EURAXESS

Action Plan

Case number

2023RO94290

Name Organisation under review

New Europe College

Organisation's contact details

Str. Plantelor, 21, Bucharest, Romania, Bucharest, 023971, Romania

Submission date to the European Commission

11/05/2024

1. Organisational Information

*Please provide a limited number of key figures for your organisation. Figures marked * are compulsory.*

STAFF & STUDENTS	FTE
Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research *	56
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality) *	16
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation) *	56
Of whom are women *	23
Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor. *	8
Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level *	48
Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level *	0
Total number of students (if relevant) *	0
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff) *	17

RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)	€
Total annual organisational budget	1695000
Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)	0

RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)	**€**
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)	1345000
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	350000

ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE (a very brief description of your organisation, max. 100 words)

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.

2. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice

Please provide an 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.

Note: Click on the name of each of the four thematic headings of the Charter and Code to open the editor and provide your answer.

Ethical and professional aspects* ⌄

Strengths and Weaknesses (max. 800 words)

Strengths:

- In its MIssion Statement, NEC adheres to the acknowledged ethical practices and principles, in accordance with Romanian and European legislation.

- In practice, NEC is recognised by its fellows and researchers as providing an ethical, fair and non-discriminatory research environment.

Weaknesses:
- Administratively, NEC does not yet have a separate procedure to advertise that it ensures an ethical, fair and non-discriminatory research environment.

- NEC does not yet have a Code of research ethics and procedures for the evaluation of researchers (although this is unnecessary, as there are no permanent research staff and no promotions), or training in research ethics or good research practice (a good idea, but of limited use as all NEC researchers are at least a few years into their postdoctoral careers).

Recruitment and selection*

Strengths and Weaknesses (max. 800 words)

Strengths:

- Recruitment follows transparent procedural standards and an open, fair, and non-discriminatory selection process;

- NEC attracts many foreign researchers and academics, resulting in a very diverse and international researcher body, especially comparatively to other Romanian and South-Eastern European institutions;

NEC is recognised as performing exceptionally well given its size or resources, especially when compared to much larger and better funded institutions in Romania and abroad (e. g., Eastern Europe, Italy, the UK), which makes it an attractive destination to researchers.

Weaknesses:

- The feedback provided to candidates who were not accepted after the competition remains limited or is entirely absent, which is however announced in the application guidelines

- There is some lack of clarity among applicants with regards to several aspects: the eligibility criteria, the number and type of fellowships available, the calendar of the various evaluation phases.

Working conditions*

Strengths and Weaknesses (max. 800 words)

Strengths:

- NEC ensures an ethical, fair, and predictable working environment;

- the staff are seen as exceptionally supportive, helpful, and open to any suggestion and request for assistance.

- fellows and researchers report an overwhelmingly positive experience with NEC's research spaces, facilities and venues for dialogue and collaboration;

- NEC provides excellent institutional support to the initiatives of its fellows and researchers (such as reading groups, workshops, project applications).

Weaknesses:

- relatively limited access to online journals and collections (although on par with those available in other Romanian and South-Eastern European institutions).

Training and development* ⌄

Strengths and Weaknesses (max. 800 words)

Strengths:

- NEC Fellowships are an extremely favourable step in researchers' careers, being internationally recognized and valued;

- NEC's alumni network provides excellent opportunities for academic collaboration;

- NEC's extensive international connections are a valuable resource for its research staff and alumni;

- regular newsletters are sent to all NEC fellows and alumni, providing updates on administrative decisions, announcements academic activities, as well as other opportunities, including funding;

- NEC supports all bottom-up initiatives by researchers organizing informal training and development events (working groups or seminars on getting your first grant/first book published, on navigating the academic job market, mock interviews).

Weaknesses:

- Researchers report not receiving adequate career guidance, leading to uncertainty and potential missed opportunities in career development;

- There is a lack of venues where early career researchers could gain skills and knowledge needed for career advancement, such as securing grants, publishing, and navigating the academic job market;

- early career Romanian academics at NEC facing challenges due to a lack of access to local academic networks.

3. Actions

The Action Plan and HRS4R strategy must be published on an easily accessible location of the organisation's website.

Please provide the web link to the organization's Action Plan/HR Strategy dedicated webpage(s):

https://nec.ro/about-us/regulations/human-resources-strategy-for-researchers-hrs4r/ (https://nec.ro/about-us/regulations/human-resources-strategy-for-researchers-hrs4r/)

Please fill in the list of all individual actions to be undertaken in your organisation's HRS4R to address the weaknesses or strengths identified in the Gap-Analysis. The listed actions should be concise, but detailed enough for the assessors to evaluate the level of ambition, engagement and the expected implementation process. The institution should strive to provide a detailed plan, not just an enumeration of actions.

Note: Choose one or more of the principles automatically retrieved from the GAP Analysis with their implementation ratings.

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 1

Develop a Code of ethics and professional conduct and a Guide to good research practice. Disseminate the Code and Guidelines to researchers and fellows.

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
(++) 1. Research freedom	10/2025
(-/+) 2. Ethical principles	
(++) 3. Professional responsibility	
(++) 4. Professional attitude	
(++) 5. Contractual and legal obligations	
(++) 6. Accountability	
(+/-) 7. Good practice in research	
(++) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results	
(+/-) 9. Public engagement	
(++) 10. Non discrimination	
(++) 11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems	
(++) 17. Variations in the chronological order of CVs (Code)	
(++) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code)	
(++) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code)	

Proposed ACTIONS

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
(++) 20. Seniority (Code)	
(++) 22. Recognition of the profession	
(++) 31. Intellectual Property Rights	
(++) 32. Co-authorship	
(+/-) 35. Participation in decision-making bodies	

Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
NEC Staff	Code and Guide published on the NEC website and distributed to researchers and new fellows at the beginning of each fellowship cycle.

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 2

Expand and revise the Welcome Guide/Information Package distributed to new fellows/researchers (brochures, initial emails) to include explicit references to the HRS4R strategy and Code of Ethics. Provide a list of resources and staff to contact for specific issues.

GAP Principle(s)

Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)

(++) 1. Research freedom

(-/+) 2. Ethical principles

(++) 3. Professional responsibility

(++) 4. Professional attitude

(++) 5. Contractual and legal obligations   10/2024

(+/-) 7. Good practice in research

(++) 23. Research environment

(++) 24. Working conditions

(-/+) 34. Complains/ appeals

Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
NEC Staff	Updated versions of documents given to the new fellows at the beginning of the new academic year.

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 3

Organize career training events for early-career researchers: regular working groups on getting your first grant/project, publishing your first book, navigating the academic job market.

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
(+/-) 25. Stability and permanence of employment	
(-/+) 28. Career development	
(-/+) 30. Access to career advice	
(++) 36. Relation with supervisors	
(-/+) 37. Supervision and managerial duties	04/2025
(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development	
(++) 39. Access to research training and continuous development	
(++) 40. Supervision	

Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
NEC Staff	Semestrial events advertised and organised in cooperation with fellows, researchers and alumni.

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 4

Initiate a mentoring program that pairs senior researchers with early career researchers, in conjunction with the activities proposed in Action 3.

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
(++) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results	
(-/+) 28. Career development	
(-/+) 30. Access to career advice	
(++) 36. Relation with supervisors	
(-/+) 37. Supervision and managerial duties	04/2025
(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development	
(++) 39. Access to research training and continuous development	
(++) 40. Supervision	

Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
NEC Staff	Announce and organize regular events. Establish and publicize a matchmaking process at the beginning of each fellowship cycle.

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 5

Organize one workshop per semester to familiarize all NEC fellows and researchers with the existing framework and opportunities for applying for fellowships, postdocs, and other academic positions.	**GAP Principle(s)**	**Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)**
	(++) 26. Funding and salaries	
	(-/+) 28. Career development	
	(-/+) 30. Access to career advice	
	(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development	10/2024
	(++) 39. Access to research training and continuous development	
	(++) 40. Supervision	

Responsible Unit	**Indicator(s) / Target(s)**
NEC staff	Workshop organized every semester.

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 6

Updating information on the application process for NEC scholarships, in particular the calendar, the number and type of scholarships available, and the evaluation criteria, as well as keeping these candidates informed during the various stages of the selection process.

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
(++) 11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems	
(++) 12. Recruitment	
(++) 13. Recruitment (Code)	
(++) 14. Selection (Code)	10/2024
(+/-) 15. Transparency (Code)	
(++) 16. Judging merit (Code)	
(++) 21. Postdoctoral appointments (Code)	

Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
NEC staff	Updated applications information published on NEC webpage.

Unselected principles:

(++) 27. Gender balance   (++) 29. Value of mobility   (++) 33. Teaching

The establishment of an Open Recruitment Policy is a key element in the HRS4R strategy. Please also indicate how your organisation will use the Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment Toolkit and how you intend to implement/are implementing the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment. Although there may be some overlap with a range of actions listed above, please provide a short commentary demonstrating this implementation. If the case, please make the link between the OTM-R checklist and the overall action plan. (max. 1000 words) *

> The process of recruitment and selection of academic staff at the NEC follows the principles of open, transparent and merit-based recruitment, as established by national and European regulations, within its remit. Typically, when successful grant applications lead to the appointment of particular researchers, employers consider the evaluation process associated with the application as satisfactory validation and proceed directly to offer a fixed-term contract for the duration of the grant. This practice is widespread and applies to all researcher appointments.
>
> In the case of fellowship appointments, these are also subject to the constraints and profile required by the various external funding bodies providing the fellowships, but there is some scope for improvement in the interview process, which is within the remit of the NEC (albeit on the basis of evaluations by an external panel of reviewers). Updated information to make the application and review process clearer to applicants will be made available on the NEC website.

If your organisation already has a recruitment strategy which implements the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment, please provide the web link where this strategy can be found on your organisation's website:

URL:

https://nec.ro/about-us/regulations/human-resources-strategy-for-researchers-hrs4r/ (https://nec.ro/about-us/regulations/human-resources-strategy-for-researchers-hrs4r/)

4. Implementation

General overview of the expected overall implementation process of the action plan: (max. 1000 words)

> The measures are the result of input from NEC fellows and researchers (including alumni) from a variety of disciplines and experience levels who participated in two focus group consultations and the HRS4R initial phase survey. In addition, internal discussions among NEC staff helped shape these actions.

To engage the scientific community, the Action Plan will be launched at a formal event. A comprehensive information package will be distributed to the community of researchers and fellows, complementing materials on the NEC's dedicated HRS4R website section. In addition, updates on the implementation process will be communicated to the entire community via institutional email. The effectiveness of each action will be evaluated at the end of the implementation phase and monitored on an ongoing basis.

Make sure you also cover all the aspects highlighted in the checklist below, which you will need to describe in detail:

Note: Click on each question of the checklist to open the editor.

How will the implementation committee and/or steering group regularly oversee progress?* ⌄

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

The implementation committee will initially develop a timeline for the implementation of each action, establish milestones for applicable actions, and assign one or more staff members with appropriate responsibilities to oversee the execution of key phases of each action.

Subsequently, the committee will meet periodically to review the progress of action implementation, receive updates from responsible staff, and make decisions as needed.

How do you intend to involve the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?* ⌄

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

To involve the scientific community in the implementation process, the Action Plan will be launched at a formal event. In addition to materials available on the NEC's dedicated HRS4R website section, a comprehensive information package will be distributed to inform the researcher and fellow community. In addition, all members of the NEC community will receive updates on the implementation process via institutional email.

How do you proceed with the alignment of organisational policies with the HRS4R? Make sure the HRS4R is recognized in the * organisation's research strategy, as the overarching HR policy. ⌄

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

The actions outlined in the Action Plan are consistent with NEC's current values and overall development strategy and are in line with NEC's recruitment policy. The HRS4R framework, including these measures, will be explicitly referenced in the NEC's public-facing documentation and internal procedures. Administrative efforts will be directed toward aligning NEC's human resources policies with the Charter, the Code and the HRS4R framework.

How will you ensure that the proposed actions are implemented?* ⌄

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

Initiation of action plan activities will begin with a public launch, accompanied by communication to the NEC community. Subsequently, implementation schedules and milestones will be established, responsible parties will be appointed, and necessary resources will be secured. Regular consultation with interested parties within the NEC will take place as required. In addition, progress will be continuously monitored with a focus on identifying and addressing any obstacles or delays that may arise.

How will you monitor progress (timeline)?* ⌄

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

Each employee will be assigned to monitor and oversee one or more of the actions outlined in the action plan. Following the timeline and milestones established by the committee during its initial meetings, each staff member will be responsible for several tasks. These include monitoring the designated action(s), identifying any obstacles, delays, or deviations from the original plan, gathering and communicating feedback from relevant units, soliciting feedback from other stakeholders such as academics, proposing corrective actions as needed, and, if deemed necessary, proposing changes to the original action or implementation timeline.

How will you measure progress (indicators) in view of the next assessment?* ⌄

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

Tracking progress varies by measure. While most measures have clear indicators of success or failure, some are more open-ended, representing first steps towards broader changes, such as the organization of career development events for fellows. In these cases, we will monitor changes over time, such as the future trajectories of early-career researchers who use career services. Direct engagement with the academic community through methods such as focus groups, as we did during the initial phase of HRS4R, will be crucial.

Additional remarks/comments about the proposed implementation process: (max. 1000 words)