

Máire Geoghegan-Quinn
Commissioner, Research, Innovation and Science
European Commission

23 July 2013

Dear Commissioner

EC proposals for a formal certification process in relation to HR management of researchers

On behalf of the UK Concordat Strategy Group, a forum of all major research funders and representative groups in the UK higher education sector, I am writing to formally thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the proposals for a European level certification of good HR management of researchers as articulated in *The FP7 Work Programme 2013 for "Capacities - Part 6: Support for the Coherent Development of Research Policies section B1 Implementation of the ERA Framework.*

The Concordat Strategy Group¹ is responsible for overseeing the implementation across the UK of the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, through which the signatories adopted the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

During the last decade, we have invested significant resources in improving the HR management of researchers in higher education and can now track major progress including:

- Over 80 UK organisations gaining the European Commission's HR Excellence in Research Award²
- Evidence of improvements in the experiences of research staff and principal investigators and research leaders via widely used UK surveys³

The UK position is that we are fully committed to the agenda and vision for high quality, excellent human resource management for all researchers in the European Research Area, but do not support the method of developing a formal certification to achieve this goal.

¹ www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/506261/Concordat-Strategy-Group-.html

² www.vitae.ac.uk/hrexcellenceaward

³ www.vitae.ac.uk/cros and www.vitae.ac.uk/pirls

Enabling lasting change in this area will require significant investment. The Concordat Strategy Group advocates the use of a range of drivers to support change which can be tailored to local circumstances, rather than a 'one size fits all' approach.

The Concordat Strategy Group believes that any new mechanisms should be part of the HR Excellence in Research Award process which is just starting to gain real momentum and deliver real change.

Vitae recently carried out a review of the HR Excellence in Research Award implementation activities across Europe⁴. This report concludes that:

'...the evidence suggests that the [UK] Concordat and [European] Charter and Code have driven practice and transformed the nature of researcher HRM. It also suggests that those institutions that have been reviewed two years after gaining the Award have deepened their practice and continued to 'innovate and improve their researcher HRM.'

In the attached statement we set out the UK position in response to the feasibility study now being undertaken by Technopolis into the details and workability of a European certification process.

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the proposals at this stage and will be happy to provide further input.



Professor Sir Adrian Smith

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⁴ <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/Vitae-HR-Strategies-for-researchers-Report-2013.pdf>