



Institute of Physical Chemistry  
of the Polish Academy of  
Sciences



## Human Resources Excellence in Research

*Interim report on Internal Action Plan  
implementation*

[Dec., 2016]



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## **I. Introduction and outline of methodology**

The Institute of Physical Chemistry of the PAS (IPC PAS) obtained permission to use the "HR Excellence in Research" logo on the 9<sup>th</sup>, Dec. 2014. Submission of IPC PAS application to the European Commission was preceded by:

- Internal Gap Analysis and Action Plan (based on a survey, and findings of a working group appointed by the Director of IPC PAS),
- IPC PAS declaration - *Letter of commitment to adopt principles underlying the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.*

This report covers 2-year period calculating from the date of obtaining the logo. Within the span of 2 years IPC PAS made the effort to take measures and actions as specified in the Action Plan. All adopted procedures were in line with provisions of the European Charter for Researchers, the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (hereinafter: "the Charter & Code"), and corresponding guidelines of the European Commission.

After 2 years IPC PAS conducted internal evaluation of the progress of implementation of the provisions of the Charter & Code into the internal regulations of IPC PAS and everyday practice of the IPC PAS society (Step 4). The evaluation consisted of 2 stages:

- analysis of taken actions in comparison with the Action Plan submitted to the European Commission,
- survey of IPC PAS employees (incl. in particular participation of research group leaders, and members of selection committees) on the efficiency of the implemented actions.

Taking into account above, update to action plan was designed to be continued in the subsequent periods (see pt. III for details).

## II. Internal evaluation of the progress of implementation principles underlying the Charter & Code

### 1 Analysis of the taken actions in comparison with the Action Plan

Generally, all actions planned ahead in the "Gap Analysis and Action Plan" were carried out with the following reservations:

- ✓ some of actions required taking different measures than planned (e.g. a new Ordinance instead of amendment to the former one, or a new ordinance instead of introduction of changes to the rules not included in any internal regulation), and
- ✓ a few of them should be continued in the future to maintain stability of introduced changes (e.g.: regular e-mails informing on different events, opportunities; update of database incl. internal regulations; trainings and lectures on the career management; trainings for members of selection committees; informational meetings and distribution of guides for newcomers).

Specific measures and actions taken within this period are listed below:

RECRUITMENT	
Recommended steps	Current status
<p><b>1 Recruitment:</b> <i>Employers and/or funders should ensure that the entry and admission standards for researchers, particularly at the beginning of their careers, are clearly specified and should also facilitate access for disadvantaged groups or for researchers returning to a research career, including teachers (of any level) returning to a research career. Employers and/or funders of researchers should adhere to the principles set out in the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers when appointing or recruiting researchers.</i></p>	
1) amendment of <i>the Ordinance of the Director introducing Rules of the selection proceedings in case of employing to the academic positions at IPC PAS</i> by the obligation that the Selection Committee must consist of both male and female representatives;	<b>Amended</b>
2) introduction of change in the rules referring to evaluation of research teams allowing not to take into account in the evaluation of the teams - scientific achievements of the person admitted to the institute after at least 2-year break in his/her research career for a period of 2 following years;	<p><b>New Ordinance of the Director</b>  <i>replacing previous rules for research teams evaluation and introducing provisions allowing not to take into account persons admitted to IPC PAS after a break in a research career</i></p>
3) training and informing selection committees and persons engaged in recruitment on possible benefits for Departments/Research Teams and IPC PAS resulting from profile differentiation of IPC PAS employees.	<p><b>Done and to be continued</b>  <i>Informational meetings, incl. before the IPC PAS College</i></p>

*Strategic management of scientific career, Researcher skills and new career paths;*

*Strategic career planning. Support programs, applications for competency management, information sources in Poland and in the world with special emphasis on the role of mentoring and counselling situation in this relationship mentors and young scientists*

**2 Selection:** *Selection committees should bring together diverse expertise and competences and should have an adequate gender balance and, where appropriate and feasible, include members from different sectors (public and private) and disciplines, including from other countries and with relevant experience to assess the candidate. Whenever possible, a wide range of selection practices should be used, such as external expert assessment and face-to-face interviews. Members of selection panels should be adequately trained.*

**3 Gender balance:** *Employers and/or funders should aim for a representative gender balance at all levels of staff, including at supervisory and managerial level. This should be achieved on the basis of an equal opportunity policy at recruitment and at the subsequent career stages without, however, taking precedence over quality and competence criteria. To ensure equal treatment, selection and evaluation committees should have an adequate gender balance.*

amendment of the Ordinance of the Director by the obligation that the Selection Committee must consist of both male and female representatives.

**General Rules Governing Competitions for Research Posts at IPC PAS**

*Appendix to the Resolution of the Scientific Council*

**4 Transparency:** *Candidates should be informed, prior to the selection, about the recruitment process and the selection criteria, the number of available positions and the career development prospects. They should also be informed after the selection process about the strengths and weaknesses of their applications.*

- 1) introduction of ad template supplemented by detailed information on selection criteria and no. of vacancies
- 2) obligation imposed on Head of Department/ Research Team responsible for selection to provide feedback to the candidates from the short-list

**General Rules Governing Competitions for Research Posts at IPC PAS**

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**5 Judging Merit:** *The selection process should take into consideration the whole range of experience of the candidates. While focusing on their overall potential as researchers, their creativity and level of independence should also be considered. This means that merit should be judged qualitatively as well as quantitatively, focusing on outstanding results within a diversified career path and not only on the number of publications. Consequently, the importance of bibliometric indices should be properly balanced within a wider range of evaluation criteria, such as teaching, supervision, teamwork, knowledge transfer, management of research and innovation and public awareness activities. For candidates from an industrial background, particular attention should be paid to any contributions to patents, development or inventions.*

- 1) introduction of ad template supplemented by wide range of selection criteria, esp. taking into account overall potential of the candidates, creativity, level of independence;
- 2) creation of employment policy with special focus on differentiated selection criteria; policy will be published on IPC PAS website and disseminated among IPC PAS employees;
- 3) training and informing selection committees and persons engaged in recruitment on possible benefits for Departments/ Research Teams and IPC PAS resulting from profile differentiation of IPC PAS employees.

**General Rules Governing Competitions for Research Posts at IPC PAS**

*Appendix to the Resolution of the Scientific Council*

**IPC PAS employment policy**

**General Rules Governing Competitions for Research Posts at IPC PAS**

*Appendix to the Resolution of the Scientific Council*

**IPC PAS employment policy**

**Done and to be continued**

*Informational meetings, incl. before the IPC PAS College  
Strategic management of scientific career, Researcher skills and new career paths;*

*Strategic career planning. Support programs, applications for competency management, information sources in Poland and in the world with special emphasis on the role of mentoring and counselling situation in this relationship mentors and young scientists*

**6 Variations in the chronological order of CVs:** *Career breaks or variations in the chronological order of CVs should not be penalised, but regarded as an evolution of a career, and consequently, as a potentially valuable contribution to the professional development of researchers towards a multidimensional career track. Candidates should therefore be allowed to submit evidence-based CVs, reflecting a representative array of achievements and qualifications appropriate to the post for which application is being made.*

- 1) introduction of change in the rules referring to evaluation of research teams allowing not to take into account in the evaluation of the team - scientific achievements of the person admitted to the institute after at least 2-year break in his/her research career for a period of 2 following years;
- 2) training and informing selection committees and persons engaged in recruitment on possible benefits resulting from candidate's engagement in different activities causing a break in his/her career or variations in the chronological order of his/her CV;

**New Ordinance of the Director**

*replacing previous rules for research teams evaluation and introducing provisions allowing not to take into account persons admitted to IPC PAS after a break in a research career*

**Done and to be continued**

*Informational meetings, incl. before the IPC PAS College*

*Strategic management of scientific career, Researcher skills and new career paths;*

*Strategic career planning. Support programs, applications for competency management, information sources in Poland and in the world with special emphasis on the role of mentoring and counselling situation in this relationship mentors and young scientists*

**General Rules Governing Competitions for Research Posts at IPC PAS**

*Appendix to the Resolution of the Scientific Council*

**IPC PAS employment policy**

- 3) creation of employment policy creating the framework for acceptance of variations in chronological order of CVs; the policy will be published on IPC PAS website and disseminated among IPC PAS employees.

**7 Recognition of mobility experience:** *Any mobility experience, e.g. a stay in another country/region or in another research setting (public or private) or a change from one discipline or sector to another, whether as part of the initial research training or at a later stage of the research career, or virtual mobility experience, should be considered as a valuable contribution to the professional development of a researcher.*

N/A

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**8 Recognition of qualifications:** *Employers and/or funders should provide for appropriate assessment and evaluation of the academic and professional qualifications, including nonformal qualifications, of all researchers, in particular within the context of international and professional mobility. They should inform themselves and gain a full understanding of rules, procedures and standards governing the recognition of such qualifications and, consequently, explore existing national law, conventions and specific rules on the recognition of these qualifications through all available channels.*

**9 Seniority:** *The levels of qualifications required should be in line with the needs of the position and not be set as a barrier to entry. Recognition and evaluation of qualifications should focus on judging the achievements of the person rather than his/her circumstances or the reputation of the institution where the qualifications were gained. As professional qualifications may be gained at an early stage of a long career, the pattern of lifelong professional development should also be recognised.*

**General Rules Governing Competitions for Research Posts at IPC PAS**

*Appendix to the Resolution of the Scientific Council*

**IPC PAS employment policy**

- 1) creation of employment policy specifying applicants' selection criteria, mobility recognition and excluding reputation-based selection; the policy will be published on IPC PAS website and disseminated among IPC PAS employees,

- 2) training and informing selection committees and persons engaged in recruitment about IPC PAS employment policy.

**Done and to be continued**

*Informational meetings, incl. before the IPC PAS College*

*Strategic management of scientific career, Researcher skills and new career paths;*  
*Strategic career planning. Support programs, applications for competency management, information sources in Poland and in the world with special emphasis on the role of mentoring and counselling situation in this relationship mentors and young scientists*

**10 Postdoctoral appointments:** *Clear rules and explicit guidelines for the recruitment and appointment of postdoctoral researchers, including the maximum duration and the objectives of such appointments, should be established by the institutions appointing postdoctoral researchers. Such guidelines should take into account time spent in prior postdoctoral appointments at other institutions and take into consideration that the postdoctoral status should be transitional, with the primary purpose of providing additional professional development opportunities for a research career in the context of longterm career prospects.*

N/A

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## SOCIAL SECURITY AND WORKING CONDITIONS

### Recommended steps

### Current status

**1 Participation in decision-making bodies:** *Employers and/or funders of researchers should recognise it as wholly legitimate, and indeed desirable, that researchers be represented in the relevant information, consultation and decision-making bodies of the institutions for which they work, so as to protect and promote their individual and collective interests as professionals and to actively contribute to the workings of the institution.*

- 1) improved website serving communication with employees, consisting of description of influence channels, list of Director's ordinances which searching machine, Director's office hours for stakeholder etc.;
- 2) regular e-mails informing about current affairs and possibility to join consulting and information groups;
- 3) before inauguration of new academic year – organizational meeting with PhD students (opened for new employees) referring to internal affairs, procedures and policy of IPC PAS and possibility to attend different consultation and information groups and meetings.

**Done and to be continued**  
*supplemented webpage, [materials for new employees](#), incl. [short video](#), access to internal regulations (some internal regulations are still introduced)*

**Done and to be continued**

**Done and to be continued**  
*meetings, [materials for new employees](#), incl. [short video](#)*



**2 Complaints/appeals:** *Employers and/or funders of researchers should establish, in compliance with national rules and regulations, appropriate procedures, possibly in the form of an impartial (ombudsman-type) person to deal with complaints/appeals of researchers, including those concerning conflicts between supervisor(s) and early-stage researchers. Such procedures should provide all research staff with confidential and informal assistance in resolving work-related conflicts, disputes and grievances, with the aim of promoting fair and equitable treatment within the institution and improving the overall quality of the working environment.*

- 1) expanding powers of the Disciplinary Committee to solving disputes and employees' appeals or creation of a new;
- 2) amendment to the Rules governing International PhD Studies indicating body responsible for solving appeals/complaints.

**New Ordinance of the Director**

*appointing Commissioner for Researchers' Rights and defining his/her rights and obligations*

**3 Teaching:** *Teaching is an essential means for the structuring and dissemination of knowledge and should therefore be considered a valuable option within the researchers' career paths. However, teaching responsibilities should not be excessive and should not prevent researchers, particularly at the beginning of their careers, from carrying out their research activities. Employers and/or funders should ensure that teaching duties are adequately remunerated and taken into account in the evaluation/appraisal systems, and that time devoted by senior members of staff to the training of early stage researchers should be counted as part of their teaching commitment. Suitable training should be provided for teaching and coaching activities as part of the professional development of researchers.*

amending the Ordinance governing the rules for the assessment of academic staff by factors related with teaching obligations

**Amended rules for the assessment of academic staff**

*Appendix to the Resolution of the Scientific Council allowing to take into consideration teaching obligations on evaluation of individual researchers*

**4 Access to career advice:** *Employers and/or funders should ensure that career advice and job placement assistance, either in the institutions concerned, or through collaboration with other structures, is offered to researchers at all stages of their careers, regardless of their contractual situation.*

- 1) placing obligation on supervisors to mentor younger research staff and providing support in case of job search;
- 2) training for group/department leaders and young employees how to manage career in science;

**Done and to be continued**

*informational meetings, provisions of the [IPC PAS employment policy](#) training on Strategic career planning. Support programs, applications for competency management, information sources in Poland and in the world with special emphasis on the role of mentoring and counselling situation in this relationship mentors and young scientists*

**Trainings and lectures - done and to be continued**

- 3) cycle of lectures on the subject of combining science, career and science management - open lectures at IPC PAS informing about possible ways of career development;
- 4) regular e-mails / information on the website referring to grant calls, scholarships, contests or job vacancies for researchers (i.e. euraxess) etc.;
- 5) supplementing the employment policy with provisions that after defending PhD thesis on schedule, employment of PhD graduate (on his/her request) will be extended by at least 3 additional months (longer – on Leader’s request) aimed at postdoc or job search.

*Strategic management of scientific career, Researcher skills and new career paths;*

*Strategic career planning. Support programs, applications for competency management, information sources in Poland and in the world with special emphasis on the role of mentoring and counselling situation in this relationship mentors and young scientists;*

*Israeli start-ups eco-system: How to commercialize technologies from Academia?*

*lectures of visiting researchers*

**Done and to be continued**

**[General Rules Governing Competitions for Research Posts at IPC PAS](#)**

*Appendix to the Resolution of the Scientific Council*

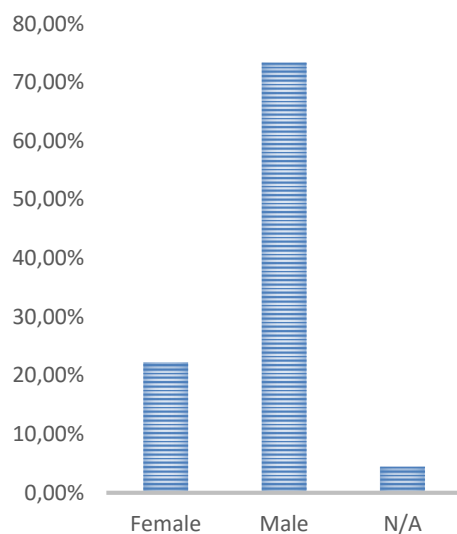
## 2 Survey of IPC PAS employees on the efficiency of taken actions

The purpose of the survey was to research efficiency of some actions and measure taken in order to implement principles underlying the provisions of the Charter & Code.

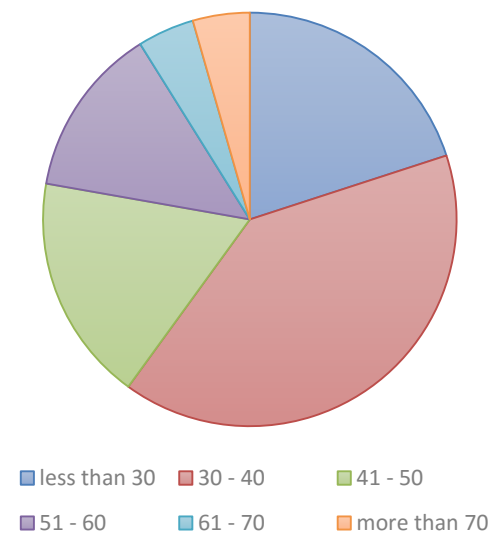
The questionnaire was sent via e-mail to all researchers in the Institute. We used [QuestionPro](#) tool to gather and preliminarily analyse data. The questionnaire was prepared in English to ensure full coverage of the target group. The questionnaire consisted of statements and task of a respondent was to estimate to what extent he/she agrees with those statements.

### Characteristics of survey respondents and variables selection

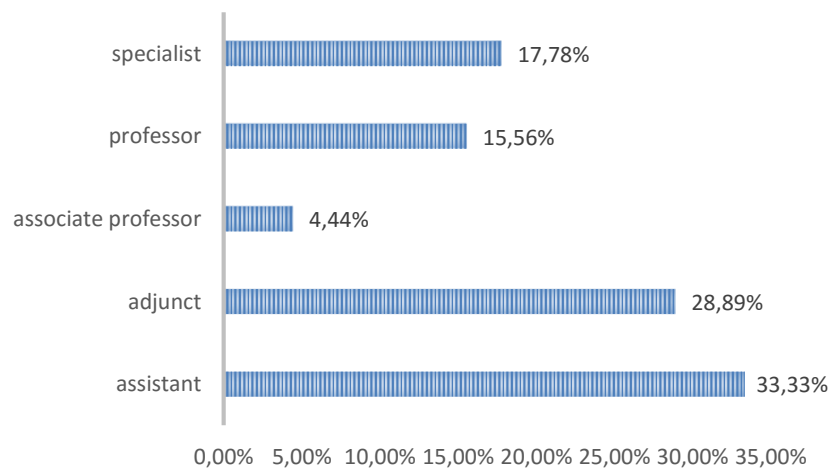
The survey was carried out in December, 2016 and before its closure one reminder was sent. Profile of respondents is presented below:



**Chart 1 Gender of the respondents**



**Chart 2 Age of the respondents**



**Chart 3 Respondents' professional profile**

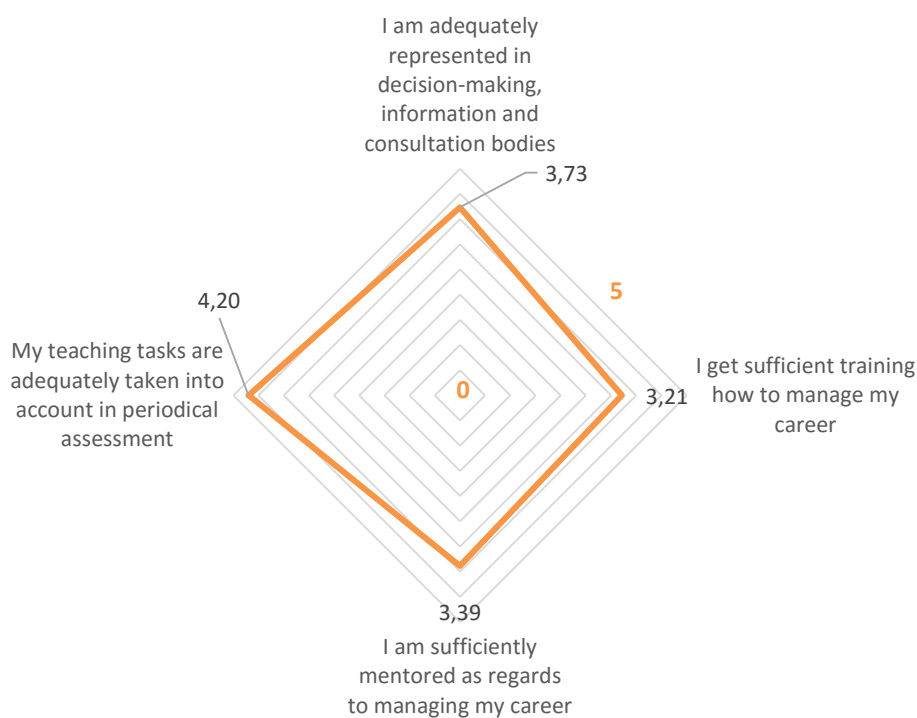
The group of respondents (with predominance of males) is consistent with overall characteristics of scientific workers at the Institute. The age structure and professional profile also correspond with general population of researchers at IPC PAS. Thus, it may be assumed as representative for the our society.

For the survey were chosen principles underlying the provisions of the Charter & Code which were identified as sensitive in the previous survey, and included in the Action Plan. It applied, in particular, to:

- mentoring for junior research staff,
- career management,
- teaching obligations,
- different channels of communications,
- training dedicated to members of selection committees.

### **Survey results**

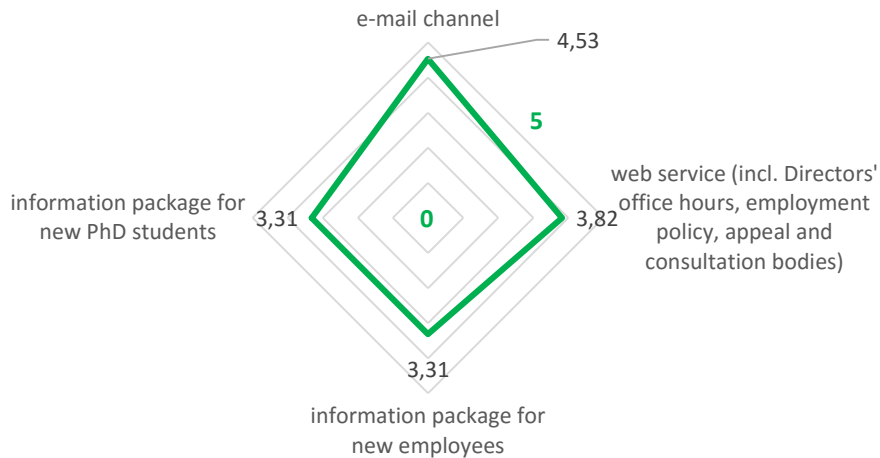
Below are presented basic results of the survey. The answers were encoded in the discontinuous scale: 1 – 5. The choice of “not applicable” / “N/A” was encoded as “0”. Charts below show weighted average results:



**Chart 4 Chosen principles of the Charter & Code included in the survey – career advice, teaching obligations, mentoring, and representation in different bodies**

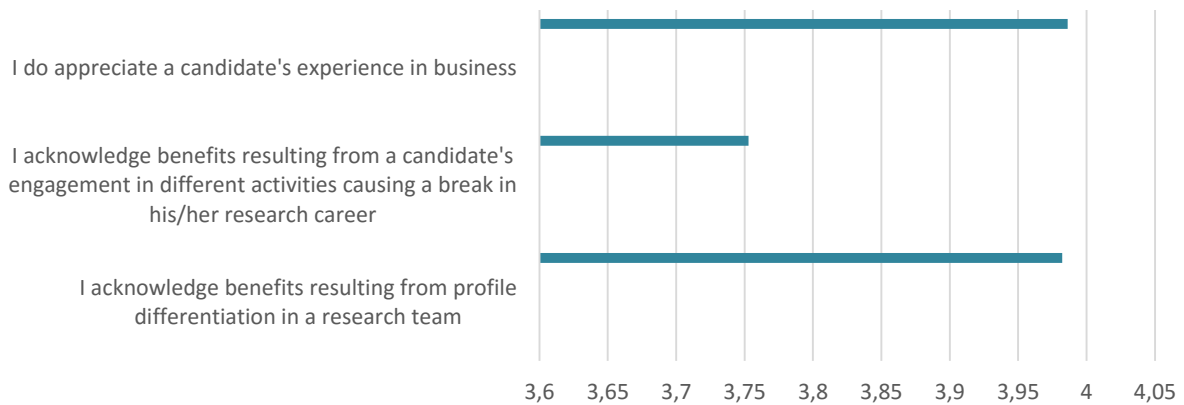
The average values vary from 3.21 to 4.20 which corresponds to the answers: from “neither agree, nor disagree” (encoded as 3) to “I totally agree” (encoded as 5). The best result (4.20) was obtained for the variable “teaching obligations” (previously – 3.3), and worst for variable “training how to manage career” (3.21). Nevertheless, the score obtained for last variable is higher than in the previous survey (ca. 2.7). Some recommendations were included in pt. III.

How satisfied are you with the following communication channels:



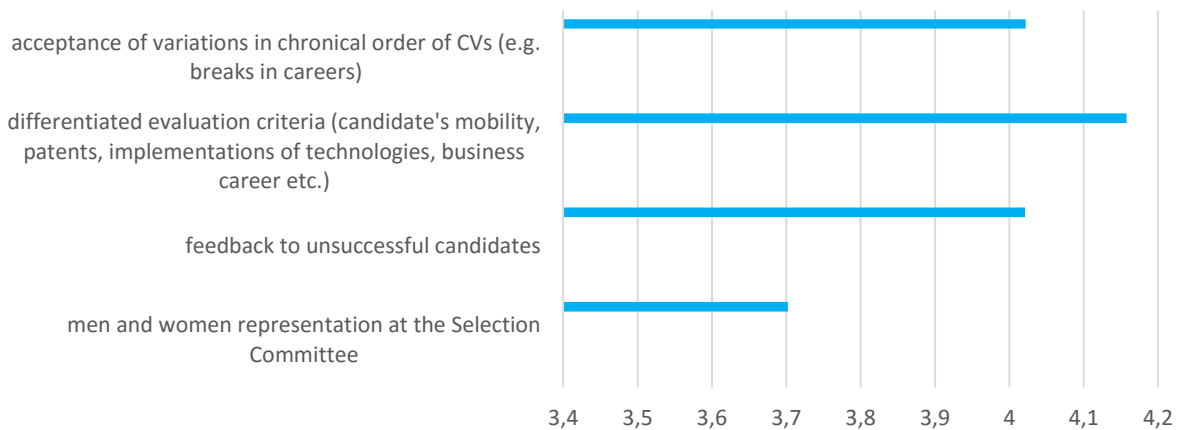
**Chart 5 Chosen principles of the Charter & Code included in the survey - information channels**

The average values vary from 3.31 to 4.53 which corresponds to the answers: from “neither agree, nor disagree” (encoded as 3) to “I totally agree” (encoded as 5). The best result was obtained for the variable “e-mail channel”, and worst for variables “information package for new PhD students” and “information package for new employees”. These statistics can be influenced by late introduction of these documents sets and insufficient spread. However, average assessment is positive. Some recommendations were included in pt. III.



**Chart 6 Chosen principles of the Charter & Code included in the survey - competencies of the members of selection committees**

When you participate in works of a committee selecting candidates for the new position at IPC PAS are the following compound ensured:



**Chart 7 Chosen principles of the Charter & Code included in the survey  
- competencies of the members of selection committees**

The average values vary from 3.7 to 4.15 which corresponds to the answers: from "neither agree, nor disagree"/"I don't know" (encoded as 3) to "I totally agree"/"Yes" (encoded as 5).

Consciousness of the members of selection committees on the benefits and importance of the principles included in the Charter & Code while selecting candidates for new positions at IPC PAS should be assessed as high. However, it is recommendable to continue trainings / lectures and other events dedicated to the members of selection committees – emphasizing benefits resulting from employing candidates with differentiated experience demanding break in research career. Some recommendations were included in pt. III.

### III. Conclusions

The results of the self-assessment show that Action Plan was implemented quite effectively, i.e. planned actions resulted in improvement of sensitive fields detected under the "Gap Analysis and Action Plan" in the year 2014. However, to ensure permanency of attitudes change and stimulate development of a new generation of scientists applying the principles of the Charter & Code to everyday practice – especially the following actions are recommended to be continued/ introduced:

- continuation of trainings and events related with access to career advice dedicated to the whole IPC society,
- continuation of trainings/ lectures and other events dedicated to the members of selection committees – emphasizing benefits resulting from employing candidates with differentiated experience demanding break in research career.
- support for senior research staff in mentoring for junior researchers,
- continuation of distribution of information packages for new employees (handed upon concluding employment contract), and widening its spread,
- introduction of more friendly web service to make information more available, in particular for the new IPC PAS employees.