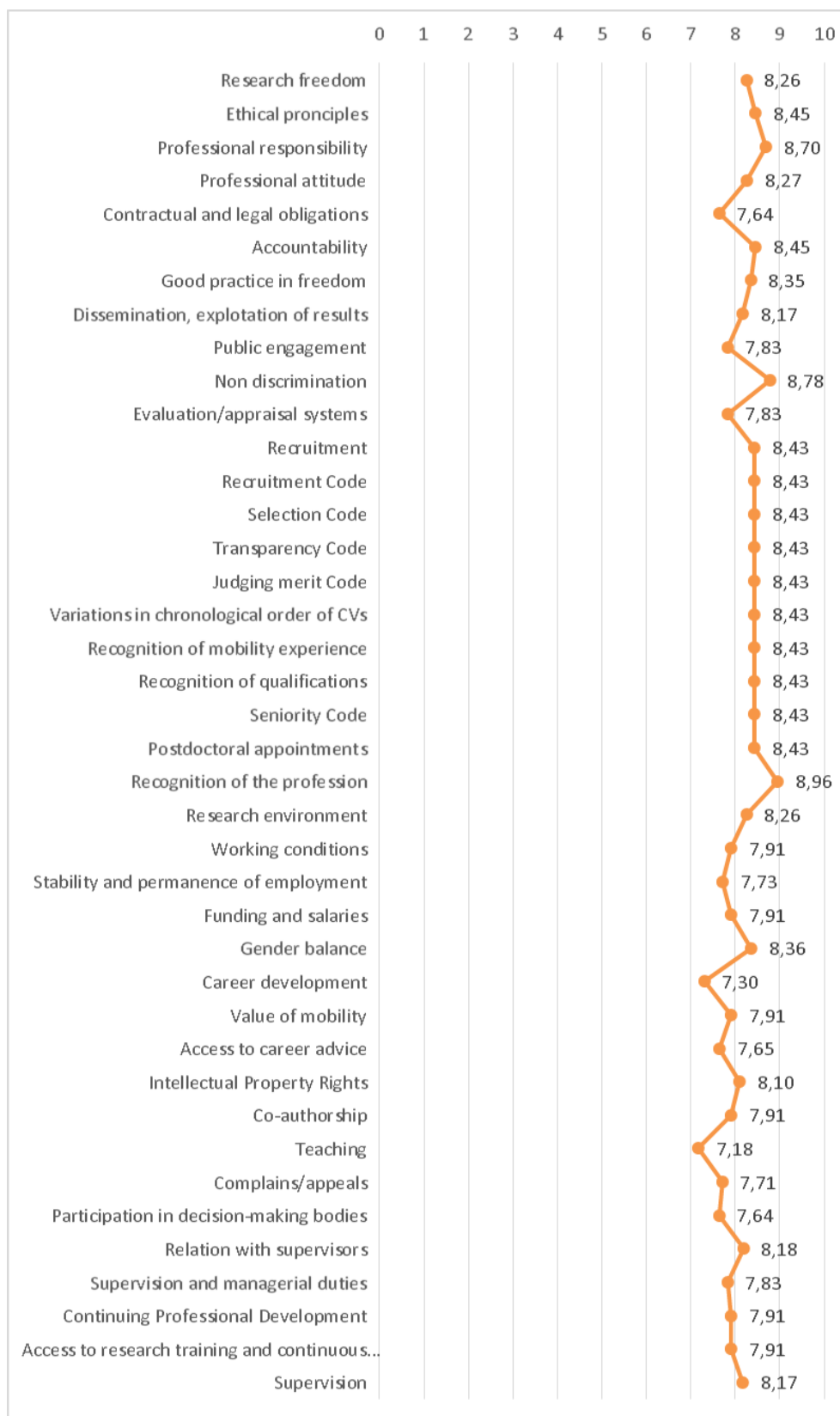
1. Ethical and professional aspects: principles 1-11
2. Recruitment: principles 12-21
3. Working conditions and social security: principles 22-35
4. Training: principles 36-40

Once the answers were compiled, POLYMAT first calculated the average score of each of the groups of principles (how much the researchers agree with the principles). This calculation helped the team to prioritize each group of principles and to prioritize the areas to deploy an Action Plan.

In the following chart, it is shown the results obtained per group.



The following chart shows the result obtained in each principle.



In order to have a better representation of the strengths and weaknesses at POLYMAT, we order the principles from highest to lowest.

1	Recognition of the profession	8,96
2	Non discrimination	8,78
3	Professional responsibility	8,70
4	Ethical principles	8,45
5	Accountability	8,45
6	Recruitment	8,43
7	Recruitment Code	8,43
8	Selection Code	8,43
9	Transparency Code	8,43
10	Judging Merit Code	8,43
11	Variations in the chronological order of CVs Code	8,43
12	Recognition of mobility experience Code	8,43
13	Recognition of qualifications Code	8,43
14	Seniority Code	8,43
15	Postdoctoral appointments	8,43
16	Gender balance	8,36
17	Good practice in research	8,35
18	Professional attitude	8,27
19	Research freedom	8,26
20	Research environment	8,26
21	Relation with supervisors	8,18
22	Dissemination, exploitation of results	8,17
23	Supervision	8,17
24	Intellectual Property Rights	8,10
25	Working conditions	7,91
26	Funding and salaries	7,91
27	Value of mobility	7,91
28	Co-authorship	7,91
29	Continuing Professional Development	7,91
30	Access to research training and continuous development	7,91
31	Public engagement	7,83
32	Evaluation/appraisal systems	7,83
33	Supervision and managerial duties	7,83
34	Stability and permanence of employment	7,73
35	Complains/appeals	7,71
36	Access to career advice	7,65
37	Contractual and legal obligations	7,64
38	Participation in decision-making bodies	7,64
39	Career development	7,30
40	Teaching	7,18

POLYMAT's general conclusion:

- The average score was 8,14 out of 10.
- There is no significant deviation within the different principles scores.
- More than the 50% of the principles score is above 8.
- The other 50% is between 7,18 and 8.
- The lowest principle score is *Teaching*, with a score of 7,18.
- The top principle score is *Recognition of the Profession* with a 8,96.
- Taking into account those figures, POLYMAT concluded that the centre's current HR strategy was quite well positioned. Anyway the management team decided to organize a focus group to obtain a qualitative analysis of these results.

2.4.2. Qualitative analysis-Focus group

In order to have a better understanding of the quantitative analysis made through the questionnaire, POLYMAT decided to bring together five employees who answered the questionnaire to a focus group activity. It is important to point out that all levels at POLYMAT were represented in the focus group (group leaders, Postdoc and PhD students).



Participants were asked their opinion about the result of each principle and their suggestions in order to improve each principle. The information obtained through the Focus Group was useful in order to prioritize the Action Plan.

2.4.3. Action Plan

I. Ethical and professional aspects

Relevant legislation	Existing Institutional rules and/or practices	Actions required
1. Research freedom		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Spanish Intellectual property Law ✓ Spanish Data Protection Law (LOPD) ✓ Spanish Science Law ✓ Spanish Statute of Worker's rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Polymat's Mission, Vision and Values. ✓ Scientific Committee Advisory Board ✓ C&C Endorsement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Compliance Plan
2. Ethical principles		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Polymat's Mission, Vision and Values. ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Compliance Plan
3. Professional responsibility		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Spanish Intellectual Property Law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ International Scientific advisory board ✓ Intellectual Property & Dissemination guidelines. ✓ Contracts and collaboration agreements. ✓ Polymat's mission, vision, and Values ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Compliance Plan
4. Professional attitude		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Internal working procedures ✓ Polymat Scientific and strategy Plan ✓ Internal communication process. ✓ International Scientific advisory board 	X

5. Contractual and legal obligation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Spanish Intellectual property Law ✓ Spanish Data Protection Law (LOPD) ✓ Spanish Science Law ✓ Spanish Statute of Worker's rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Intellectual Property & Dissemination guidelines. ✓ Contract clauses ✓ Collaboration agreements ✓ Working procedures ✓ Internal communication process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Compliance Plan
6. Accountability		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Polymat's mission, vision & values. ✓ Internal and external audits. ✓ Internal budget supervision process ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Compliance Plan
7. Good practice in research		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Spanish Intellectual property Law ✓ Spanish Data Protection Law (LOPD) ✓ Spanish Risk Prevention Law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Annual Risk Prevention Plan ✓ Risk lab audits ✓ External advice risk prevention specialist (IMQ). ✓ Intellectual Property protection guideline ✓ Data safe procedure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Compliance Plan
8. Dissemination, exploitation of results		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Spanish Intellectual property Law ✓ Spanish Data Protection Law (LOPD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Dissemination guideline ✓ Internal working procedures ✓ Contracts and collaboration agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Compliance plan

9. Public engagement		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Annual Plan of social dissemination activities. ✓ Participation in public administration programs of scientific dissemination to society. ✓ Dissemination system through social networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reinforce Internal communication and dissemination. ✓ Open policy to encourage participation of researchers at any level.
10. Non discrimination		
✓ Spanish Statute of Worker's rights.	✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners)	✓ Compliance Plan
11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Continuous supervision working process ✓ Management team and Group Leader role 	X

II. Recruitment

Relevant legislation	Existing Institutional rules and/or practices	Actions required
12. Recruitment		
	✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners)	X
13. Recruitment (Code)		
	✓ Recruitment process ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners).	X
14. Selection (Code)		
	✓ Recruitment process ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners).	X
15. Transparency (Code)		
	✓ Recruitment process ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners).	X
16. Judging merit (Code)		
	✓ Recruitment process ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners).	X
17. Variations in the chronological order of CVs (Code)		
	✓ Recruitment process ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners).	X

18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code)		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Recruitment process ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners). 	X
19. Recognition of qualifications (Code)		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Recruitment process ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners). 	X
20. Seniority (Code)		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Recruitment process ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners). 	X
21. Postdoctoral appointments (Code)		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Recruitment process ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners). 	X

III. Working conditions and social security

Relevant legislation	Existing Institutional rules and/or practices	Actions required
22. Recognition of the profession		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Spanish Statute of Worker's rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners). ✓ Polymat's mission, vision and values. 	X
23. Research environment		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Spanish Risk Prevention Law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Polymat's mission, vision & values ✓ Annual Risk Prevention Plan ✓ Risk lab audits ✓ External specialized risk prevention advice (IMQ) ✓ Facilities maintenance Plan ✓ Polymat's mission, vision & values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Compliance Plan
24. Working conditions		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Spanish Statute of Worker's rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reduction working hours option due to child care. ✓ Permission days due to child or relatives illness. ✓ Option for leave. 	X
25. Stability and permanence of employment		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Spanish Science Law ✓ Spanish Statute of Worker's rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ External and Internal Grant programs. ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners). 	X

26. Funding and salaries		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Spanish Science Law ✓ Spanish Statute of Worker's rights. ✓ University (UPV/EHU) and Ikerbasque salary regulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Internal guide on social security, health insurances and taxes. 	X
27. Gender balance		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners). 	X
28. Career development		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Annual Training activities. ✓ Group Leaders role as people developers. ✓ Polymat's values relative to commitment in people development. ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Formalize and emphasize the Group Leader role related to career development and advice. ✓ Internal communication figure and process for dissemination of job opportunities
29. Value of mobility		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Group Leader roll as a career developer. ✓ Stays programs ✓ Polymat's mission, vision & values. ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Formalize mobility policies, reinforcing and encouraging the mobility as an important value. ✓ Group leader role.

30. Access to career advice		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Group Leaders role as Career developers and advisors. ✓ Polymat's mission, vision & values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Define internal communication process for dissemination of job opportunities ✓ Ex alumni project ✓ External training on Job Search and selection processes.
31. Intellectual Property Rights		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Spanish Intellectual property Law ✓ Spanish Data Protection Law (LOPD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Intellectual Property protection guideline. ✓ Contract clauses ✓ Collaboration agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Compliance Plan ✓ Reinforce Internal communication process
32. Co-authorship		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Publication and Dissemination policy and procedure ✓ Group Leader role as a career developer. 	X
33. Teaching		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners). ✓ Polymat's mission, vision & values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ More development on Scientific Internal training program opportunities ✓ Push on Training program for transferable skills with other centres. ✓ <i>How to teach</i> training program.
34. Complains/ appeals		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Spanish Risk Prevention Law related to psychosocial risks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Annual risk prevention plan ✓ External advice risk prevention specialist (IMQ). ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Compliance Plan ✓ Solve conflict procedures ✓ Grievance procedure

35. Participation in decision-making bodies		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Group Leaders role as representatives of teams` needs.✓ Open door communication philosophy.✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Formalize the internal communication process for general decisions.✓ Formalize and emphasize the GL role as representative of researchers` interests.

IV. Training

Relevant legislation	Existing Institutional rules and/or practices	Actions required
36. Relation with supervisors		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Group Leader role related to Project management and careers developers ✓ Polymat's mission, vision & values ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners). 	X
37. Supervision and managerial duties		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Group Leader role related to Project management and careers developers ✓ Polymat's mission, vision & values ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reinforce Group Leader People management skills
38. Continuing Professional Development		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Group Leader role related to Project management and careers developers ✓ Polymat's mission, vision & values ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners). ✓ Annual internal training and external training activities. 	X

39. Access to research training and continuous development		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Group Leader role related to Project management and careers developers ✓ Polymat's mission, vision & values ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners). ✓ Annual internal and external training activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Formalize and encourage internal training programs ✓ Formalize and encourage transferable skills training with other research centers. ✓ Formalize and emphasize the Group Leader role related to career development and advice.
40. Supervision		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Group Leaders' role related to careers developers and supervision ✓ Polymat's mission, vision & values ✓ Welcoming guide and process ✓ Endorsement of C&C (Commitment of Founding Partners). ✓ Annual internal training and external training activities. 	X

2.4.4. Calendar of actions

Action	Description	Responsible	Starting Date	Finishing Date	Top deadline
Compliance Plan	The 2015 Spanish criminal code reform establishes the elements that the compliance plan should incorporate to serve as means of corporate defense from certain crimes that can be committed by its directors or employees. This plan includes ethical and behaviour code and procedures and protocols. It is being developed by POLYMAT, and it affects some of the principles related mainly to ethical practices, intellectual property rights, risk prevention, legal working conditions and grievance.	Management Team	May 2016	December 2017	December 2017
Reinforce Communication Plan on specific subjects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce information about public engagement activities • Communication process and figure for job opportunities dissemination • Reinforce communication on Intellectual Property Rights, collaboration agreements and confidentiality clauses. • Formalize the internal communication process for general decisions. 	Management Team	September 2016	December 2016	
Formalize HR specific policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open policy to encourage participation on public engagement activities. • Formalize mobility policies. 	Management Team	September 2016	November 2016	
Reinforce the Group Leader role on strategic aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Leader role as career developer, advisor, representative of researchers interest towards the Manager and Center Director. 	Management Team and Group Leaders	September 2016	December 2017 (continuous process)	
Reinforce Training Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External training on Job Search and selection processes. • Promote more Scientific Internal training program • Training program for transferable skills with other centres. • “How to teach” training program. • “Team management skills” for Group Leaders. 	Management Team	September 2016	December 2017	
Ex Alumni Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oriented to careers development 	Management Team	January 2017	December 2017	
Conflict and grievance solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define specific procedures for grievance and conflict resolution. 	Management Team	September 2016	March 2017	

2.5. General conclusions

The Basque Center for Macromolecular Design and Engineering, POLYMAT Fundazioa is a non-profit foundation fostered by the Basque Government and created by the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) and Ikerbasque (The Basque Foundation for Science).

Since the beginning of this project it is has been clear for POLYMATt that persons are the key factor for success, especially in the research sector.

We truly believe that a professional and personal satisfaction push any organization towards the excellence. In this sense, POLYMAT focus its efforts in supporting researchers at all stages of their careers, providing adequate facilities, professional development and support and a good work environment, all based in our core values.

The implementation of the Charter and Code has given us the opportunity to analyze, through a participation process, a lot of key aspects, realizing that some important ones need to be improved.

We really hope that the actions chosen will help us to continue developing and growing in the quality of POLYMAT's people management system.