HR Excellence in Research:
Strategy and Action Plan
Interim Report 2016
1. Developing the HR strategy (2014)

The HR strategy as developed at Ghent University was the result of three complementary sources of information and input. These three processes of information gathering and discussions contributed primarily to the gap analysis, but also helped to shape the priorities in the HR strategy:

- Input provided by experts across the university administration, involving in particular the Department of Personnel and Organisation and the Research Department, but also the Departments of Education and of Administrative Affairs;
- Data collected from ECOOM, the Flemish policy centre for R&D Monitoring – in particular data on research careers and survey results on researchers’ expectations;
- Input provided by focus groups with the entire research community – involving PhD researchers, postdoctoral researchers and professorial staff.

Figure 1: Overview of input provided to HR strategy and action plan, Ghent University 2013-2014

The HR Strategy and Action plan generated in 2014 by this process, consisted of strategic components and practical implementation into 29 actions. Each of the 29 actions was assigned to one or more policy experts in the university’s central administration offices.

The draft was submitted to various advisory bodies within the university. Their feedback helped to finetune the strategy and action plan. In addition, it helped to stimulate discussion on the role of Human Resources within the university’s overall research policy and to embed the HR strategy deeper into the university’s general decision-making process.
The endorsement process can be visualized as follows:

Figure 2: Endorsement process of HR strategy and action plan, Ghent University, January-April 2014

Ghent University’s Board of Governors gave its approval to the initial HR Strategy and Action plan at its meeting of 4 April 2014.

The HR strategy was submitted for approval to the European Commission on 11 April 2014. The Commission’s response on 16 May 2014 was highly positive. Ghent University was granted the permission to use the HR Excellence in Research badge for its internal and external communication. This award meant the end point for the development process, but also indicated the start of an ambitious follow-up process and implementation phase.

The two coordinators who managed the entire development process (Jasmien Van Daele and Karen Vandevelde, Department of Personnel & Organisation and Research Department respectively) also committed themselves to managing the implementation process.

2. Following up the HR strategy (2014-2016)

Upon approval by the University Board and the European Commission, an internal communication strategy was set up to increase awareness of the university’s HR strategy amongst the entire research community. Letters to each of the faculties by our Rector, direct mailings through the university’s electronic newsletter as well as a featured news message on the university’s website contributed to this awareness campaign.

A number of faculties invited the project managers to give presentations on the HR strategy and to discuss the expected outcome of some of the measures. These discussions were very helpful in promoting a high-quality HR process throughout the university, to take into account discipline-specific issues and to engage a wider community of researchers than the group of stakeholders consulted in the start-up phase.

A webpage devoted to the HR Excellence in Research process was set up, informing the Ghent University Community as well as interested web visitors about the project and the process:


In addition, a solid management structure was initiated in order to guarantee a successful follow-up of the action plan. Key tool for this management structure was – and still is – the overview table identifying each of the actions, their timing, their action representative, and the status of the action at each monitoring moment.
First of all, a **Steering Committee** was set up with the role to regularly monitor the progress as scheduled in the action plan, and secondly to have the power to intervene should any stumbling blocks occur. The Committee consists of the highest levels of management under the university’s Rector and Vicerector. They meet formally once a year, receive an annual monitoring report designed by the two project managers, and formulate recommendations to the action representatives should any re-steering be desirable.

A **Monitoring Committee** was set up as a collective of all the university policy experts who provided input to the initial gap analysis and action plan, and who ended up taking responsibility for one or more of the 29 actions in Ghent University’s HR-action plan. They also meet formally once a year – usually a few weeks before the Steering Committee meetings – but in addition have regular contacts and informal meetings with the project managers.

The **two project managers** (Jasmien Van Daele, Karen Vandevelde) who coordinated the HR strategy in its development phase as such, became the key coordinators in the implementation phase. They are members of the Steering committee as well as the Monitoring Committee, and are the first point of contact for any communication initiatives. They organize the communication and feedback loops between the individual action representatives, the monitoring committee and the steering committee.

In 2016, the project managers felt the need to reconnect with the initial group of stakeholders who provided input to the university’s gap analysis, HR strategy and action plan. Their views on the university’s progress in implementing its actions may differ from those of the Steering Committee and Monitoring Committee members, and they may signal new needs to be addressed. For the purposes of the current interim report, the project managers brought the **stakeholder focus group** back to life to address these issues. As quite a number of researchers who had provided input to the initial action plan were temporary research staff, the deans of all faculties were contacted to contact new interested staff members and to guarantee maximum participation of all researchers. This stakeholder group discussed the progress within the HR Strategy during a meeting on 12 May 2016. All participants at this meeting agreed that the stakeholder consultation should become a regular event once every year: this will help in communicating the HR-related achievements within the university and will contribute to a closer feedback loop with the research community on the implementation plan.
3. Preparing the interim review (2016)

For the interim report and the updated action plan, the following provided input:

- Each action representative provided an update on the progress of their individual action
- The monitoring committee, consisting of the group of action representatives, composed the overall monitoring table
- The steering committee performed a first quality check on the progress
- The stakeholders provided a second quality check on the progress & reflected on future priorities
- The two project managers coordinated the internal evaluation process

The draft interim report and the revised Action plan were updated on the basis of their input.

The interim report was discussed during meetings of the university’s Research Council (9 May 2016) and of the Personnel Negotiation Committee (25 May 2016).

Finally, the interim report was submitted to the university’s Executive Board (10 June 2016).

4. Transversal achievements: Dialogue, collaboration, effectiveness

The combination of bottom-up initiatives and top-down support throughout the entire process has given all actors involved in the process a great sense of responsibility and achievement. The university’s overall support – although critical initially considering the ambitious number of activities – has positively inspired everyone involved. More than ever before, HR issues are treated as policy-relevant challenges rather than merely administrative pursuits. The culture of reflection and the university’s commitment to improve has also contributed to the dialogue between the research community on the one hand and the university’s administration on the other.

This has effects which are entirely positive to everyone involved, but has also raised the expectations of the research community and of the university management. As such, this posed new challenges. The attention given to HR issues at Ghent University over the last three to four years, as illustrated by the HR Excellence in Research award in 2014, has brought new elements to the surface which had laid dormant before (take, for example, the situation of researchers without government funding or appointment contract) or has intensified the debate over difficult topics (such as, for example, a pension plan for staff on temporary contracts). It would not be fair to assign all of these developments entirely to the HR Excellence in Research process. However, the fact that these challenges are addressed and not ignored is part of the same culture of change that has provided the room for designing, developing and implementing the HR Excellence in Research strategy. While positively an indication of a more active HR culture, these developments do place extra burdens on staff members and often also on funds, and require managerial decisions on setting the right kind of priorities. These challenges are discussed further below.

Secondly, the way in which the HR Strategy and action plan were implemented generated a number of unexpected side benefits. By bringing the action representatives together on a regular basis – experts fragmented across five different Departments in the university’s administration services – a culture of trust, constructive criticism and collaborative engagement has developed which results in more coherence across all activities. The meetings organized by the Monitoring Committee, for example, do
more than just tack stock of progress. The action representatives share good practices, establish transversal links across actions, nurture collaboration, and inspire each other to overcome hurdles.

The light management structure and high level of individual responsibility in this project – entirely in line with Ghent University’s overall culture of participation – has so far proven to be an efficient and effective way of working. The responsibilities are clear to every individual, unit and department involved. The progress is monitored regularly without being burdensome.

5. Specific achievements

The actual implementation status (actions completed and actions in progress) is summarized in the attached overview monitoring table.

The colour coding in the monitoring table indicates the status of each of the actions.

GREEN = actions which have been completed or which are now a part of the regular operations of the university. They require no active follow-up by the action representatives or the HR strategy project managers and will no longer feature in the updated action plan.

YELLOW = actions which were already listed in the initial HR strategy, but either they have not been started or they are still under development within the foreseen timeline. They will remain a part of the updated HR strategy covering the period 2016-2017.

ORANGE = actions which have not yet been completed as foreseen, are delayed or modified.

13 of the 29 (original) actions are registered as “completed” or “part of the regular operations”.

A number of the completed actions may be defined as “quick wins”: relatively small interventions, or activities which were already in the process of being set up – even if Ghent University had not participated in the HR strategy. The “new way of working” policy (target 13) is a nice example: the pilot was already in preparation before the HR strategy was embarked on, but having it embedded within the HR Strategy made it more coherent with other HR-related interventions within the university. In addition, it enhanced the HR benefits of the project (trust and autonomy) rather than the practical and economic benefits (work space management, IT infrastructure).

Other actions are the result of thorough consideration and discussion with the research community. An interesting example here is the budgetary autonomy for postdoctoral researchers (target 20). This change in regulations required a mind-shift from the community of professors who had previously been the sole academic staff category who could apply for project funding and manage finances and personnel. More researchers now spend a longer time in postdoctoral positions. Prestigious grants and appointments at tenure track level now expect applicants to demonstrate independence and project management skills. In this changing context postdoctoral researchers were right to demand the opportunity to gain such management experience within our own institution. The fact that this action was embedded in the HR strategy and in line with the postdoc career policy at Ghent University, helped to convince the University Board of the importance of this change in regulations. Their decision in December 2015 required technical modifications in the financial workflows as well as a good communication strategy, but its implementation is certainly successful.

The balance between quick wins and more complex targets is important. Short-term achievements demonstrate progress to the research community, help to legitimize participation the HR Strategy, and contribute to the action representatives’ motivation. More challenging projects demonstrate ambition
and commitment. When completed, they give a great sense of achievement but more importantly, the
contribute to the trust between the research community and the university management.

6. Specific challenges
Ghent University experienced challenges related to the HR strategy in three areas:

Delay in implementation
A small number of actions did not proceed as planned or proved to be more difficult to implement than
foreseen. In some cases, practical obstacles or time pressures came in the way. In others, the action
turned to be more complex than foreseen and was redefined by the monitoring committee. We
describe the progress in the monitoring table (Annex 2), but elaborate briefly on the reasons for steering
a different course here:

- **Target 1:** Ghent University has the necessary processes in place to guarantee quality screening in
  the application procedure for all foreign PhD researchers and to introduce better quality
  processes in supervision for all PhD researchers: The initial ‘good practice’ approach was no longer
deemed sufficient when the Doctoral Schools developed a quality framework for doctoral training in
2015 and held an extensive stakeholder consultation. The scope of the initial action 1 was therefore
broadened. In the updated HR Strategy, action 1’s progress is therefore still on track in terms of
timing, but has been redefined.

- **Target 14:** Ghent University initiates a better pension rights plan for all researchers employed by
the university: the situation of researchers proved to be particularly difficult. General principles on a
new career structure model for research staff are being discussed and elaborated within a special
advisory committee, which is currently investigating the feasibility of a pension plan for some
categories of research staff. Negotiations with the staff union representatives will hopefully reach
an acceptable solution for all within a reasonable time period.

- **Target 19:** Ghent University makes sure that faculties adopt the current regulation for
postdoctoral researchers with substantive teaching responsibilities to be formally entitled as co-
lecturer. While the central system (OASIS) allows registration (and thus formal acknowledgment) of
all staff members involved in teaching courses, some faculties set internal limitations and only allow
a maximum of 3 officially registered (co-)lecturers. Further follow-up with the faculty
administrations is required.

- **Target 29:** Ghent University develops a Research Data Management policy and infrastructure:
the target has been broadened in scope. Initially defined as a policy for “the opening up of research
data”; this action now includes investments in infrastructure.

Transversal priority of “career prospects”
In addition to the four main themes of the European Charter & Code (Recruitment & Evaluation, Labour
Conditions & Social Security, Training & Development, Ethical & Professional Aspects) Ghent University
had already defined a fifth transversal focus on “Career Prospects” as a major theme in its HR strategy in
2014. The stakeholder consultation in 2016 identified this theme as one that will continue to require close
attention. Despite a wide range of available information, hands-on training and courses made available,
some researchers still hold unrealistic expectations with regard to their professional careers,
strengthened in some cases by professors and supervisors who are unaware of the changing role of the
PhD degree and the widening career opportunities for researchers. Events organized to address these
issues often do not attract the researchers who need this information most. A number of actions in our
strategy related to this topic are ongoing. On the occasion of this mid-term evaluation a commitment was
made to reassess the extent to which current and ongoing activities can be strengthened, in consultation with the stakeholder group, the Doctoral Schools and the Ghent University Postdoc Community.

New priorities

Based on the experiences of the Monitoring Committee and the Steering Committee and on informal feedback from other members of the Ghent University Research Community, 3 new actions (30, 31, 32) have been added to the initial 4-year action plan. Their feasibility has been checked with the departments and action representatives responsible for carrying them out; the institution’s commitment has been guaranteed by the Steering Committee.

These newly added actions are also marked in YELLOW in the monitoring overview as they are currently under development as foreseen.

We briefly describe the motivation for these changes here:

- **NEW Target 30: Developing a policy on minimal social security entitlements for researchers without regular funding or employment contract:** a staff member responsible for development collaboration projects pointed out that not all PhD researchers enjoy the same entitlements in terms of facilities (e.g. library loan term) or insurance (e.g. accident insurance), especially when their scholarship or appointment is funded from abroad. In such situations they are registered as students, not staff. An overall study was deemed necessary to compare various entitlements and to examine the feasibility of equal treatment for all.

- **NEW Target 31: Open & transparent Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R):** a number of grievances regarding recruitment procedures have been voiced at Ghent University over the previous years. An internal analysis was made of the proportion of internally versus externally recruited professors, providing a solid basis for reflection and discussion. The European Commission’s OTM-R guidelines provide an excellent tool to address these issues.

- **NEW Target 32: Eliminating the obstacles to intersectoral mobility for researchers:** in January 2016 an ad-hoc stakeholder meeting was organized to examine whether researchers find sufficient opportunities to engage in intersectoral activities during their research work at Ghent University. A number of obstacles were identified and a first coherent analysis was made on the issues of internships, entrepreneurship and non-academic activities, focusing primarily on the PhD phase. All agreed that ‘something’ needed to be done – with this new action as a result.

7. Continued commitment to implementing the HR strategy

Gathering strengths to implement an action plan requires energy and focus. Continuing this level of dedication long-term requires an even stronger commitment. We can envisage a number of threats to this commitment, but we foresee manageable ways to address these:

- **Time constraints** → the HR strategy at Ghent University is ambitious and the most complex actions are still in progress. There is substantial risk that the next interim report will identify more actions as ‘delayed’ than is currently the case, as the increasing workload is not met by an increase in staff numbers taking responsibility for new actions. While the Steering Committee will oversee that such delays remain limited, we need to be realistic and allow for some flexibility in the implementation phase. The expected changes in the HRS4R process, as announced by the European Commission, will continue to provide external monitoring opportunities and require the submission of revised action plans. We are confident that this
continuation will allow for some flexibility while still guaranteeing the commitment to implement the actions we have promised.

- **Financial constraints** → the majority of the actions in our Action Plan have been tested as to their financial viability. However, there is cause for concern for some of these. Target 14 (developing a pension plan for all researchers, regardless of their contract or duration of employment) is expected to pose a considerable financial burden on the institution. Negotiations with staff unions are currently in place, trying to find an appropriate balance between financial feasibility and researchers’ fair entitlements.

- **Turnover of staff members appointed as responsible for particular actions** → as each action representative is a member of an administrative unit or department within the university, the head of these units/departments are expected to delegate this responsibility to another staff member.

- **Turnover of staff members coordinating the HR strategy** → despite the light management structure, continued commitment requires coordination. This is in the hands of two people rather than one. If one was to leave their function, each still have their head of department as members of the Steering Committee and new staff members can be appointed to take over.
Annex 1: Stakeholders

Steering Committee members:
- Prof. Koen Goethals, Academic Registrar
- Prof. Ignace Lemahieu, Director of Research
- Mr. Hugo De Vreese, Director of Personnel & Organisation
- Dr. Jasmien Van Daele, HR Policy Advisor/Postdoc Career Manager
- Dr. Karen Vandevelde, Policy Advisor Research

Monitoring Committee members:
- Dr. Dirk De Craemer, Head of Research Coordination Office
- Dr. Nele Bracke, Doctoral Schools Policy Advisor
- Esther De Smet, Policy Advisor Research
- Lieve Vanhelleputte, Head of Recruitment Office
- Christa De Coster, Recruitment Officer
- Stefanie Van der Burght, Policy Advisor Research
- Luc Van de Poele, Head of Educational Quality Assurance Office
- Prof. Guido Van Huylenbroeck, Director Internationalisation
- Angelo De Bruycker, HR Policy Advisor
- Els Verhoeve, Head of Career Development Office
- Dr. Katrien De Gelder, Doctoral Schools Policy Advisor
- Dr. Katrien De Gelder, Doctoral Schools Policy Advisor
- Dr. Dieter De Bruyn, Doctoral Schools Policy Advisor
- Mieke Van de Putte, Legal Advisor Human Resources
- Sigried Lievens, Diversity Policy Advisor
- Dr. Tine Brouckaert, Gender Policy Advisor
- Hilde Van Overbergh, Welcome Officer
- Annik Leyman, Research Quality Assurance Officer
- Sara Drieghe, Confidential Advisor & Staff Councillor
- Helke Baeyens, Development Cooperation Officer
- Dr. Jasmien Van Daele, HR Policy Advisor/Postdoc Career Manager
- Dr. Karen Vandevelde, Policy Advisor Research

Stakeholder group members (Interim report, 2016)
- Mieke Audenaert, postdoctoral researcher, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
- Wim Peersman, postdoctoral researcher, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences
- Katia Levecque, postdoctoral researcher, ECOOM & Faculty of Psychology & Educational Sciences
- Hans Dierckx, postdoctoral researcher, Faculty of Sciences
- Dieter De Coninck, postdoctoral researcher, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences
- Jana Asselman, postdoctoral researcher, Faculty of Bioscience Engineering
- Olga Petintseva, doctoral researcher, Faculty of Law
- Annelies Verdoollaeghe, postdoctoral researcher, Faculty of Arts and Philosophy
- Frederik De Grove, postdoctoral researcher, Faculty of Political and Social Sciences
- Freddy Haesebrouck, professor, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
- Lieve Balcaen, postdoctoral researcher, Faculty of Sciences
- Maarten Oosterlinck, postdoctoral researcher, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
- Rob De Staelen, postdoctoral researcher, Faculty of Engineering and Architecture
**C & C THEME**

**GHENT UNIVERSITY ACTION**

**TIMING**

**RESPONSIBLE ACTOR**

**STATUS May 2016**

**KPI/Evidence/Outcome**

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**RECRUITMENT AND EVALUATION**

Target 1: Ghent University has the necessary processes in place to ensure quality and efficiency in the application procedure for all PhD and postdoc recruitments and to introduce better quality processes in supervision for all PhD researchers.

2017-Q4

Doctoral Schools

This quality screening is rolling, welcoming and supervisions of international PhD researchers was initially based on a "good practice" approach. In 2015, however, the Doctoral Schools developed a quality framework for postdoctoral training. Consultation with postdoctoral supervisors suggested the necessity to broaden the scope of the initial action. Codifying good practices and adapting a "soft approach" was no longer deemed sufficient. In the context of the Ghent University's 11th progress report (early implementation) or revision of timelines, but has been reinforced including openness, transparency, and self- and third-party evaluation processes (see) as such is linked with the new action (31). A policy on progress and re-registration for the PhD degree, and multiple supervision arrangements, will be developed to be a better understanding of the university's internationalisation policy.

Quality framework for doctoral training has been approved by the University's Board (8 May 2015) and webpage are published (https://www.ugent.be/en/research/postdoc-talent-management/). Procedure for doctoral training is revised in accordance with the Ghent University's policy. The obligation of a second supervisor for each PhD researcher is included in the Education and Examination Code. Training for supervisors on counselling of PhD students is in place.

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Target 2: Ghent University raises more awareness within faculties and research departments for making better use of various online international job portals. If feasible through an automated process, all academic vacancies are also published on the universities website.

2015-Q3

Dept. of Personnel & Organisation

All academic job vacancies are posted on the English-language Ghent University website and, as part of a long-term structural agreement, within the Academic Postdoc Network the Euresys and Ventures (Eurojobs) websites. This is the case for professional and academic staff, and at 50% of the cases also for research staff depending on whether the position is attractive to international candidates. Since January 2016 vacancies for professional staff are now also published through ResearchToday. The job postings are now integrated in the regular operations of the Recruitment and Selection Office.

This target has resulted in increased visibility of Ghent University vacancies across Academic Positions (+25%) and an increased number of applications. Ghent University's English vacancies webpage: https://www.ugent.be/en/work/career/

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Target 3: Ghent University implements a new mobility funding scheme at the level of the faculties according to new guidelines and commits itself to a regular review of this new scheme.

2017-Q4

Research Dept.

Every faculty of Ghent University has a specific Mobility Fund in place to support incoming and outgoing mobility, especially for early-career researchers. All faculties have been asked to define rules and regulations, within a university-wide regulatory framework, on how to apply for mobility funding. The University's Research Council is in charge of quality control.

A total institutional budget of 1.1 million euro is allocated to this purpose. http://www.ugent.be/en/research/funding/mobilityfund.htm

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Target 4: Ghent University has a clear view on the feasibility of providing an institutional sustainable system for professional staff and acts upon the recommendations of the study.

2017-Q4

Research Dept.

To be started.

Expected outcome: (1) feasibility study and (2) recommendations for implementation.

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Target 5: Ghent University regularly reviews its services for newly appointed staff - local and foreign.

Continuous

Dept. of Personnel & Organisation

Continuous efforts to improve the welcome services for new staff e.g. individual and group welcome sessions (for staff categories) are in place, with a focus on administrative matters and getting started in the job. The faculty system for new arrivals/departments is currently under revision. The faculty system for international staff is in place, with an aim to provide a welcome service for international staff in 2017.

Positive feedback on continuous improvements from the international staff community.

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Target 6: All Ghent University departments guarantee adequate and easily accessible information in English related to working at Ghent University.

Continuous

Academic Director Institutional/ Internationalisation/ Strategy

Progress, but still continuous efforts by individual departments to deliver English information on the website. E.g. http://contentful/gdpr.ugent.be/en is a new practical tool with educational tips and tricks for all teaching staff. A centrally coordinated action has not been launched yet due to a change in the management position of the academic director on internationalisation. In general, there are budgetary limits for translations on the departmental level.

CAREER PROSPECTS

Target 12: Ghent University communicates openly about realistic career perspectives within and outside the university, both at the institutional level as well as the departmental level. The heads of faculties and department heads are trained to disseminate realistic career awareness amongst their research staff by giving them all possible exposure and opportunities in order to develop their competencies and skills.

Continuous

Doctoral Schools + Dept. of Personnel & Organisation + Research Depat + Dept. of Administration + Dept. of Communication Technology + Dept. of Infrastructure and Protection at Work

Continuous efforts at different levels, e.g., top-down, overall career support programmes by the Doctoral Schools, involving PhD students and supervisors, the declaration of the University’s Board on a shared responsibility in raising awareness and career prospects of postdoctoral researchers, the provincial and federal governments, the university and the external labour market, bottom-up: the Ghent University Postdoc Community launched a campaign to make faculty board members and deans aware of the responsibility of PhD’s to make research careers visible in the next career step.

See also targets 10, 11, 20, 23.

CAREER PROSPECTS

Target 13: Ghent University completes a feasibility study investigating a new type of long-term appointment for a limited number of postdoctoral researchers with a designated management or coordination role.

2016-Q3

Dept. of Personnel & Organisation + Research Depat

The possibility of establishing a new type of long-term appointments for research staff is part of the ongoing and ongoing negotiations on a new transparent career model for research staff (see also the status of target 14). A taxonomy of different research staff roles, with a limited number of research staff posts (per senior research management/coordination) with contracts of variable duration.

LABOUR CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Target 14: Ghent University initiates a cluster-sensitive tight plan for all researchers employed by the university.

2015-Q3 => 2017 Q2

Dept. of Personnel & Organisation

Since September 2015, a special advisory committee, designated by the Rector, is elaborating a new transparent career model for research staff. This includes new career tracks for research groups and levels of the institution.

A new career model & structure for research staff, with the possibility of a pension plan for specific categories of research staff, is expected to be approved and in place by mid 2017.

LABOUR CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Target 15: A strategy and action plan introducing a new way of working (‘co-working’) is undertaken in order to adapt the current set-up of the working environment.

2015-Q4

administrator + Dept. of Personnel & Organisation + Information and Communication Technology + Dept. of Infrastructure and Protection at Work

A pilot project on teleworking (running in all central administration departments and two research departments in 2014 and 2015) was positively evaluated. The University’s Board has approved a university-wide regulatory framework for the gradual application of teleworking, based on formal positions, ensuring that the tasks and responsibilities for the different kind of work and work context (home or travel instead of fixed workplace) will be formally extended to all Ghent University employees.

Approved by the University’s Board of the university-wide implementation (1 April 2016). Teleworking charters for individual staff members have been developed. www.ugent.be/en/staff/new-way-of-working

LABOUR CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Target 16: Ghent University implements the actions of its recently launched gender policy plan.

2015-Q4 policy plan implementation Continuous

Gender and Diversity Policy Unit

A general policy plan is completed. Implementation on the faculty level is in the next step, e.g. with support of the deans, faculties have launched a gender policy campaign. On the central level, a plan on international mobility criteria for tenure track professorial staff members is carried out by the Dept. of Personnel & Organisation.

Ghent University commits to reach 45 % of women in tenure track professorial staff positions http://www.ugent.be/nl/univgent/waarvoor-staat-ugent/diversiteit-en-gender/genderbeleidsplan (in Dutch)

LABOUR CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Target 17: Ghent University implements the actions of its recently launched gender policy plan for researchers with disabilities.

2015-Q4 policy plan implementation Continuous

Gender and Diversity Policy Unit

A general policy plan is completed. The implementation is ongoing, e.g. a special staff network on the themes of working with disabled staff members and psychological disabilities is established.


LABOUR CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Target 18: Ghent University ensures a better evaluation and recognition of teaching skills in both the recruitment process (e.g. evaluation during hiring) and in the evaluation/appraisal system.

2017-Q1

Dept. of Education + Dept. of Personnel & Organisation + Research Depat

Ghent University formally acknowledges an important set of teaching criteria (experience by evaluation, expertise, responsibilities) in the recruitment process of professorial staff members. The evaluation of teaching performance, including in particular student evaluations, in the general evaluation/appraisal system.

A university-wide policy and action plan on psychosocial welfare of all staff members, approved in 2013, is further implemented and followed-up. The University’s Board of the university-wide implementation (1 April 2016).

University’s Board approved the changes in the regulations for professorial staff with regard to teaching criteria in the spring of 2018.

LABOUR CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Target 19: Ghent University makes sure that faculties adopt the current regulation for postdoctoral researchers with substantive teaching responsibilities to be formally entitled to co-teaching.

2015-Q4 => 2017 Q4

Dept. of Education + Faculty Boards

The central system allows to register 1 male and 1 female co-teachers as needed, acknowledging all those who have a substantive teaching mandate, which applies also to researchers (e.g. they officially register maximum 3 staff members as co-teachers, which is publicly often more than 7 people are involved in teaching courses). Faculties need to be encouraged to formally register all active co-teachers. This target requires further follow up in co-teaching connection with the faculty administrations.

Expected outcome: faculties register all co-teachers correctly.

LABOUR CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Target 20: Ghent University develops a policy with appropriate conditions and circumstances in which research autonomy, responsibility and independence of researcher/researcher (e.g. in the general evaluative/assessmental system) and in the general evaluation/appraisal system.

2016-Q1

Research Dept. + Board of Government

Since the end of 2015 postdoctoral researchers enjoy the same criteria to apply for and to manage research projects as professorial staff. This means they can apply as principal investigator (as long as the leading agency accepts them as an propositor of the project, e.g. European funds). This allows for the development of a strong independent research profile, but also a higher visibility and possibilities for PhD researchers. The University’s Board of the university-wide implementation (1 April 2016).

New regulation approved by the Executive-Board on 15 December 2015. The Finance Dept. and Research Dept. have introduced the quality control mechanisms required by the electronic project management system.

LABOUR CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Target 21: Ghent University develops an action plan to implement a psychosocial welfare policy framework, targeted at the different profiles and situations of the Institution.

2015-Q2

Office of Prevention & Protection at Work

A university-wide policy and action plan on psychosocial welfare of all staff members, approved in 2013, is further implemented and followed-up. The purpose is to drafted, table award, distribute and help staff members preventing and treating psychosocial risks. There are actions on the central, the faculty and the individual level. Current focal action points are leadership, community-building and specific approaches for different staff categories.

Since the University launched its plan, there is a significant increase in the amount of psychosocial risk related questions.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Target 22: Ghent University further develops strategies for building the doctoral training programmes in the everyday research practice of PDR researchers and supervisors.

Continuous

Doctoral Schools

Ghent University is currently developing its doctoral training programme in order to meet the new and changing needs of the PhD researchers. A wide range of episodic and transferable skills courses (in 6 clusters, career management, communication, networking & personal efficiency, research & innovation, collaboration) is built-up by e.g. to research integrity (see also target 27). Small group trainings are complemented with other learning formats (e.g. motivational and introductions to enhancing PhD career success since 2013). Continuous efforts are made to involve supernumerary and post awareness on the website of doctoral training for PhD researchers, especially paving the way for a career after finishing a PhD. The Doctoral Schools continue these efforts.

Currently, 35% of the researchers obtaining a PhD holds a doctoral training certificate; 72 % has followed at least one doctoral training course. The Doctoral School continues these efforts.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Target 23: A training programme is available designed to position coaching and mentoring skills in good practice and assist issues in academic excellence. There are 3 clusters of skills training: Career Management, Leadership (e.g. supervising PhD researchers), Business impact: creativity, pitching and resilience.

2015

Dept. of Personnel & Organisation

A training package tailored to the postdoctoral working context and with the purpose to support postdocs in their career and skills development is now available at the University’s regular training programme. This includes: career management, leadership, creativity, pitching & resilience. In the spring of 2016 a pilot on negotiation skills was organized and evaluated to complement the regular programme.

http://www.ugent.be/en/work/servertalentmanagement/postdoctrainingprogram.htm. Along the needs of the program, the training programme will be further developed.
TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Target 24: Ghent University continues elaborating academic leadership and development for its professional staff at all levels in line with the concrete needs of the target group (e.g. short and experience-based).
Continuous
Dept. of Personnel & Organisation

Training courses on leadership skills for professional staff (in Dutch and English) are now part of the University’s regular training programme. This is complemented with the format of learning peer networks (e.g. for heads of departments). A mentoring scheme for new professional staff members, with special focus on the international, will be launched in September 2016.

By 2016 these actions, amongst others, should lead to a more structured inclusion of societal impact in institutional and/or decentralized research policy (e.g. in part of evaluation criteria), support to researchers (e.g. via contact points and a community of practice), database of expertise and service to societal activities (GAMOS), online information with good practices, funding information, and informal information on the types of societal value creation and a training programme for researchers, minimal expertise about ethical and legal aspects of societal impact.

https://www.ugent.be/en/research/staff/forms/organisation/soc_value

ACTION COMPLETED & NOW PART OF THE REGULAR OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES. NO INTERVENTION OR DETAILED MONITORING REQUIRED

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Target 25: Ghent University co-organises a new programme on strategic leadership for senior management.
2016-Q2
Dept. of Personnel & Organisation

The 2nd cycle of the two-year Academic Leadership programme for deans and directors within the Vrije Universiteit (Ghent, Gent, Gentamer, Gent). The programme is completed in the Spring of 2016 and positively evaluated.

Leadership development for senior management level completed (top-down) - in line with the University’s vision on leadership development for other target groups (bottom-up).

ACTION COMPLETED & NOW PART OF THE REGULAR OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES. NO INTERVENTION OR DETAILED MONITORING REQUIRED

ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL ASPECTS

Target 26: As part of its review of evaluation criteria, Ghent University is focussing on ethical and on the professional responsibilities of researchers as part of its regular programme.
2015-Q2 (policy plan) & 2017-Q4 (implementation)
Research Dept.

A policy on societal impact has been approved in May 2015. Based upon this plan, a number of initiatives are being taken (in synergy with targets 6, 7, 8, 9 and 23) to increase researchers’ awareness of the societal value of research, to strengthen their involvement in outreach activities and to reward achievements in this area. A steering committee has been appointed to implement these.

A workshop training format is developed and research policy advisors are trained in (via train the trainer format).

Webpages have been developed: https://www.ugent.be/en/research/staff/forms/organisation/research_integrity/overview.htm

ACTION COMPLETED & NOW PART OF THE REGULAR OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES. NO INTERVENTION OR DETAILED MONITORING REQUIRED

ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL ASPECTS

Target 27: The Doctoral Training Programme introduces sessions on scientific integrity and on the professional responsibilities of researchers as part of its regular programme.
2015-Q3
Doctoral Schools

A training package (4 sessions per year) on research integrity for individual PhD researchers has been launched and positively evaluated. There is a growing interest for introduction and awareness workshops at group level (on the request of local departments/research groups). Research integrity training is implemented via different channels and formats, for example, the introduction day for new PhD researchers, PhD and Spring Schools, external policy communication.

A Ghent University Charter for doctoral students and their supervision is introduced in the summer of 2015. The Charter, signed by all PhD students at the start of a PhD project, states in broad terms the rights and duties of the PhD researcher and the supervisor and aims to align the expectations of both. It is based on the general principles of the European Charter for Researchers and good practice guidelines derived from a broad stakeholder consultation at Ghent University. The follow-up is integrated in the regular activities of the Doctoral Schools.


ACTION COMPLETED & NOW PART OF THE REGULAR OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES. NO INTERVENTION OR DETAILED MONITORING REQUIRED

ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL ASPECTS

Target 28: Ghent University develops a Research Data Management policy and infrastructure.
2015-Q4 (policy) and 2017-Q4 (infrastructure)
Research Dept.

Initially, this target focused on developing an institutional open data policy. Meanwhile, the scope of the target has broadened. The topic of Open data started out as a side-track of the bigger policy topic on research integrity. During the last few years however, it became clear that the importance and range of the data topic increased and it became a self-contained topic. The actions involved consisted of a lot more than the opening up of research data; Research Data Management is about all actions needed to make research data discoverable, accessible and understandable in the long term. The policy approach has a strong focus on making research data accessible and understandable in the long term.

Research Data Management is represented in different channels and formats, e.g. the introduction day for new PhD researchers, S&O Spring Schools, external policy communication.

A workshop training format is developed and research policy advisors are trained in (via train the trainer format).

Webpages have been developed: https://www.ugent.be/en/research/research-staff/organisation/datamanagement

ACTION COMPLETED & NOW PART OF THE REGULAR OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES. NO INTERVENTION OR DETAILED MONITORING REQUIRED

ADDITIONAL NEW TARGETS

LABOUR CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Target 30: Developing a policy on minimal social security entitlements for researchers without regular funding or employment contract.
2017-Q4
Research Dept. + Dept. of Personnel & Organisation

Ghent University is currently reviewing its insurance and admission badge policies for ‘visiting’ researchers without regular funding or employment contract and will prepare a draft proposal on guaranteeing minimal social security protection for all temporary researchers.

Expected outcome: new regulation for visiting researchers, approved by the University Board

RECRUITMENT AND EVALUATION

Target 31: Open & Transparent Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R).
2017-Q1
Research Dept. + Dept. of Personnel & Organisation

In 2016 a flyer was designed to promote open recruitment policies in the recruitment of externally funded research staff, adopting the principles laid out in the OTM-R guideline. For externally funded research staff, an internal appeal was made of the promotion of interim versus externally recruited professors, providing a solid basis for discussion. In addition, a new working group was set up in 2016 with a task of developing a more adequate procedure for the evaluation of candidates. A policy plan is expected to be completed in 2016, implementing the infrastructure is scheduled for 2017 – but may require more time for completion.

Expected outcome: flyer raising awareness on OTM-R principles is distributed across the university; the University Board gives its approval to a strengthened recruitment process.

CAREER PROSPECTS

Target 32: Eliminating the obstacles to international mobility for researchers.
2017-Q4
Research Dept.

A first cohort analysis was made on the issues of internships, entrepreneurship and non-academic activities, focusing primarily on the PhD phase. A plan was developed to address the discrimination in regulations between various types of scholarships, to remove obstacles at institutional level and to engage a discussion with Flemish and federal government agencies regarding legislative barriers. Expected timing: 2016 & 2017.

Expected outcome: information campaign on OTM-R principles is distributed across the university; the University Board gives its approval to a strengthened recruitment process.

STATUS (Did we achieve our target?)

Action completed & now part of the regular operational activities. No intervention or detailed monitoring required.
Ongoing (on track in foreseen timeline) and continuously improving

Scope has changed or target has been postponed