Survey Report

Working and Professional Development Conditions — HR Excellence in Research

Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Science
(*Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN*, ISP PAN)
September 2022

As Director of the Institute of Political Studies, Professor Grzegorz Motyka and Chairman of the Scientific Council Professor Wojciech Roszkowski had submitted their letter of intent to the European Commission concerning the Institute's adoption of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, a survey was conducted among the Institute's staff on their awareness, opinions, and experiences with regard to the working and professional development conditions in the Institute. The survey was designed in such a way so as to obtain the staff's feedback on the Institute's compliance with the key principles of the Charter and the Code.

The anonymous online survey was carried out between 26 April and 21 May 2022. A total of 56 completed questionnaires were submitted, which means that 60% of the Institute's staff took part in it.[1]

In late April 2022, the Institute had 94 employees, including 74 researchers. Women made up 37% of the total staff (men — 63%), but they constituted as much as 70% of the administrative staff (men — 30%) and only 29% of the researchers (men — 71%). Women accounted for 32% (men — 68%) of the non-independent researchers (adjuncts and assistants) and 24% (men — 76%) of the independent researchers (professors and professors of the Institute). These ratios were relatively well reflected among the respondents. Women constituted 36% of all the respondents, while the percentage of men was 64%. At the same time, women are slightly under-represented among the independent researchers (26%) and over-represented among the independent researchers (36%).

The respondents' breakdown by position (administrative or scientific, and among the latter independent or non-independent)[2] is relatively proportional to the employment structure. In late April 2022, the administrative staff constituted 21% of all employees, doctors — 44%, and professors — 35%. 41% of the responders were professors, 45% — doctors, and 14 % — administrative employees. Hence, the administrative staff was slightly under-represented

[1]It is noteworthy that most of the questionnaires (68%) were received on the day when the employees were requested to fill them in (26 April - 16 questionnaires) and on the days when reminders were sent out (10 May - 9 questionnaires, 17 May - 9 questionnaires, and 20 May - 4 questionnaires). Due to the decreasing effect of the reminders it can be reasonably safely assumed that the continuation of the survey would have only slightly increased the total number of responses.

[2]For the sake of simplification, hereinafter independent researchers shall be referred to as "professors," while the non-independent researchers shall referred to as "doctors." This makes all the more sense also considering the very small number of assistants among the non-independent researchers.

among the respondents, but this is not particularly problematic considering the objectives of the HR Excellence in the Research process, which is primarily targeted at researchers.

Recruitment to the Institute

The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers attach great importance to open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment of researchers. Therefore, the first part of the survey was dedicated to the individual recruitment experience and feedback on what the recruitment procedures should look like.

According to the respondents, personalized channels of information about job offers in the Institute have been dominant during the over 30 years of ISP PAN's history. More than three-fourths of the respondents found out about the job offer either from an ISP PAN employee (41%) or a person not employed in ISP PAN (18%), or they contacted ISP PAN on their own initiative (18%). Among the professors, there were 2 declarations of co-creation of the Institute. Only 18% of the respondents said that they had learned about the job offer from a public announcement of the competition. It is noteworthy that most of the respondents who learned about the job offer from such announcements were PhDs — 36%. This suggests that the open recruitment channels have gained more importance only in recent years, which is consistent with the wider changes in the functioning of the science sector in Poland. 70% of the doctors and less than half of the professors declared that they were hired in open competitions. Competitions are not carried out for administrative posts, with only 13% of the respondents who work in the administration (1 person) declaring such an experience.

The respondents agreed that the number of channels currently used to spread information on employment opportunities in ISP PAN should be increased. A vast majority of the employees think competition announcements should be posted not only on the website (96%) but also in the ISP PAN social media (79%), on the website of the Polish Academy of Sciences (75%), and on EURAXESS (54%).

The Institute's staff positively assessed the procedures connected with recruitment to ISP PAN: 50% — "very positively", 42% "somewhat positively", and only 8% "somewhat negatively." At the same time, men were much more likely to have a "very positive" (60%) opinion about the recruitment procedures, while women had a "somewhat positive" opinion (60%). One should bear in mind that there were no "losers" among the respondents, that is, people who had applied unsuccessfully. It is noteworthy that the highest ratings were given by doctors, that is the category of employees hired in recent years and through competitions.

In conclusion, in light of the principles and guidelines included in the Charter and the Code, the above data constitute a prerequisite for further reform of the Institute's recruitment policy in the spirit of openness, inclusion, transparency, and meritocracy.

Ethical and professional principles

Another important pillar of the Charter for Researchers is the issues connected with ethics and professional standards in science. Therefore, the survey asked about the necessary, recommended, acceptable, not recommended, and unacceptable practices connected with research work in ISP PAN. The responses are presented in Table 1,[3] and they represent the standards as seen by the Institute's staff. The question did not address the issue of the publication in domestic scientific publications, as it can be assumed that it is the least controversial standard, which constitutes a point of reference for other standards.

The survey showed that the Institute's staff have strongly internalized the norm of publishing their research results in foreign scientific journals and publications. They consider this practice necessary in scientific work (61%) or at least recommended. Visibly less substantial, though still significant, was the approval for open access publishing (25% of the respondents considered it necessary, and 64% thought it recommended) and publicizing research results in the media (20% of the respondents regarded that practice as necessary and 54% as recommended). Moreover, most of the respondents had nothing against various activities — scientific, teaching, and other — outside ISP PAN, although their opinion varied depending on the nature of that activity. While teaching outside ISP PAN was considered acceptable (59%) or even recommended (36%), parallel employment in another institution (scientific or other) was seen only as acceptable (approx. 60%), not recommended (approx. 20%), or even unacceptable. This shows that multi-jobbing, which is controversial in Polish science, meets with relatively broad approval on the part of the ISP PAN staff, possibly due to the traditionally low salaries in PAN institutes (especially in the humanities and social sciences) due to the state's policy on science and the low ministerial subsidies.

Table 1. Please indicate whether you regard the following as necessary, recommended, acceptable, not recommended, or unacceptable elements of your work in ISP PAN.

	Necessary	Recommended	Acceptable	Not recommended	**Unacceptable**
Publishing or speaking for national and foreign media	**20%**	54%	27%	0%	**0%**
Publishing in foreign scientific journals and publications	**61%**	38%	1%	0%	**0%**
Publishing in open access	**25%**	64%	9%	2%	**0%**
Teaching classes outside ISP PAN	**4%**	36%	59%	2%	**0%**
Parallel employment in a different scientific institution	**0%**	11%	66%	20%	**4%**
Parallel employment outside science	**2%**	7%	59%	21%	**11%**

From the Charter's perspective, freedom of research is the key principle. All the researchers who took part in the survey (n=48) declared that in their scientific work, they enjoyed a high

[3] The percentages given in the tables have been rounded to integers and do not always add up to 100.

degree of freedom in choosing research topics (82% of whom ticked the "strongly agree" box and the rest — "somewhat agree"). A large percentage of the respondents (31 people) also decided to answer the open-ended question about the types of the main threats to their freedom of research. An analysis of the responses revealed that as many as 20 of the 31 respondents (65%) regarded the state's policy (of the government and the minister of science) as the most serious threat. The individual responses also concerned, for example, financial constraints, the neoliberal science reform, and the bureaucratization of science. This means that ISP PAN researchers are free to select the research topic in the Institute but work under pressure from the external milieu, on which the Institute has no influence.

The European Charter for Researchers lays great emphasis on the awareness of and respect for ethical principles and good practices in research and the dissemination of research results. The survey asked where, according to the Institute employees, the ethical principles on research were best presented. Most of the respondents (17) pointed to the PAN Researcher's Code of Ethics and the codes of ethics of the scientific societies in the given discipline (13). Several employees (8) mentioned generally accepted customs and traditions or following the example of other scientists, and 5 employees made references to the COPE Code of Publication Ethics. The ISP PAN statute, the National Science Center's code of ethics, and the doctoral oath were mentioned by 1 person each. Such a distribution of responses shows that many ISP PAN employees were unable to identify the main catalogues of the ethical principles to be followed by researchers, which suggests that they might be even less familiar with their content.

This conclusion finds confirmation in the answers to the question where the employees were requested to say how familiar they were with the different rules that applied to their scientific work for ISP PAN. Here the catalogue was much broader and included, among others, Acts, ordinances, and internal rules, including the resolutions of the Scientific Council and the Director's ordinances. According to the respondents, they were most familiar with the employee review criteria, the responsibilities listed in their employment contracts, and the Director's ordinances (with over 90% of the respondents being "very familiar" or "quite familiar" with them). In addition, 89% of the respondents declared that they had good knowledge of the ministerial registers of journals and publications. 79% said that they were very familiar with the Scientific Council's resolutions The respondents were less familiar with the Act on PAN and the Act on higher education and science — 42% of the respondents declared that they were largely unfamiliar with those acts and 43% said that they barely knew them. Similarly, 41% of the respondents said that they were largely unfamiliar or barely familiar with the PAN Researcher's Code of Ethics, 43% with the National Science Center's rules and regulations, and as many as 60% with the guidelines of the COPE Code of Publication Ethics.

Table 2. Please indicate how familiar you are with the following regulations:

	Very familiar	Quite familiar	Largely unfamiliar	**Barely familiar or not familiar at all**
Labor law	**11%**	57%	29%	**4%**
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR and domestic legislation)	**7%**	41%	43%	**9%**
Act on higher education and science	**13%**	45%	32%	**11%**
Act on the Polish Academy of Sciences	**11%**	48%	29%	**13%**
Ordinance on the evaluation of scientific institutions	**18%**	43%	30%	**9%**
Ministerial registers of journals and periodicals	**48%**	41%	9%	**2%**
ISP PAN statute	**23%**	50%	21%	**5%**
ISP PAN Director's ordinances	**54%**	39%	4%	**4%**
Resolutions of the ISP PAN Scientific Council	**38%**	38%	16%	**9%**
The National Science Center's rules and regulations	**18%**	39%	30%	**13%**
PAN Researcher's Code of Ethics	**18%**	41%	25%	**16%**
Guidelines of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)	**11%**	29%	30%	**30%**
The employee's responsibilities as stated in the employment contract or in the annex	**64%**	29%	5%	**2%**
Rules for periodic evaluation of employees	**64%**	30%	4%	**2%**

The Institute's staff were also asked whether they had observed ethical violations during their work in ISP PAN. Over 2/3 of the respondents gave a negative answer, 20% of the respondents had noticed such instances in recent years, and every eighth respondent had observed them, but those instances had taken place more than a decade ago. The respondents who had noticed the violations of ethical principles could then clarify what violations they meant. The dominant violations were plagiarism and inappropriate attribution of authorship (11 indications), auto-plagiarism (9 indications), and a dishonest, biased review (10 indications). No respondent mentioned any unethical treatment of data or fabrication of research results. Asked about who one should report instances of violation of research ethics, most of the respondents (31 indications) pointed to the Institute's management. The respondents much less often mentioned collegial organs and/or the organs established specifically to deal with ethical questions or instances of violation of ethical principles, such as the ethics committee (8 indications), the Institute's Scientific Council (6 indications), the Scientific Council's disciplinary commission (4 indications), the Disciplinary Proceedings Representative of the Scientific Council (6 indications).

Hence, it seems appropriate to include the external ethical standards in science in the Institute's internal legal order (for example, in the form of appropriate resolutions of the Scientific Council). Next, steps should be taken to ensure that the staff systematically familiarize themselves with these standards as well as to organize training sessions devoted to this topic. It also seems that the Scientific Council's organs should be more closely involved in the development and implementation of the Institute's rules on ethics in science.

Working conditions

The third important issue addressed in the European Charter for Researchers is the working conditions in scientific institutions, including job stability, flexible working conditions, non-discrimination, prohibition of improper treatment, transparent promotion rules, equal pay on analogous positions, and balanced representation of different groups, in particular, women and non-independent researchers in decision-making bodies.

According to 90% of the respondents, the rules for professional promotion in ISP PAN were clear. However, it is noteworthy that the men were much more likely than women to tick the "strongly agree" option (47% and 15%, respectively) and that the women were more likely to tick the "somewhat agree" option (75%). All negative answers were given by women (10%). Also noteworthy is that the administrative staff were more critical than the researchers of the promotion criteria transparency. It seems that while for the latter promotion usually involves obtaining a degree, in the case of the former, the criteria are unclear.

The system of granting financial bonuses to employees was even more positively evaluated by the respondents. 93% of the respondents considered it to be transparent and impartial, with more than half ticking the "strongly agree" option and almost 40% ticking the "somewhat agree" option. Similarly, 93% of the respondents thought that the periodical evaluation of employees was carried out in a transparent and impartial manner. The "strongly agree" answers were even slightly more numerous, nearing 60%. It can be assumed that the high degree of approval results from the existence of precise formal rules based on the external score-based assessment criteria. They were adopted by order of the Director and a resolution of the Scientific Council and, as shown above, they are well-known to the entire staff. This is a prerequisite for development of clear and transparent rules for other areas of the Institute's operation.

The respondents had a positive opinion about the working conditions in ISP PAN (see Table 3) in terms of work-life balance (89% positive opinions, including 66% strongly positive ones) and gender equality (84% positive opinions, including 59% strongly positive ones). As many as 93% of the respondents did notice the present solutions, which make it easier for the staff to take care of their family commitments, such as remote work and flexible working hours. However, noteworthy is the distribution of the answers after taking into account the gender criterion. When we do this, this strongly positive picture becomes much more nuanced. 94% of the men and 80% of the women claimed that the working conditions in ISP PAN allowed them to maintain a work-life balance, but the opinion "strongly agree" was selected by 75% of the men and only 50% of the women. The conviction that in ISP PAN, the staff are treated equally, regardless of gender, was expressed by 92% of the men and 70% of the women, with the "strongly agree" option ticked by 75% of the men and only 30% of the women. At the same time, 22% of the respondents said that it was often difficult for them to fulfil their personal commitments due to the amount of time spent at work, with that opinion expressed by less than 17% of the men and as many as 30% of the women.

While most of the employees had a positive opinion about the organizational culture in terms of gender equality, many of the respondents did not have a clear opinion as to whether ISP PAN responds adequately to unequal treatment (52% of the answers were "difficult to say"). A large group of employees (nearly 40) was also unable to identify who to turn to with regard to possible gender equality issues. This may be because the staff might have had little contact with such situations or due to a lack of an appropriate institutional and procedural framework or lack of communication on gender issues.

Table 3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Difficult to say
Working conditions in ISP PAN allow me to maintain a work-life balance.	66%	23%	7%	4%	0%
In ISP PAN, the staff is treated equally, regardless of their gender.	59%	25%	7%	0%	9%
I know who to turn to with regard to gender equality issues.	34%	16%	7%	14%	16%
ISP PAN offers solutions which enable its staff to fulfil their family obligations (for example, remote work, flexible work hours).	73%	20%	2%	0%	5%
ISP PAN responds properly to issues related to unequal treatment of women and men.	29%	13%	7%	0%	52%
I often find it difficult to fulfil my personal obligations due to the amount of time I spend working in ISP PAN.	11%	11%	34%	38%	7%

Asked who to report problems related to improper treatment in the workplace, such as mobbing, discrimination, or sexual harassment, the respondents pointed primarily to the Institute's management (31 indications), followed by the department head (6 indications), and the "independent representative" or the Disciplinary Proceedings Representative of the Scientific Council (5 indications each). The ISP PAN HR Department, PAN authorities, the public prosecutor's office, the ethics committee, the Scientific Council Disciplinary Commission, and the National Labor Inspectorate were mentioned by 1 employee each. Therefore, it appears that clear procedures should be developed and implemented in the Institute to prevent improper treatment in the workplace. This is all the more important as 5 of the respondents declared that they had fallen victim to improper treatment. Key here is the fact that those were exclusively women, who amounted to 25% of the female respondents. The improper behavior was mobbing, harassment, discrimination, unequal treatment, and harassment in the form of unambiguous comments. Most of the situations described took place more than 1 year ago, but not more than 10 years ago, and 2 of them took place last year. An analysis of the open-ended question revealed that the situations described were mainly, but not exclusively, instances of improper behavior of the supervisors.

The above-mentioned conclusions concerning a slightly more critical evaluation of the Institute's functioning by specific groups of employees (administration, women) encourage reflection on the need for a more balanced representation of specific groups of staff in collegial bodies and decision-making organs. According to the survey, 50% of respondents were in favor of additional representation (for example, in the Scientific Council, in the form of an additional position or mandate) of the employees in the different disciplines; 48% of the respondents were in favor of such a representation of non-independent researchers. Last but not least, additional representation of women and the administrative staff was supported by 41% and 38% of the respondents, respectively. Thus, the postulate of the additional representation of the various groups of employees is not supported by the absolute majority. But this majority exists within these groups. 58% of the doctors surveyed were in favor of a greater representation of non-independent researchers, 57% of the administrative staff surveyed expressed the need for their group to be represented, and 54% of the women surveyed pointed to the need for a better representation of their gender.

The employees were also asked to give their opinion on the Institute's financial policy, that is, which expenses should be increased and which ones should be reduced in the context of the resources from the ministerial subsidy. The results (Table 4) show that the respondents supported mostly an increase in various expenses but rarely indicated the areas where the Institute should make savings. This suggests that the employees postulated changes not so much in ISP PAN's financial policy as in the government's policy of financing science. The absolute majority of the respondents spoke in favor of pay rises and expenditure on research (queries, conferences, etc.), training sessions and professional development, and equipment and infrastructure. As for the remaining items (number of employees, fixed costs, bonuses for scientific achievements), the absolute majority postulated that that expenditure be kept unchanged. As regards the reduction in expenditure, the only item that met with the approval of at least 1/5 of the respondents was the reduction in the number of employees (21%).

Table 4. Within the limits of the financial resources available, mainly from the ministerial subsidy, each research unit realizes a certain budgetary policy. At the same time, it must be assumed that the relative increase in some expenses is made at the expense of others ones. Please consider some of the main components of the expenditure and indicate which expenses you think should be increased, left unchanged, or reduced compared to the existing state of affairs.

	Should be increased.	Should be left unchanged.	Should be reduced.
Salaries	70%	30%	0%
Number of employees	14%	65%	21%
Fixed costs (e.g. rents, utilities)	2%	84%	14%
Performance bonuses	48%	52%	0%
Expenditure on queries, conferences, etc.	71%	27%	2%
Expenditure on professional development and training	59%	34%	7%
Investment in equipment and infrastructure	54%	39%	7%

Training and professional development

The last important issue addressed in the European Charter for Researchers is professional training and development, including access to mentoring and raising professional qualifications. The survey asked the researchers (n=48) to rank the support ("substantial," "average," "insubstantial," or "difficult to say") which they had received from their direct supervisors, fellow researchers from their teams, and various PAN and ISP PAN organizational units which are to support researchers. The highest ratings were given to the ISP PAN Library and the head of the department to which the given employee belonged (that support was praised by 85% and 81% of respondents, respectively). The Institute's Research Office and the HR Department got 79% and 73% of positive responses, respectively. Support from fellow researchers from one's team (Department) was praised by 71% of the respondents. 19% of the respondents regarded it as average, and 4% said that the support was insubstantial. It is noteworthy that the support within the Institute was assessed significantly more favorably than that on the level of the Academy as a whole. Support for the PAN International Cooperation Unit and the PAN Scientific Excellence Office was positively evaluated by only 19% and 13% of the respondents, respectively. About half of those surveyed were unable to evaluate the support provided by these units because they had had no contact with them. However, even if we took into consideration only the assessments given, then it would become clear that the aid offered by the PAN's central administration is viewed less positively than that offered by the Institute's administration.

The expectations for the more professional training for ISP PAN employees varied. The professors were the least interested in increasing the number of training sessions (30%), doctors were significantly more interested (44%), and the administrative staff was the most interested (50%). Most of those who said that they wanted to improve their qualifications wished to take part in training sessions on how to obtain and manage grants (6 indications), on publishing abroad (6 indications), on research methodologies (5 indications), on relevant computer techniques and modern software (5 indications), and language courses (4 indications). Teamwork workshops, anti-discrimination workshops, and online safety workshops were mentioned by 1 respondent each.

Final remarks

In addition to the issues discussed above, the survey also sought to identify any special needs of the particularly vulnerable categories of employees, such as persons with disabilities; persons looking after young children or persons with disabilities; and religious, ethnic, or sexual minorities. Although a significant percentage of the respondents declared that they belonged to at least one of those groups, nobody identified any specific problems regarding their work in ISP PAN resulting from that affiliation. The respondents said only that maternity and parental leaves should be treated equally in the rules for the periodic assessment of employees (the number of points required should be proportionally reduced). The largest group of people with special needs was parents of young children and people looking after persons with disabilities. Therefore, further steps should be taken to identify their needs, obtain the European Commission's HR Excellence in Research certificate, and implement the HR strategy connected with this certificate.

Study prepared by the team for the implementation of the principles resulting from the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers. The team is composed of Agnieszka Cianciara, Agnieszka Cianciara, Weronika Grzebalska, Izabela Klatt, Maciej Łuczak, Ireneusz Sadowski, and Ewa Snopkiewicz.