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Human Resources in a Research Infrastructure

Example of the ESRF

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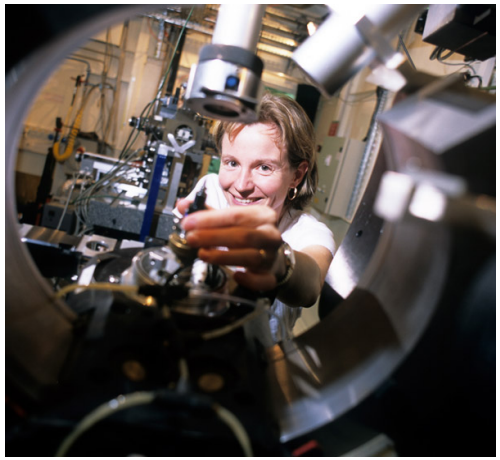
A people story : Attracting and retaining skilled staff in an international research facility

- **Recruiting**
- **Integrating and giving support**
- **Ensuring good conditions of employment**
- **Allowing staff development**
- **Key HR projects**



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ESRF

A *European Synchrotron Radiation Facility* located in Grenoble (France), funded by 19 countries, receiving about 6000 visits of users per year carrying out experiments on the beamlines.

A single site facility

•Foundation phase:	1986 – 1988
– International convention signed on:	December 1988
– Société civile created on:	1 January 1989
•Construction phase (machine and beamlines):	1989 - 1998
– Inauguration:	1994
•Operation phase:	since 1999
•Major UPGRADE :	2009 – 2018

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Some figures

- **An international service and research institute with about 600 staff,**
  - 25% scientists (3/4 on time limited contracts)
  - 75% support staff (engineers, technicians, administrative staff) mostly on permanent contracts
  - 25% women
  - Distribution of nationalities varying with the type of post
  - About 100 recruitments per year (mainly scientific staff but not only)
  - Employment of young staff (traineeship and apprentice type)
  - PhD programme, grant holders, visitors
- **Continuous 24 hour operation**

Recruiting

- **Internationally** , mainly (but not only) in the 19 financing countries.
  - Use of web, networks (users, collaborations), visibility of scientists, *social networks*
  - Get a good distribution of candidates per nationality (also balance men/women)
  - Recruit the best - NO QUOTA
  - With the involvement of the personnel service (incl. interviews)
  - Internal mobility to be considered

Good mix of nationalities for scientific staff ,

poor for technicians

- **Diversity :** nationalities, gender, young and senior staff, disabled staff

Recruiting - *Key points*

- International research environment – not for profit organisation
- World class facility with investment capabilities
- Possibility for scientists to use the source for in-house research
- Interdisciplinarity - availability of support staff
- Good conditions of work and employment

- Location in a middle size town oriented towards university, research and industry
  - » **For nature (and mountains) lovers**
  - » **With sports and cultural activities available**

Recruiting

Constraints

- Easier to recruit internationally scientific staff than engineers and technicians
- Cost of advertising in many countries
- Length of process
- Competition with new national facilities

- Time-limited contracts for scientific staff
- Service activities and not only research

However the ESRF is very attractive for scientists

Integration

- **Support**
  - upon arrival to look for accommodation
  - for visas, residence cards, administrative processes, information
  - In case of social, personal problems (welfare officer)
- **Financial incentives** for new staff recruited outside the Grenoble region and/or from abroad
- **Language training (staff and spouse)**
- Possibility of social/sport/cultural activities with the Works Committee

Easier than 20 years ago (travelling, internet, etc)

Requires support from the personnel service and the teams

Integration - *key issues*

- **Staff:** adaptation to a multi-cultural environment/management
- **Families:**
  - Integration easier for staff than for spouses, for young people
  - Employment of spouses: language barriers , loss of income.
  - Careers of couples
    - » ***Future Opportunities in collaboration with other institutes?***
  - Free International schooling: not fully appropriate - Should enable further reintegration of children in their home country
  - Long and irregular working hours for scientists
- **Language issues**
  - English as working language
  - French needed for employment contracts , rules and regulations
    - ***Many texts/documents must be bilingual***

Conditions of Employment

- **Legal frame: French "Société civile"** ***good flexibility***
  - Created by an intergovernmental convention (Dec 1988)
  - Under French Work law with some specificities **(up to 5 year scientists contracts)**
  - Conditions of employment negotiated with unions
    - ***Application of national law not always easy in a multinational research environment (e.g. 35 hour working time)***
    - ***MANY RECENT CHANGES in French Labour law, with compulsory and lengthy negotiation processes.***
  - Complexity of contracts (staff, visitors, grant holders)

- **Extensive use of Management information systems** to be implemented with self service applications

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Conditions of Employment

Remuneration:

- **Pay scale + additional benefits** defined on the model of a large public research institute (CEA) and of ILL, now more differentiated
- Generally equal or better than in national research facilities, but not competitive with international organisations. Attractiveness of pay depends of the country
- Benefits linked to expatriation and change of residence
  - ***To be carefully designed and reviewed***
- Benefits linked to the continuous 24h operation of the facility (shift-work, on call duty, local contact)
  - ***To be foreseen in contracts - Complicated rules and pay***
- Social security and pension plans according to French scheme
  - ***pension rights payable outside France. Recent changes .***

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Staff development

- **Training and further education programme (technical and soft skills) - conferences /workshops**
- **Change to a project based culture** in particular for the Upgrade programme
- **Very low turnover of permanent staff** and limited opportunities of upward mobility (temporary management appointments)
- **Professional development of technical staff – skills management**
    - ***Technical staff to be kept motivated by involvement in projects, technical challenges or new activities***
- **Internal mobility** to be encouraged – balance to be found with external recruitment –
- **Mentoring - transfer of knowledge issues**.

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Staff development

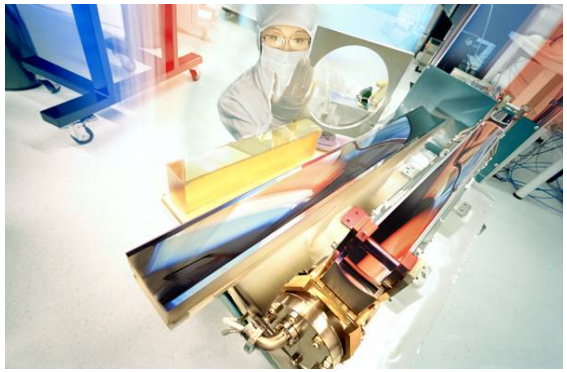
- **Rotation of scientists at early stage considered as fundamental,** ***but many scientific staff (PhD – post docs- scientists) wish to stay after the end of contract (3 or 5 yrs)***
- **Regular Beamline reviews (5 years)**
- **Procedure for permanent assignment of scientists** /or opportunities of recruitment on other positions
- **Train scientists and supervisors in soft skills, management /leadership and project management**
- **Encourage scientific staff at all stages to prepare their future** inside or outside the facility, through networking, collaborations with universities and other facilities, peer reviews, external committees.
  - ***Many scientific staff recruited by University / Research institutes / Synchrotron facilities (new sources = opportunity)***
  - ***Internal promotions (up to DG level!)***

Key projects in HR

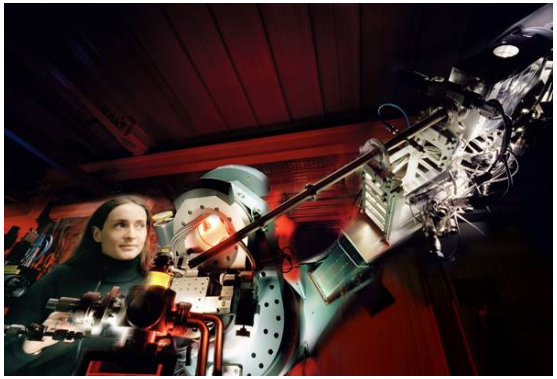
- **Management of employment and skills according to future needs** (internal mobility, seniors, competence framework, supervisors' training)
- **Controlling and containing salary costs**
- **Revision of existing policies with various working groups and unions**
  - salary grid, advancements, expatriation benefits in view of further revision of the collective agreement
  - evaluation process and annual interview
  - Motivating and rewarding
  - Review of retirement policies
  - Gender equity
  - Prevention of psycho-social risks (stress, moping, burnout, etc)

- **Implementation of new HR tools (e-recruitment, personnel costs simulation, upgrade of database...)**

CONCLUSION



- **Building, operating and upgrading a research facility is an exciting adventure**
- **Based on skilled people at all levels** (and not only scientists) **with inspired leaders**



- **Human Resources as a central point of the organisation, (much more than a pure administration role)**