

IMDEA Water and the European Charter for Researchers

Having a human resources management strategy is crucial in a scientific institution if the aim is to create good working conditions, assess the investigators and their activity and provide the appropriate means to enable them to carry out quality research and facilitate the attraction of talent.

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At [IMDEA Water Institute](#) we are aware of its importance and ever since the centre was created in 2006 this aspect has been considered an important pillar of our organisation. Recently, our efforts were compensated when our human resources management strategy was awarded the [seal of excellence](#). This acknowledgement, granted by the European Commission, makes us the [first Spanish research centre and the eleventh in Europe](#) to receive it.

The European Commission adopted the European Researchers' Charter and the Code of Conduct for Researcher Recruitment, drafting two documents aimed at researchers as well as employers and providers of public and private sector funding. Both documents have become key elements of European Union policy, making research an attractive career and stimulating economic growth and employment in Europe.



Specifically, the [European Charter for Researchers](#) outlines the functions, responsibilities and rights of investigators and their employers. The aim is to ensure that the relation between these parties contributes to successful performance in the generation, transfer and shared use of knowledge, as well as the professional development of researchers from the early stages.

Moreover, the [Code of Conduct](#) for the hiring of researchers was drawn up to improve enrolment, so that selection procedures are fair and transparent. The researcher's merit should be measured not only by the number of publications, but also by a wider range of evaluation criteria such as education and teaching, supervision, teamwork, knowledge transfer, management and public awareness-raising activities.

Today, more than a hundred organisations from twenty-eight European and Non-European countries subscribe to the Charter and Code principles (C&C), among them IMDEA Water.

To help accommodate the centres to the C&C, the Commission set out a procedure through which the centres interested in including them could design their own "[Human Resources Strategy](#)".



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

This procedure consists of five steps: preparation of a rigorous internal analysis; publication on the interested centre's website of the strategy to follow to maintain and improve the C&C; evaluation and approval by the Commission of said strategy; application and continuous self-assessment by the centre of the process followed and, finally, the external evaluation by the commission four years after initiating the process. The institutions that have received this seal of quality are currently in the fourth phase of "follow-up and improvement".

But implanting the strategy does not mean that the work to be carried out by the centre has to be individual and isolated, as behind the scenes there is an ongoing collaboration with the Commission and other centres (members of the pilot group,

including the twelve institutions that already have this acknowledgement and those in the process of obtaining it), through which experiences are exchanged and good practices shared. At the group's last meeting, held in Slovenia at the end of September, IMDEA Water presented their strategy and shared their good practices and plans for improvement.

Possessing this seal of excellence is a great honour for us, since it highlights the efforts of IMDEA Water and the IMDEA network in the Community of Madrid ([Madrid Institute for Advanced Studies](#)) from their inception to meet quality standards and create a favourable environment for research, fomenting mobility, attracting new talent and helping to strengthen the research lines, among other aims.

It is important that the Commission has made the effort to include these principles in its policy and encourage research centres, regardless of their size and structure, to integrate them in their own organisational strategies, since in our experience it helps to find out the situation of the centre and quickly adapt to their changes and needs, while respecting the responsibilities and rights of the researchers and the organisation.