

EUA PUBLICATIONS 2015



# **ATHENA**

---

# **T O O L K I T**

## **HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**



**EUA**

European University Association



Tempus

This project has been funded with  
the support of the European Union

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	3
Context .....	3
Trends and challenges in HR management in universities .....	4
<b>1. HR Management</b> .....	5
1.1 Functions of HR management .....	5
1.2 Actors in HR management .....	6
1.3 HR departments .....	7
<b>2. Steps to take to develop and implement an HR management strategy</b> .....	11
2.1 Analyse the current situation .....	11
2.2 Develop a strategy taking account of the analysis .....	12
2.3 Develop adequate structures .....	12
2.4 Develop adequate processes .....	13
<b>Other resources</b> .....	14

Copyright 2015 © by the European University Association

All rights reserved. This information may be freely used and copied for non-commercial purposes, provided that the source is acknowledged (© European University Association).

European University Association asbl

Avenue de l'Yser 24 · 1040 Brussels, Belgium · Tel: +32-2 230 55 44 · Fax: +32-2 230 57 51

A free electronic version of this report is available through [www.eua.be](http://www.eua.be)

ISBN: 9789078997610

# Introduction

## Context

The focus of the ATHENA project, supported by the TEMPUS programme of the European Union, is to contribute to the restructuring of university governance by promoting greater university autonomy and financial sustainability in Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Increased autonomy and financial sustainability require professional staff at all levels of the university. The ATHENA project therefore supports universities in the partner countries to develop and implement modern HR strategies and to professionalise their human resources through benchmarking and capacity-building activities. Good governance, good leadership and good people management go hand in hand and need to be addressed simultaneously (see ATHENA Toolkit Governance models).

EUA's analysis of the regulatory framework governing university activities in the three ATHENA partner countries has identified **human resources** as a priority area to address. While this issue may be considered with less urgency than other challenges, it is a crucial dimension of autonomy, notably in relation to university governance and management.

It is also important to note that all three countries do have a relatively high level of formal staffing autonomy, but lower levels in financial and organisational autonomy make it difficult to reap the benefits associated with high autonomy in staffing matters.

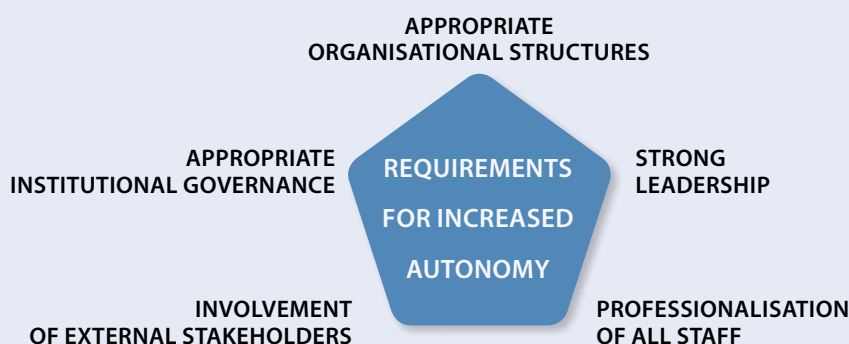
This toolkit outlines basic elements of modern human resource management at universities, which is essential to the organisational success of the institution. Indeed, universities, like other people-intensive organisations, depend on a motivated and committed workforce to remain competitive.

This toolkit will support the partners in:

- development of strategic staffing policies
- setting up transparent recruitment processes
- development of clear career pathways for all university staff
- succession planning
- development and promotion of young talent, and
- establishment of a comprehensive middle management level.

### The toolkit provides:

- practical guidance in a user-friendly format
- good practice examples
- links to further material



# Introduction

## Trends and challenges in HR management in universities

European universities face many challenges. The economic downturn affecting many countries, global competition and decreasing budgets are only a few examples. In this environment, and with increasing institutional autonomy, universities in Europe (and in particular in the north of Europe) have been looking closely at strategic HR management. They have set up and implemented modern HR strategies to attract and retain the people they need to deliver their mission of teaching and research, and to retain people motivated to perform at their best level.

### Two examples of HR strategies from universities:

- University of Sheffield (UK):  
[http://hr.dept.shef.ac.uk/talent\\_first/Documents/Talent\\_First\\_Final.pdf](http://hr.dept.shef.ac.uk/talent_first/Documents/Talent_First_Final.pdf)
- Maastricht University (NL):  
<http://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/web/file?uuid=11ec5a51-291b-46b5-9215-b3a1f3bb6985&owner=f49d6eb1-1aab-4a93-a28d-d4a1409c073c>

The university sector in many countries has also seen a transformation process in leadership development and in the roles that different staff perform. Academic and administrative functions have been transformed and skills that staff need in both areas have been developed so as to help them with their new responsibilities.

Previous generalists have found themselves becoming specialists, and vice versa. Through new expectations and tasks, new roles and skills have been developed both by recruiting new staff and by broadening the competencies of existing staff.

The development of the finance function with increasing financial autonomy for universities is just one example. Many universities across Europe have hired new staff, for example, from outside the university sector or trained their staff to provide them with the new skills they need in financial management.

HR departments in the more developed systems in Europe have a strategic role and HR directors in these systems are often also part of the top management team.

People are the most important asset of universities, but the specific goals and structures of universities bring some challenges for the implementation of HR management. The independence of teaching and research activities make it more difficult to align the overall academic goals and HR strategy within an institution.

The academic self-governance modalities that were set up in a framework of high control by the state are often not fit for purpose in a more autonomous setting.

The attachment to the academic disciplines may also make it more difficult for the university leadership to develop a shared culture.

### Key elements

- Challenges in university environment and increased autonomy require strategic HR management
- New responsibilities require new skills
- Professional development of all staff (academic and administrative)
- Leadership plays a key role in developing strategic HR management

# 1. HR Management

## 1.1 Functions of HR management

Human resources management (or people management) includes a variety of tasks and activities in relation to staff within the organisation.

- Planning and recruitment (which includes the development of processes on search and selection)
- Retention (all actions to maintain high levels of performance, motivation and satisfaction)
- Performance review and evaluation (setting and applying standards)
- Human resources development (activities to ensure potential and skills development)

### PEOPLE MANAGEMENT



***Which functions are already developed in your institution?  
Which of the staff fulfil these roles?***

# 1. HR Management

## 1.2 Actors in HR management

HR management includes a variety of actors and is not just organised exclusively via an HR department. There are various roles in academic management (university leadership team, deans, heads of organisational units such as institutes and departments, etc.), administrative management (head of administration, heads of administrative departments), as well as in research management (research team leaders) that also need to carry out some HR management activities even if they are supported by an HR department.

In an optimal organisation, all actors receive the right support to be able to assume their role in HR management. The development of an HR strategy, on the other hand, needs to be aligned with the overall institutional strategy. As this is often developed by the HR department, it requires input from the university leadership and support from the governing bodies.



***Who is actively involved in HR management in your institution?  
Are the different people aware that they play an important role?  
Do they have specific training?***

# 1. HR Management

## 1.3 HR departments

### Structures

HR departments can be organised in many different ways. There is no single best option. The way they are organised depends on the cultural and historical setting, the overall structure and governance of the university (centralised or decentralised), the size, profile and the legal frameworks.

The following shows the different options that exist in European universities:

1. Mostly centralised but links to faculty/department
2. Centralised and organised into functional groups (selection, training, etc.)
3. Small strategic/advisory/coordination core with operations decentralised to faculties/departments
4. A combination of the above
5. One of the above and a structure outside of the university
6. One of the above and an external consultancy



***How is your HR department organised? What would be the right organisation to support your institutional structure and environment? Could one of the above options work for your institution?***

# 1. HR Management

## 1.3 HR departments

### Size

The size of HR departments vary greatly across Europe, depending on the range of activities (strategic, operational, type of activities), size and profile of the institution. An internationally oriented, strong research university will have a different focus on some activities than an institution which caters mainly for a regional or national level. These elements are therefore important to consider in any benchmarking.



*How many staff work on HR matters in your institution? What would be the right size of an HR department? How many people would you need and for which roles?*



# 1. HR Management

## 1.3 HR departments

### Activities

There is a wide variety of activities that an HR department may perform. They cover the full cycle of following staff from the recruitment stage until the termination of contracts. This can be organised in one single department or by grouping the various activities into different departments. All activities should contain a strategic and an operational element.

Below is an overview of different activities that HR management encompasses:

Recruitment/Selection	Staff planning	Work with trade unions
Retention	Succession planning	Managing bureaucracy
Job evaluation	Managing poor performance	Legal advice
Performance management	Providing advice to managers	Terminating contracts/ Redundancies



***Which activities are performed by your HR department?  
Are there activities that you still need to develop?***

# 1. HR Management

## 1.3 HR departments

### Tools

There is a wide variety of tools available to support HR management. These tools address the different stages of the HR management cycle.

Workforce planning and succession planning aim at resourcing the university according to the strategy. These tools must be complemented by:

- a proper analysis of the current status
- long-term planning
- an evaluation of the environment, and
- a monitoring of the development of the legal frameworks for universities.

Benefit packages and flexible working policies are important tools to attract staff.

Staff appraisal and performance management, as well as training and leadership development, are tools for staff already working at the institution. It can nevertheless also play an important role for attracting new staff, in particular young talent that can benefit from further personal development of management and leadership skills.

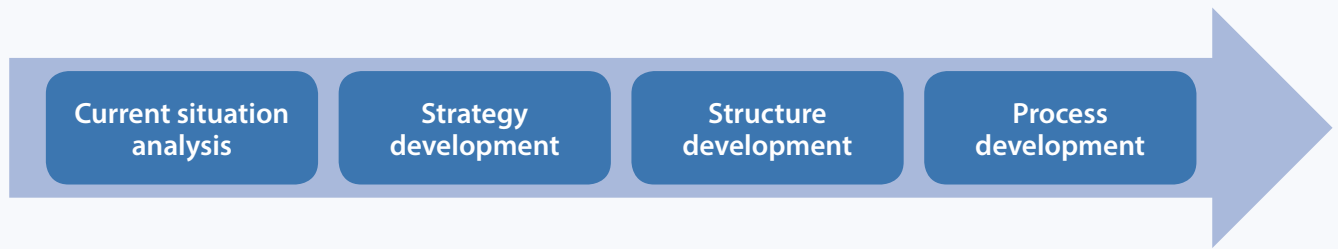
Below is an overview of different tools available for HR management:

Staff appraisal	Succession planning	Performance management
Leadership development	Training	Workforce planning
Flexible working policies	Motivation and incentives	Benefit packages



***Which tools are used in your institution? Which tools should you further develop or implement to achieve your strategic goals? Are all relevant actors in the university aware of the tools that exist already?***

## 2. Steps to take to develop and implement an HR management strategy



### 2.1 Analyse the current situation

The analysis of the current situation requires collecting adequate and sufficient information on the following elements:

#### Internal information:

- Different staff categories (academic, administrative, etc.)
- Different staff levels (hierarchy of positions)
- Ratio full-time/part-time staff
- Age, gender distribution
- Type of contracts (long-term/fixed)
- Salary structures
- Job descriptions
- Organisational/managerial structures

#### External information:

- Legal frameworks
- Funding situation
- Value and prestige of working in the university sector

## 2. Steps to take to develop and implement an HR management strategy

### 2.2 Develop a strategy taking account of the analysis

The Human Resources strategy needs to be developed on the sound basis of the analysis of the current situation. What kind of human resources are needed to deliver on the institutional strategy and mission?

The Human Resources strategy is an important tool for communicating both the aims and visions as well as the processes of the institution to the university community and to potential staff. It is a key tool to attract and retain staff.

It should set the goals, targets and objectives aligned with the university's overall strategic plan. The goals, targets and objectives should be designed to be measurable so that their completion can be assessed.

The HR strategy should cover the full career cycle of staff, how the different goals are reached, and which tools are used. It should address both academic as well as administrative staff.

It should also include an analysis of the costs involved in implementing the strategy and how they can be covered.

### 2.3 Develop adequate structures

To implement the strategy it might also be required to review the institutional governance structure or the division of competencies between the governing bodies or specific bodies set up by the governing bodies (in particular in relation to recruitment of academic staff).

It certainly requires a review of administrative structures and reflection on how the core functions of HR management should be set up (see HR department structures):

- Mostly centralised but links to faculty/department
- Centralised and organised into functional groups (selection, training, etc.)
- Small strategic/advisory/coordination core with operations decentralised to faculties/departments
- A combination of the above
- One of the above and a structure outside university
- One of the above and an external consultancy

It also requires an evaluation of the level of strategic experience and competence in the different administrative departments to professionally support the preparation and implementation of a strategy.

The analysis carried out in the framework of the ATHENA project shows a lack of strategic competence and the absence of a mid-management level in many universities in the partner countries. It will therefore also be important to develop the relevant competences and responsibilities in these areas (for example, strategic financial planning, strategic institutional development, quality assurance, research management and support, communication and marketing, estates, ICT, etc.).

## 2. Steps to take to develop and implement an HR management strategy

### 2.4 Develop adequate processes

Staff planning is an essential tool to ensure the university has the right staffing structure to carry out the mission and aims of the institution. It should involve all academic leaders (including faculty deans, heads of department together with heads of research institutes and heads of colleges and schools, etc.). It needs to be aligned with research and study programmes.

One of the key elements of the modernisation of HR processes is the development of all activities related to staff recruitment. Transparent and professional appointment procedures are essential to develop the human base for the university. The processes need to be aligned with the institutional strategy (e.g. are selection procedures in line with the institution's strategic priorities?). It requires a reflection on selection criteria and staff profiles. Who is involved at which level of recruitment? There are usually different procedures depending on the level of academic or administrative staff. Basic principles of transparency, clarity and efficiency should apply at all levels.

- Professional and transparent appointment procedures
- Clear job descriptions
- Adequate career path models
- Staff promotion models
- Evaluation and review of performance
- Clear and transparent salary system
- Transparent incentive system
- Terminating contracts
- Staff development (induction for new staff; training and skill development; mentoring and coaching schemes)



***Which processes could you develop at your institution?  
Which processes are already in place and do they need  
to be changed?***

## Other resources:

### ■ Reports and material:

ATHENA Training Seminar on Human Resources management.

<http://www.athena-tempus.eu/project/material>

Estermann, Thomas, Nokkala, Terhi, & Steinel, Monika, 2011, *University Autonomy in Europe II: The Scorecard* (Brussels, European University Association).

[http://eua.be/Libraries/publications/University\\_Autonomy\\_in\\_Europe\\_II\\_-\\_The\\_Scorecard.pdf?sfvrsn=2](http://eua.be/Libraries/publications/University_Autonomy_in_Europe_II_-_The_Scorecard.pdf?sfvrsn=2)

European Commission, 2005, *European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers* (Commission Recommendation of 11 March 2005 on the European Charter for Researchers and on a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers).

<http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/europeanCharter>

European Commission, 2012, *Human Resource Management in Public Higher Education in the Tempus Partner Countries*, A Tempus Study, 10 (Brussels, Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency).

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/tools/documents/issue10\\_hr\\_mngt\\_120720\\_en.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/tools/documents/issue10_hr_mngt_120720_en.pdf)

Gupta, Sheila, 2011, 'Professionalisation of management and leadership', in *Beiträge zur Hochschulforschung*, 2 (Munich, Bayerisches Staatsinstitut für Hochschulforschung und Hochschulplanung).

[http://www.bzh.bayern.de/uploads/media/2-2011-gupta\\_01.pdf](http://www.bzh.bayern.de/uploads/media/2-2011-gupta_01.pdf)

## EUA project team Governance, Funding and Public Policy Development Unit

Thomas Estermann Director  
Enora Bennetot Pruvot Deputy Director  
Anna-Lena Claeys-Kulik Policy Analyst & Project Manager  
Isabel Silva Administrative Assistant

Contact [autonomy@eua.be](mailto:autonomy@eua.be)

The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 47 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Thanks to its interaction with a range of other European and international organisations EUA ensures that the independent voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact on their activities.

The Association provides a unique expertise in higher education and research as well as a forum for exchange of ideas and good practice among universities. The results of EUA's work are made available to members and stakeholders through conferences, seminars, website and publications.

