

# Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice

Overview of the organisation in terms of the current strengths and weaknesses of the current practice under the four thematic headings of the Charter and Code at your organization.

## Ethical and professional aspects

**UNIZA's current state was ascertained through university management, Steering Committee and Working Group meetings, as well as the GAP Analysis, OTMR Checklist and employee survey questions 3, 4, 10, 11, 12, 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, and 42.**

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### Strengths:

The possibilities of independent research at UNIZA belong to the most important values and basic principles of the university and are also embedded in the UNIZA Long-term Plan for 2021-2027. Employees are aware of their responsibilities and know, how their research assists in meeting the objectives of the department and the university. There is a strong feeling of research cooperation, the superiors keep in mind employees' suggestions for improvement and provide them with technical assistance and feedback. The researchers are aware of their responsibility for the efficient use of finances allocated for research and follow ethical principles when conducting research and publication activities. They have received essential information regarding the protection of intellectual property rights, basic principles of scientific research, principles of Open Science and responsibilities in protecting the data obtained in their scientific research activities, from their managers, our website and welcome information. They share the results of their research work with the public mainly during Open Days of respective workplaces, through UNIZA communication channels and during the annual European Science Night co-organized by the university. UNIZA encompasses several supporting departments such as the Technology Transfer Center, the Department of International Research Projects – EraDiate+ and the Department of Preparation of Strategic Science and Research Projects, which assist researchers in submitting, funding and implementing research projects and navigating intellectual property rules. UNIZA has created its own Grant system to support research and scientific projects of students in their 2nd and 3rd level of study and young pedagogical and research employees, along with an information portal to register all types of projects.

### Weaknesses:

The researchers survey showed that still 44% of survey respondents do not communicate their scientific work to the general public (Action Plan (AP), point 4) and as much as 57% think that the time allocated for their research is insufficient. The public is insufficiently informed about the results of UNIZA's scientific research activities, mostly focused on central events (AP, point 4). Researchers need to be regularly educated on intellectual property rights issues (AP, point 1). Perceived lack of awareness of research opportunities in the European Research Area (AP, point 2). UNIZA suffers from a low level of bilingualism, several directives, forms and guidelines are missing an English translation (AP, point 3). 68% of survey respondents marked the evaluation of professional performance at the university as transparent and objective. However, there are no uniform criteria for performance evaluation and employee remuneration according to work activities and individual workplaces. Revision and adjustment of performance evaluation is needed, to ensure sufficient diversification and reflection of the work activities of different groups of employees (AP, point 5).

## Recruitment and selection

UNIZA's current state was ascertained through university management, Steering Committee and Working Group meetings, as well as the GAP Analysis, OTMR Checklist and employee survey questions 21, 22, 23, and 24. [www.uniza.sk/images/pdf/HRS4R/EN/07102024\\_HRS4R-InCITIES-2023-prieskum-EN.pdf](http://www.uniza.sk/images/pdf/HRS4R/EN/07102024_HRS4R-InCITIES-2023-prieskum-EN.pdf)

### Strengths:

When staffing researcher positions, the university strictly adheres to the relevant laws and internal regulations. To ensure a transparent admission procedure at UNIZA, the profile and specific requirements of each job vacancy are made available in advance. 86% of survey respondents consider the selection procedure to be transparent and unbiased. Only 1% of respondents were not informed about the results of the selection procedure.

In the decision-making process, the committees follow the criteria set out in the internal regulations. Internal regulations make the course and evaluation of the selection procedure clear and predictable. In the UNIZA Long-term Plan for 2021-2027, the university promises to ensure a transparent system of selection, evaluation and remuneration of employees, while respecting the Code of Ethics and relevant regulations, and simultaneously create a system of support and incentives for all university employees in the field of international cooperation and mobility.

The university supports opening postdoctoral positions. Every year, several positions are filled from UNIZA's own resources. This support of postdoctoral researchers and academic staff – specifically in the area of their professional and pedagogical activities –, or an active search for them in line with internationalisation processes and individual project solutions is also part of the strategic development objectives and UNIZA Long-term Plan for 2021-2027. The applicants submit all relevant documents required for the selection process but can also submit further documents as evidence of the details provided in the CV, including additional qualifications and mobilities. Mobility is recognised and evaluated as a contribution to the professional development of each researcher. To support the admission of foreign employees and make their arrival in Slovakia easier, UNIZA became part of the EURAXESS network (via EURAXESS Centre UNIZA). This centre provides information and administrative support to such employees or their future superiors. UNIZA has its own Counselling and Career Centre.

### Weaknesses:

Procedures for the recruitment and selection of candidates are not formalised according to OTM-R principles (Action Plan (AP), point 15). Rules for admission and career development are not wholly comparable with international practices (AP, point 15). Insufficient training of the selection committee members (AP, point 15). Non-existent feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate after the selection procedure (AP, points 14 and 15). Promotion of vacancies on foreign portals or via EURAXESS is scarcely utilised. The university lacks formalised procedures for facilitating the employment of disadvantaged groups, particularly at the start of their careers (AP points 15 and 6). Job advertisements lack specific descriptions of possible career development (AP, point 12).

## Working conditions

UNIZA's current state was ascertained through university management, Steering Committee and Working Group meetings, as well as the GAP Analysis, OTMR Checklist and employee survey questions 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, and 36. [www.uniza.sk/images/pdf/HRS4R/EN/07102024\\_HRS4R-InCITIES-2023-prieskum-EN.pdf](http://www.uniza.sk/images/pdf/HRS4R/EN/07102024_HRS4R-InCITIES-2023-prieskum-EN.pdf)

### Strengths:

90% of survey respondents stated that UNIZA offers suitable working conditions. 78% of respondents think that UNIZA offers a stimulating working environment with adequate equipment and 91% of respondents find their work enjoyable. Through various benefits stemming from the collective agreement, UNIZA continuously strives to broaden the portfolio of provided benefits (flexible working hours, sick-days, recovery allowance, physical training for employees, sports days, team buildings, Healthcare Days, home office...). UNIZA actively encourages employee mobility, as confirmed by 93% of respondents. Mobility or internship is one of the requirements for successful completion of PhD studies, applying for the title of associate professor and professor, as well as a prerequisite for the post of associate professor and professor. Since 2021, the university gradually implemented the Gender Equality Plan and dealt with the issue of physical and psychological violence. A specialised workplace Technology Transfer Center comprehensively ensures intellectual property rights and supports the transfer of education, research, and development results into practice. UNIZA puts a great deal of effort into improving the working environment (building infrastructure, renovating buildings, offices, classrooms, sports grounds and outdoor spaces). The university also owns cutting-edge laboratories, available to researchers as well as students. The UNIZA Institute of Lifelong Learning offers customised training courses for young university lecturers and researchers who are involved in the teaching process, along with language courses. In 2021, UNIZA founded its Counselling and Career Centre which includes psychological support. The majority of academic staff at UNIZA is involved in both teaching and research (research activities account for 30% of contractual obligations).

### Weaknesses:

The administrative burden of individual employees is significant (Action Plan (AP), point 16). Electronic distribution of accounting documents is in the process of development (AP, point 16). The university does not have a published list of computer technology and laboratory and technical equipment, which the employees could borrow for their research needs (AP, point 15). Lack of a formal procedure for retaining talented students after they finish PhD studies or projects (AP, point 8). Training of senior staff regarding unconscious bias in the selection procedure has not been implemented (AP, point 15). No less than 48% of respondents think that plagiarism can be committed without being detected later (AP, point 1). No proactive outreach to women to engage in the selection procedure for leadership positions (AP, points 10, 17 and 15). The university does not have an official mentoring programme and the long-term career prospects of PhD and postdoctoral students are not specified (AP, points 6, 7, 13 and 11). Missing compiled Age Management (AP, point 7). Co-authorship lacks examples of good scientific practice (AP, point 1). 52% of respondents consider their remuneration to be low (AP, points 18, 5 and 9).

## Training and development

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### **Strengths:**

In the UNIZA Long-term Plan for 2021-2027, the university pledges to develop further education of its employees. The Institute of Lifelong Learning provides our employees with educational opportunities such as language courses, information workshops as well as "adaptive training" aimed at new university teachers and researchers regarding higher education pedagogy, language education, information technology and publishing. The university also offers training regarding the process of applying for a foreign grant – conducted both internally and by external providers. Researchers are further educated by their participation in expert seminars and conferences. Every two years since 1995, UNIZA organises a prominent international conference TRANSCOM, intended for PhD students and young research employees. An important part of education is also participation in ERASMUS exchanges and various types of mobilities.

### **Weaknesses:**

The university does not have an established mentoring programme (Action Plan (AP), point 11). Training of senior staff in management skills and uniform strategy for employees' career development is also missing (AP, point 12), along with further types of specialised training (AP, point 12). Employees do not have access to a plain overview of training courses provided by the university (AP, point 6). Lack of formalized Age Management as a form of employee benefit.