

# Internal Consultation Report

## New Europe College

### Introduction

The purpose of this report is to outline the conclusions drawn from the consultations conducted at New Europe College (NEC) in 2024 as part of the initial stage of the Human Resource Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) process. The primary aim of this stage is to obtain the initial certification, facilitating the progression to the next stages in the process. NEC is committed to providing favorable employment terms, open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment practices, prioritizing training and development opportunities, and upholding research integrity principles.

For the successful completion of the HRS4R initial phase, consultation with the NEC community of researchers is vital. This report offers an overview of the consultation process, which included two main components tailored for the HRS4R process: *focus groups* with NEC researchers from various disciplines and experience levels and an *online survey*, which delved into researchers' perceptions and experiences, yielding valuable proposals for enhancing NEC's Human Resource practices.

Rather than separating conclusions according to the two methodologies of consultation, the following presents an integrated systematic analysis of the survey and the focus groups, delineating shared perspectives, specific participant concerns, and related proposals broken down according to the four headings around which are organized the HRS4R European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers: 1) Ethical and professional aspects; 2) Recruitment and selection; 3) Working conditions; 4) Training and development.

### Organization Profile

New Europe College (NEC) is an independent Romanian Institute for Advanced Study in the humanities and social sciences founded in 1994 that hosts individual fellowships and collective research projects. Over the past 30 years, NEC has acquired a unique position in Romania and the region, becoming established as a research center of international repute, with a strong track record of supporting applications for and hosting successful *research projects* including Romanian government-funded projects, five ERC projects (more than any other Romanian academic institution), and the Hannah Arendt Prize awarded for extraordinary reforms in science and research in Eastern Europe.

At the same time, through various *fellowship programs*, NEC yearly hosts tens of Romanian and international young researchers, enabling them to work on individual projects and to establish connections with colleagues from other fields and countries. To all its members and alumni, NEC provides a vibrant environment of open exchange of ideas across disciplines and national borders, by providing a structured schedule of events for meetings and discussions, and by actively maintaining and expanding its academic networks with other similar institutions throughout Europe.

New Europe College has a unique profile, in terms of its *research culture* (outlined above), its *administrative organization* (a small staff ensuring the smooth running of an institution punching above its weight on several fronts, from successful project support to international collaboration), and its *financing model* (multiple streams of funding, mostly private, some of them earmarked for specific disciplines or national backgrounds,). For these reasons, NEC does not neatly fit many of the provisions and criteria of the HRS4R process.

Most importantly, NEC has no permanent research staff, and does not ‘recruit’ in the usual sense of the word. It has two tiers of researchers, all employed temporarily: the fellows (invited for research stays of up to ten months through various streams of funding based on annual applications assessed by an external panel of researchers) and the researchers involved in various projects hosted by NEC and funded by national (e.g., UEFISCDI – Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding) and international (e. g., the European Research Council) funding bodies, employed on the basis of evaluations undertaken by those institutions.

## Methodology

The consultations involved both current and former research staff, soliciting their opinions and attitudes on various aspects of the research environment at NEC, including research culture, ethics, research facilities, engagement, training, development, and recruitment.

The *internal survey* was conducted on-line and consisted of 45 questions, which included demographic, rating scale, and open-ended ones. The survey gathered information on the four key areas identified by the European Commission within the Charter and Code for Researchers that directly impact research staff.: 1) Ethical and professional aspects; 2) Recruitment and selection; 3) Working conditions; 4) Training and development. There were 40 responses to the survey, which represents a good sample of the various categories of research staff hired now or formerly by NEC.

Since *focus groups* encourage informal, open-ended discussions, we found them ideal for gathering personal experiences, whether positive or negative, from our community. Our goal was to create a supportive environment where participants could openly discuss their careers and NEC HR practices. The two focus-groups were designed to gather a representative sample from each category of NEC researchers (fellows and researchers, which were also former fellows), gender and age groups, and academic field.

## Overarching Results

With these caveats in mind, the following report, based on feedback gained from current and former fellows and researchers via an online survey and two focus groups, outlines some of the ways in which New Europe College measures against the criteria of HRS4R European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

The analyzed data shows the NEC research staff as genuinely enthusiastic, motivated, feeling valued and actively participating within the institute’s activities. They believe NEC upholds the principles of open and transparent recruitment and working there is generally seen as a productive and beneficial stage in their academic career. Certain areas for improvement have been pinpointed, which will guide NEC’s HRS4R Action plan.

### Demographics (April 2024)

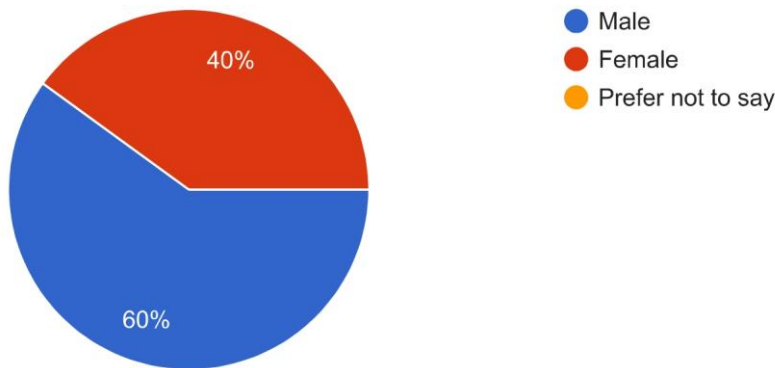
**Total:** Research staff by gender (M/F) and role (Fellows/Researchers involved in projects)

As of 31 March 2024, NEC has a total of 56 researchers and fellows (33 male and 23 females). 34 of them (21 males and 13 females) are fellowship holders, coming to NEC for one or two semesters of the academic year 2023 – 2024. They receive a tax-free monthly stipend.

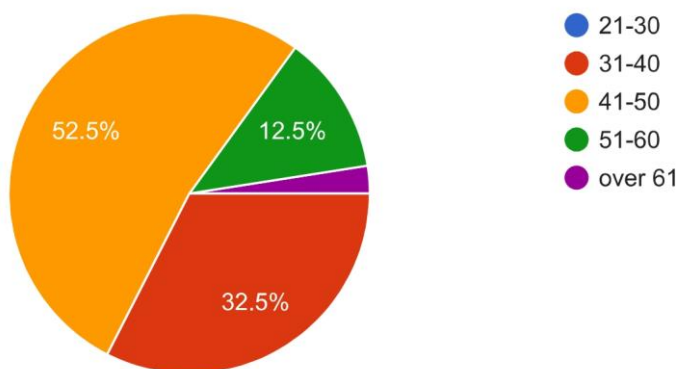
There are also 22 researchers (12 males and 10 females) are employed in 7 projects funded by UEFISCDI, PNRR and the ERC.

#### Demographics of those who participated (40):

##### Gender

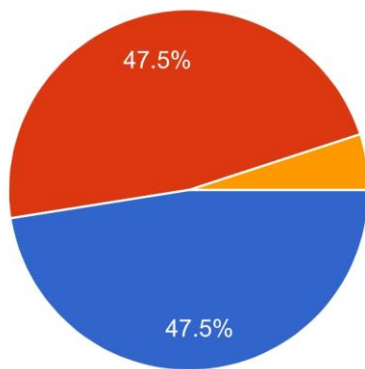


##### Age category



The survey had a relatively balanced distribution of participants gender- and age-wise, reflecting the overall distribution of the NEC staff.

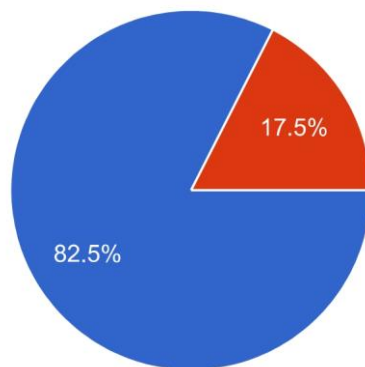
### Position held at NEC



- Fellow
- Researcher
- Alumnus/alumna

An even number of current fellows and researchers, relatively corresponding to the structure of the current academic staff (the fellows are slightly underrepresented), with alumni being very underrepresented, likely due to the low response rate of former NEC fellows to the survey.

### Are you (or have you been) PI of a research project hosted by NEC?



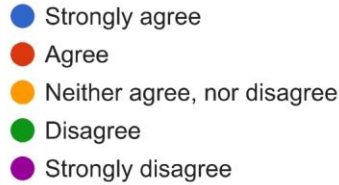
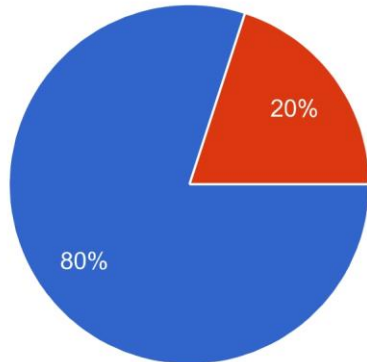
- No
- Yes

This relatively large number of PIs stems from the over-representation of researchers among the survey respondents.

**Focus Group Findings:** The selection and resulting composition of focus group participation balances out the bigger picture, as there were just three researchers (also alumni) and ten fellows, with a similar gender ration (6 females to 7 males).

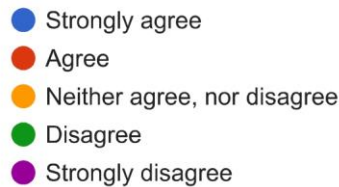
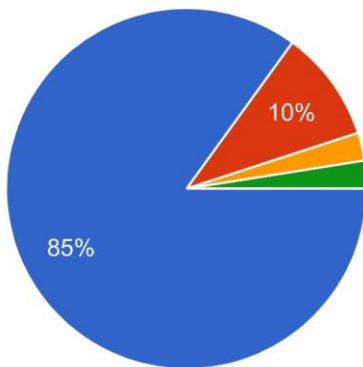
## 1) Ethical and professional aspects

### 1. Fellows/researchers at NEC have freedom of expression and choice of research topic.



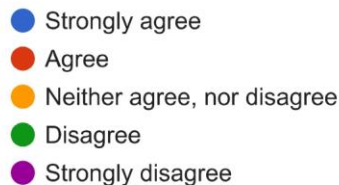
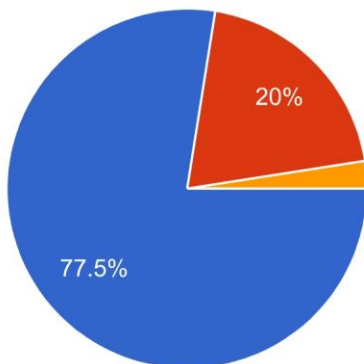
All fellows and researchers feel that they are free to express themselves and choose their research topic.

### 2. The professional activity of fellows/researchers at NEC complies with the principles and norms of ethics.



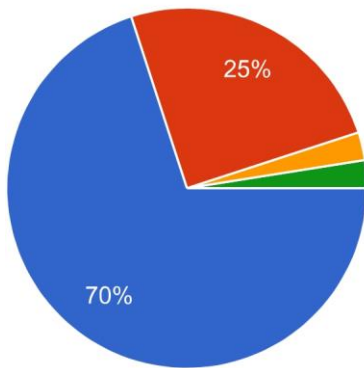
The vast majority feels that NEC ensures the adherence to ethical principles.

### 3. Fellows/researchers at NEC are aware of the professional responsibility of research, with a positive impact on society.



The great majority of NEC staff is aware of the social responsibility of research.

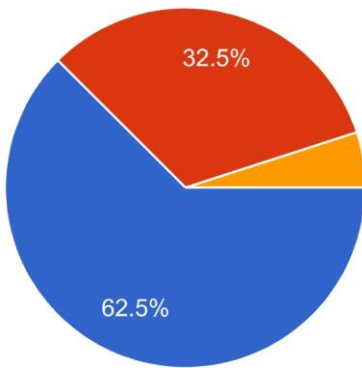
**4. Fellows/researchers at NEC are informed about ways to access, implement, and report research projects.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The great majority of NEC staff is informed about how to access, implement, and report projects.

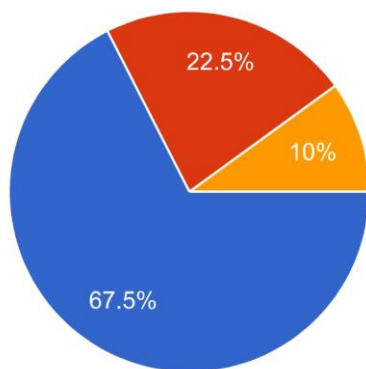
**5. Fellows/researchers are aware of the regulations, procedures, and legal principles underlying scientific research activity.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows are aware of the laws and procedures underlying research activity, with a minority unsure about this.

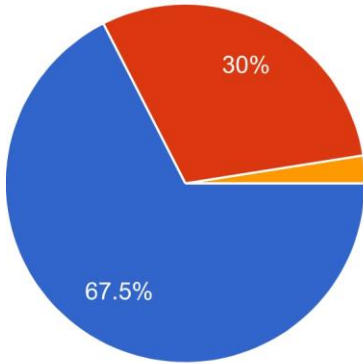
**6. Fellows/researchers have access to the information related to the correct, efficient, and transparent use of financial resources allocated to research.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows are informed about how to access and use financial resources in a correct, efficient, and transparent manner, with a minority unsure about this.

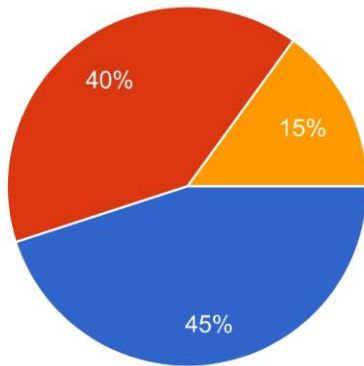
**7. NEC ensures the correct information regarding national and European legislation on the protection of research results/personal data.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The great majority of NEC staff agrees that NEC provides correct information about the laws concerning the safeguarding of research outcomes and personal information

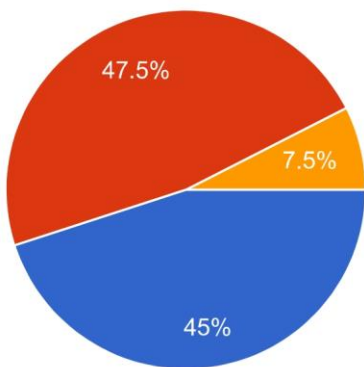
**8. NEC researchers/fellows know how to promote, to practically apply and capitalize on research results.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The vast majority feels that they know how to promote, apply and capitalize on research results, with a minority unsure about this.

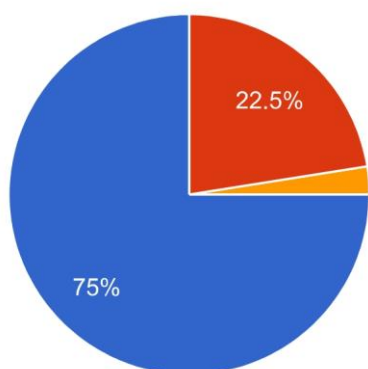
**9. NEC researchers/fellows ensure that their research activities are known to society at large, thus improving the public understanding of science.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The majority feels that their research is known to society at large and contributes to the public understanding of research.

**10. At NEC, there is no discrimination based on ethnicity, age, gender, social environment, language, disability, sexual orientation, political opinions, or social/material situation.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The great majority of NEC staff agrees that ethnicity, age, gender, social status, language, disability, sexual orientation, political views, and socio-economic circumstances do not serve as grounds for discrimination

**Focus Group Findings:** There was general agreement that there is no discrimination at NEC. The application of ethical principles at NEC is generally perceived as very satisfactory and pervading all levels of engagement of researchers with the institution, which are characterized by transparency and openness.

There was some confusion as to how some of the survey questions actually applied to the relatively unique position of NEC fellows and researchers, since they are temporary, and generally from the social sciences and humanities. There was a feeling that many of the questions in this category apply more to the hard sciences and to institutions with permanent staff (e.g., how can one capitalize and promote their research results?).

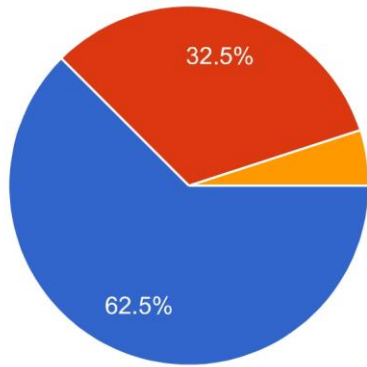
**Participants’ Suggestions:** One participant felt more could be done about making NEC more accessible to disabled people, and more proactive about inviting scholars from various ethnic backgrounds (e.g., Roma academics).

**Relevant Quotes:**

- ‘NEC is an advanced research institution with a clear strategy and unique and up-to-date institutional culture, which makes it one of the best such institutions in the region.’

## 2) Recruitment and selection

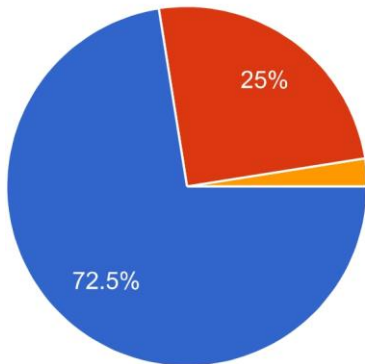
**11. At NEC, there are adequate systems for regular and transparent evaluation of the fellows' and researchers' professional activity.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The great majority of researchers agrees that NEC has effective systems to transparently assess their professional activities.

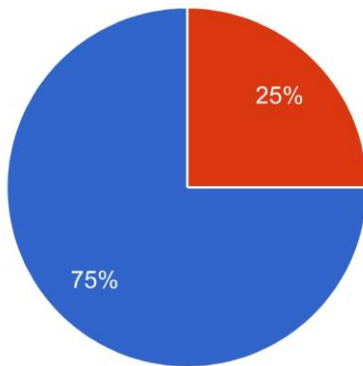
**12. At NEC, procedures for recruiting researchers/fellows are open, efficient, transparent, and compliant with national and European regulations, being adapted to the type of vacancy/available position.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows agree that NEC practices Open, Transparent and Merit based Recruitment, in accordance to national and European regulations

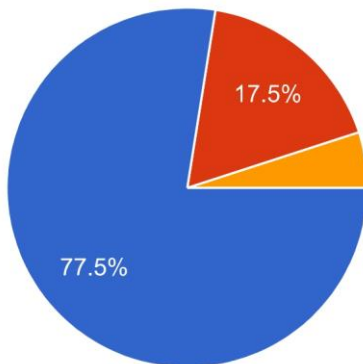
**13. At NEC, members of research selection panels have appropriate experience and competence for a fair evaluation of candidates.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

All researchers and fellows agree that the selection panels are experienced and competent for a fair evaluation of candidates

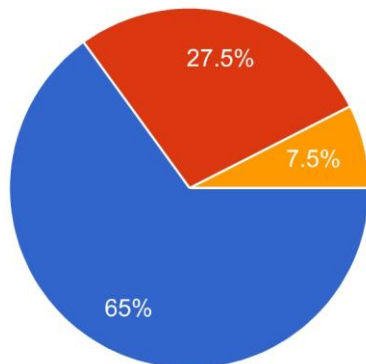
**14. At NEC, the process of selecting researchers/fellows uses various practices, such as evaluating the candidates' competencies based on their application projects, testing knowledge, and conducting interviews.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows agree that the selection process involves evaluating the candidates' competencies based on their application projects, testing knowledge, and conducting interviews

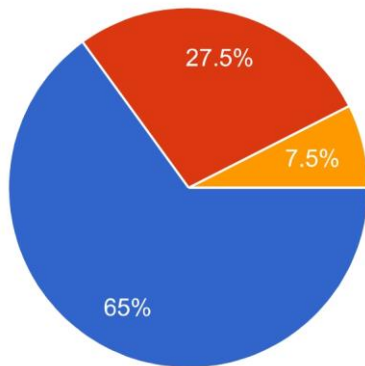
**15. NEC is a transparent institution. Candidates are informed about the recruitment process, selection criteria and the number of research positions open for competition.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows agree that NEC is a transparent institution and that candidates are informed about the recruitment process and selection criteria.

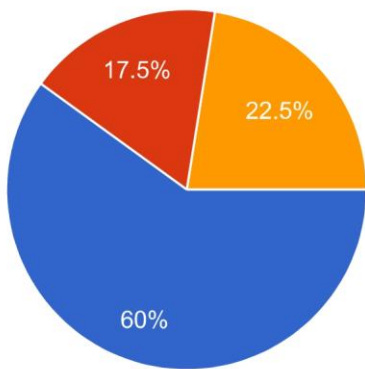
**16. The assessment of the fellows/researchers' work is based on the relevance of their research results, not on quantitative data, such as the number of their scientific publications.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows agree that their work is evaluated on the quality of their results, not on the number of publications.

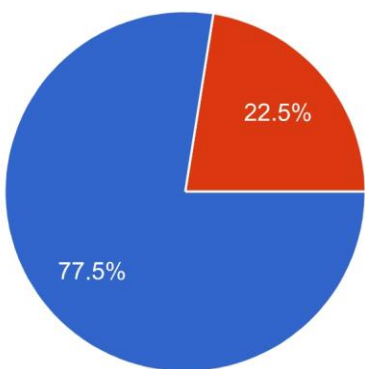
**17. At NEC, interruptions/discontinuities regarding the researchers'/fellows' careers are not sanctioned.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows agree that career interruptions are not sanctioned, though there is a significant minority with a more mixed opinion.

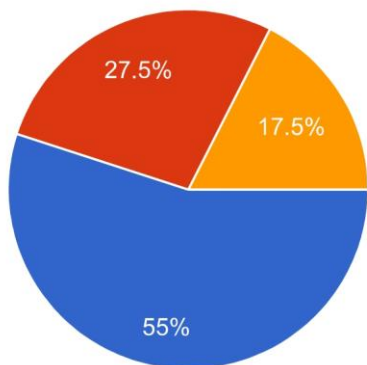
**18. At NEC, the mobility of researchers/fellows is considered a valuable contribution to professional development.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

All researchers and fellows agree that mobility is considered a valuable contribution to professional development.

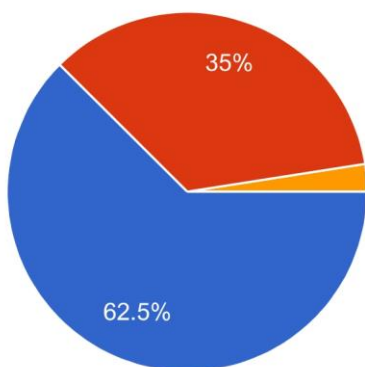
**19. At NEC, promotion to a higher position is based on getting new skills or developing existing ones, the main criterion being the researchers' academic results.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows agree that promotion to a higher position is skill- and results-based, though there is a significant minority with a more mixed opinion.

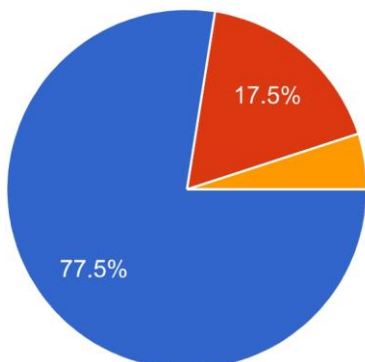
**20. At NEC, recognition of research excellence is not influenced by the stage of the researchers'/fellows' career.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows agree that NEC's recognition of research excellence is not influenced by career stage.

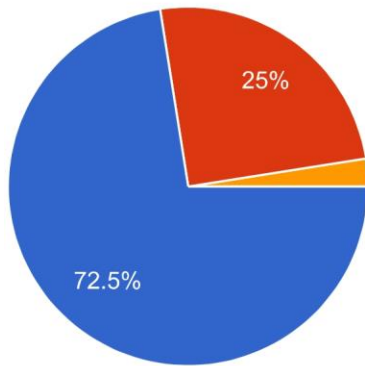
**21. NEC provides an appropriate institutional framework for recruiting, selecting, and hiring postdoctoral researchers/fellows.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows agree that NEC offers a suitable institutional structure for the researchers' recruitment, selection, and appointment.

**22. At NEC, recognition of the researchers'/fellows' status does not depend on career stage.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows agree that NEC’s recognition of their status does not depend on career stage.

**Focus Group Findings:** The vast majority of participants characterized their evaluation process as open, fair, and transparent. Some of the stories told by participants suggested that, compared to hiring practices in other Romanian and international (particularly the UK) institutions, NEC is doing much better: compared to Romanian institutions, there is none of the usual nepotism, and unlike international interviewing experiences, the one at NEC was much more relaxed.

However, a few expressed a feeling of confusion during the process and its aftermath with regards to several aspects (eligibility criteria, the number and type of fellowships available, the calendar of the various assessment stages).

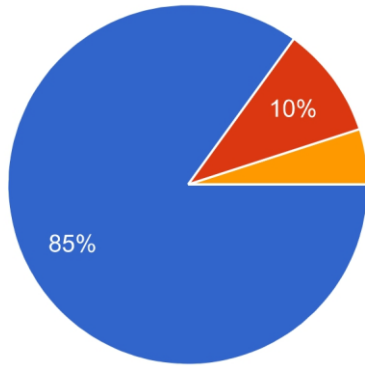
**Participants’ Suggestions:** It would be useful for applicants if NEC stated clearly from the start how many positions are available, what the rate of acceptance is, the calendar of the stages of assessment and of the interviews, then to receive news of rejections from the waiting list stage.

**Relevant Quotes:**

- ‘I actually enjoyed my interview... it was like an intellectual conversation.’
- ‘They put in a lot of effort and it shows... they brought in a few big names [as evaluators on the panel].’

### 3) Working conditions

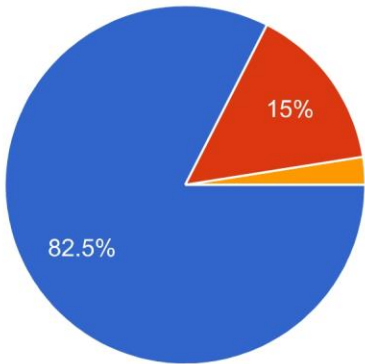
**23. At NEC, researchers/fellows have access to proper institutional research infrastructure.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows agree that they have access to research infrastructure.

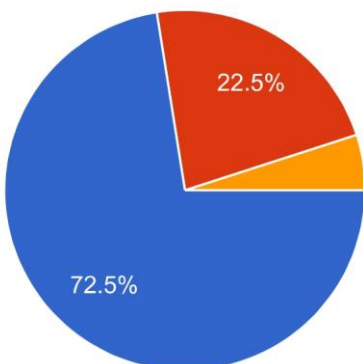
**24. NEC ensures working conditions that allow a proper work-life balance.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows agree that NEC enables a proper work-life balance.

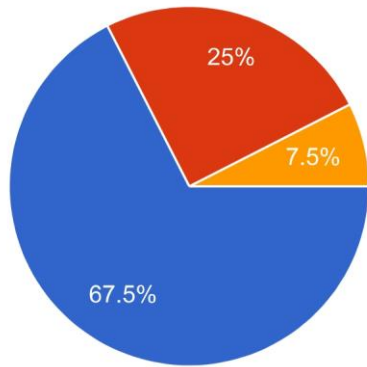
**25. The working conditions of NEC's researchers/fellows are characterized by stability and predictability.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows agree that working conditions are stable and predictable.

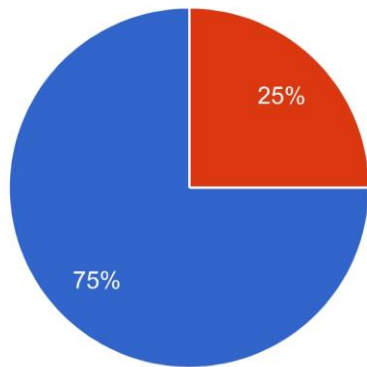
**26. NEC provides researchers with an attractive salary, comparable to that in similar institutions in Romania, according to legal regulations.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows agree that NEC provides an attractive salary.

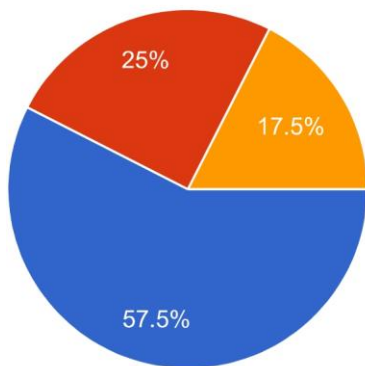
**27. NEC ensures gender equality, based on a policy of equal opportunities in recruitment, selection, and career.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

All researchers and fellows agree that NEC ensures gender equality and equal opportunities.

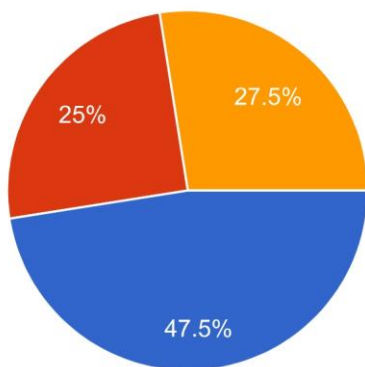
**34. NEC has the proper tools for resolving complaints/appeals and in ensuring confidentiality in resolving professional conflicts.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows agree that NEC has the proper tools for resolving complaints and professional conflicts, though there is a significant minority with a more mixed opinion.

**35. At NEC, researchers are duly represented in the institute’s consultation and decision-making bodies.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

There is a mixed response on the representation of researchers in NEC’s consultation and decision process.

**Focus Group Findings:** A general sense of efficiency and openness to the fellows’ initiatives and ideas. There was widespread enthusiasm about the activity of the NEC administrative staff. They were all perceived as kind, helpful, quick to react to questions and propositions from the researchers – in marked contrast to participants’ experiences with other Romanian and international institutions. The NEC is always felt to be very supportive of the initiatives of its fellows and researchers (such as reading groups, workshops etc.).

The working conditions are perceived as not just adequate, but positively generous, from the working spaces to the venues for discussion and collaboration and, last but not least, the common lunches. The only drawback was the relatively limited access to online journals and collections, but this was recognized as a much broader problem pervading the academic publishing industry and based on the inequalities between a few rich institutions in the Global North and academia in the rest of the world.

**Participants’ Suggestions:**

- Agreements with larger Western libraries that might be able to provide some access to certain journals and collections currently not covered at NEC.
- While no survey respondent or focus group participants reported any professional conflicts or infringement on their rights, one researcher suggested there should be an ombudsman, a member of staff who would be advertised from the start as the go-to person for personal/professional complaints.

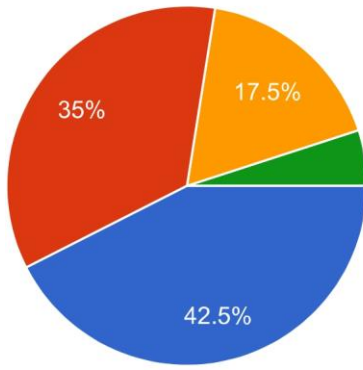
**Relevant Quotes:**

- ‘Everybody from the staff is not just doing their job, but actually going the extra mile on every little thing.’
- ‘You get the feeling they are team... that everybody knows what they are doing.’
- ‘I never got the “It’s not my job” excuse from anyone at NEC... they’ve helped me with everything from visa issues to health problems, they drove me around.’

- ‘There’s always a smiling face welcoming me.’
- ‘My colleagues told me that NEC is a place of open discussion, it is truly so.’
- ‘This is a very collegial place.’
- ‘Two months ago, my reading group was just an idea I floated to the NEC people, and now it’s a weekly series of meetings with a conference planned in a few months.’

#### 4) Training and development

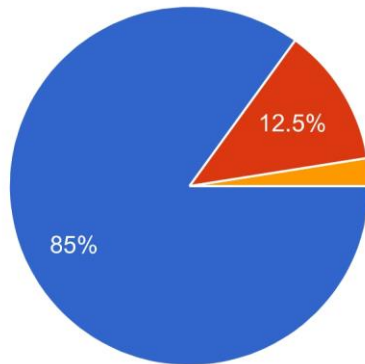
##### 28. NEC has a clear strategy for career development in research.



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

There is a mixed response on NEC's strategy for career development.

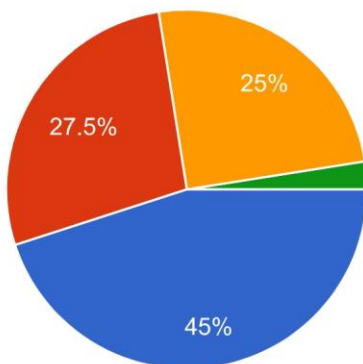
##### 29. NEC encourages national and international mobility of researchers/fellows.



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows agree that NEC encourages their national and international mobility.

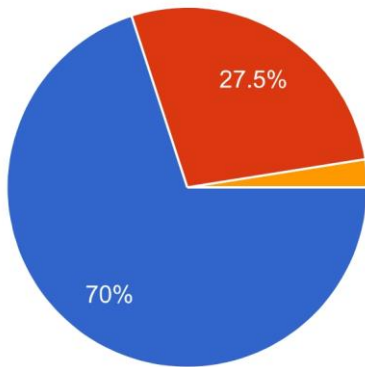
##### 30. NEC provides career advice to its researchers/fellows.



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

There is a mixed response on NEC's providing career advice.

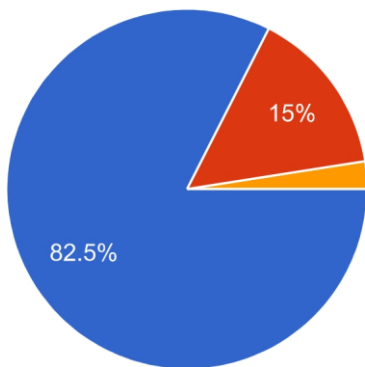
**31. NEC ensures the protection of intellectual property rights, including copyright of publications etc.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows agree that NEC protects intellectual property rights.

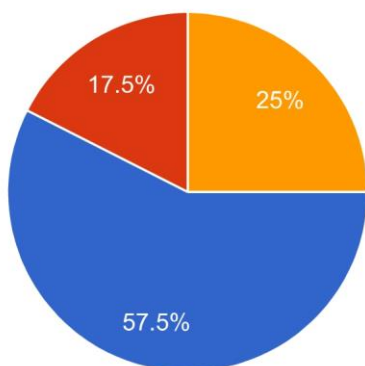
**32. NEC encourages partnerships and collaborations in national/international research networks.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows agree that NEC encourages national and international collaboration.

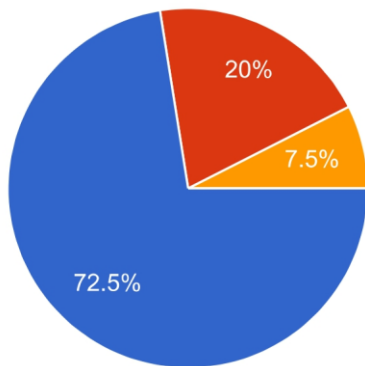
**33. NEC provides appropriate training for research activities as part of the fellows'/researchers' professional development.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

There is a mixed response on NEC's providing appropriate training for their professional development

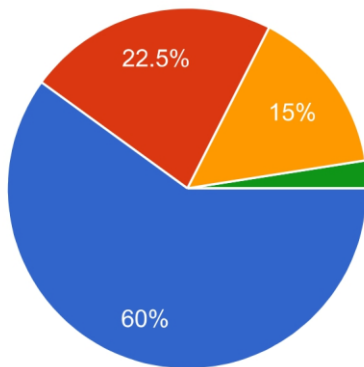
**36. NEC provides the institutional framework for a fair, equal, and productive collaboration between younger researchers and their academic coordinators (PIs, academic staff).**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Most researchers and fellows agree that NEC enables productive collaboration between younger researchers and their academic coordinators.

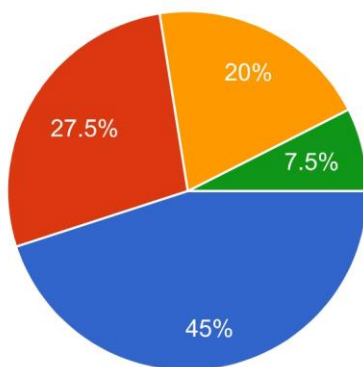
**37. Experienced researchers are involved in supervision, mentoring, project coordination, and knowledge transfer activities, useful in supporting the careers of younger researchers.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

There is a mixed response on involvement of experienced researchers in supporting the careers of younger researchers.

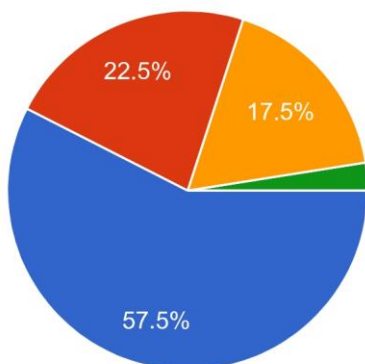
**38. NEC provides courses for continuous professional development of researchers/fellows.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

There is a mixed response on NEC providing professional development courses.

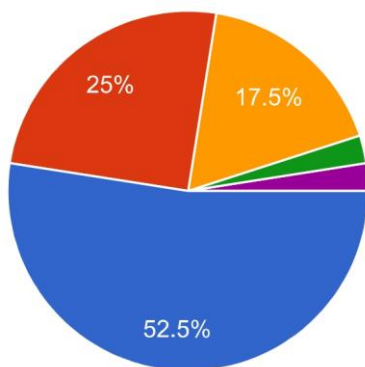
**39. NEC provides opportunities for research training and continuous development of researchers'/fellows' academic skills.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

There is a mixed response on NEC providing research training.

**40. Younger researchers can rely on a scientific supervisor with advanced skills in their field of research.**



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree, nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

There is a mixed response on NEC ensuring that younger researchers can rely on scientific supervisors.

**Focus Group Findings:**

The general sentiment among participants is that a fellowship at NEC was a significantly positive experience and an overwhelmingly beneficial stage in the researchers' careers. NEC definitely improved most people's prospects. A fellowship enabled researchers who had had a break in their academic career to get back on track and to continue their work.

However, the NEC policy towards former fellows is not always clear: unlike other institutions such as the CEU, where it is made clear to researchers that they cannot return, NEC does theoretically encourage future collaboration, but details are vague: Can they apply to other fellowships? Can they return in another way? How can they get involved in projects hosted by NEC?

On the front of career development, NEC is perceived (as in all other respects) as being very open and helpful if approached by individual researchers, but a significant majority feels that there is no general guidance on the possible future trajectories of fellows and little in the way of an institutional structure making sure fellows are aware of the grant application processes and potential collaborations (such as

projects already running or starting at NEC). On a positive note, the NEC alumni network and the monthly newsletter actually work: this is how some researchers found out about their next positions and projects. Still, there was a reported lack of equal access to information: researchers who ‘know the tricks’ (i.e., how to apply to grants, where to find out about them) are not placed in a position to share their knowledge, and the success of individual researchers’ future career trajectories depends on their personal connections at the end of the day. NEC could do more to provide spaces for this information to circulate more broadly.

The NEC Yearbook plays an important role in the fellows’ stay here (they need to publish one article at the end of their fellowship), but it is not always clear how beneficial this publication is for their further career. Some participants opined that it would be better if this publication was more visible/more prestigious, or alternatively, if NEC was more flexible and allowed for the publication of their resulting work in other venues, or other arrangements (such as working towards a book project).

Realistically, the participants agreed that while NEC cannot provide any long-term stability due to its available resources (financially and staff-wise), it is doing its best to prepare its alumni for furthering their academic careers. In another sense, it was concluded that NEC was a victim of its success: it gathers the best researchers in Romania and the Black Sea region in the humanities and social sciences, but it cannot keep them long enough to insert them into the local academic system. Meanwhile, NEC’s position in the Romanian academic ecology is unclear: there is a perceived lack of established channels of communication with other Romanian universities or research institutes. Consequently, more established, but less open local institutions might feel reluctant to open for NEC alumni (though this was recognized to be also due to these institutions’ perceived lack of transparency and fair recruitment practices).

### **Participants’ Suggestions:**

- Include in the materials distributed to the fellows (the welcoming brochure, the newsletter) clear explanations on how to submit a project to national or international funding bodies that would be hosted by NEC or how to apply for a position on such a project.
- Allow current fellows to shadow some of the researchers involved in projects (‘bring-a-NEC-fellow-to-work days’).
- Organize some form of career training (seminars/working groups on how to get your first grant/your first book published) and mentorship (match senior and younger researchers for one-to-one or small group conversations about career development). This would be helpful, though perhaps hard to implement with NEC’s resources. Some of these activities are already happening, but informally and irregularly, stemming from individual initiatives of researchers. They enjoy NEC’s support, but there is a need felt for an institutional effort ensuring their regularity.
- The NEC Yearbook should be indexed on academic databases such as SCOPUS/EBSCO, ensuring its status and visibility.

**Relevant Quotes:**

- ‘I wouldn’t have an academic career without my NEC fellowship... It mattered when it needed to matter.’
- ‘NEC gave me a bit of optimism for going further with my research.’
- ‘My NEC fellowship came at the right moment, it got the ball rolling for me.’

## Conclusions

### Positive Findings

- NEC is seen as performing exceptionally well given its size or resources on several fronts, especially when compared to much larger and better funded institutions in Romania and abroad (e. g., Eastern Europe, Italy, the UK).
- NEC continues to be perceived as a prestigious research institution, drawing the best minds in their fields.
- The NEC staff are seen as exceptionally supportive, helpful, and open to any suggestion and request for assistance.
- Fellows and researchers report an overwhelmingly positive experience at NEC and many would like to return in some capacity.
- They value the available facilities and the venues for collaborating in research.
- They feel that NEC ensures an ethical, fair, and predictable working environment.
- NEC Fellowships are perceived as an extremely favourable step in researchers' careers.
- NEC practices open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment.

### Areas of Potential Improvement

- Making the application process to NEC fellowships clearer up-front (with regards to the calendar, evaluation criteria and potentially some feedback)
- A high proportion of researchers said that they did not receive career advice. Actions will be prepared to address this gap.
- Providing some form of career training (e. g., working groups or seminars on getting your first grant/first book published, on navigating the academic job market, mock interviews etc.).
- On a related note, providing some form of mentorship (e.g., linking more senior researchers with early career ones, perhaps as part of activities suggested above).
- A closer relationship to other Romanian institutions would be beneficial to early career Romanian academics at NEC, many of which have started their career abroad and thus have no networks locally.