HR Award at the VRI

Statements and comments from research departments on the proposal for implementing the Action Plan and a summary of proposals regarding the activities and further implementation strategy

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Summary:

Upon further review and pondering the Action Plan (hereinafter AP) interconnections, none of the activities can be considered insignificant because, albeit not in the short term, but from a longer-term and future perspectives, the implemented activities and modified processes will surely become known and exert a positive effect on employees and support other similar activities. It is not possible to clearly define some activities as essential and select those of lesser importance. It is important to undertake activities leading to the promotion of the Institute, recruitment of new employees and simplification of the current administrative procedures to make work of all of us better and easier (reserves are not only in the ordering systems, ABRA system, but difficulties are also in the access to and sharing electronic documents - contracts, job descriptions, etc.). It is crucial to obtain information for common agenda, to obtain help from administrative support staff (for fast order processing, material supply, travel orders - electronic availability and access also from outside of the VRI are needed). It is necessary to show to the common users that ABRY is useful - there are large reserves and discomfort. If the AP indicators are only simply performed, the risk may be that the situation will not change much for the better. It is necessary to go beyond the set indicators and carefully explain the reasons for the change and make an effort to change mainly the attitudes and approaches to new things. It is necessary to know the consequences if a specific activity is not introduced and performed. Prior to the final approval of AP implementation, a meeting of department leaders and unit leaders would be beneficial in order to jointly coordinate the activities with the departments' operational reality. The choice of the implementation team members for different activities will also be crucial - it is impossible to select a small group of people who would create and implement processes without the entire management support and consensus.

Crucial and important activities for the implementation - the main direction of AP implementation

17 Improvement of team cohesion and team-building

09 Principles of internal VRI communication

30 Search for and implementation of new ways of internal training

01 Self-presentation of the Institute and development of communication channels

It is absolutely crucial to improve the interpersonal atmosphere within the Institution and support communication, especially towards the Institution. It is necessary to make efforts to improve communication between the administrative support staff, management and employees in the departments - research groups. There is a lack of an efficient flow of documents; the information quality and selection of a suitable means of communication are very important. The reasons for introducing changes and the explanation of the expected benefits of such changes are not sufficiently presented and explained.

Providing transparent and open information to employees is crucial for building trust in the follow-up steps, promoting the corporate culture and values that we should share with each other and support as colleagues. It would be useful to draw inspiration from colleagues from other similar institutions in order to select appropriate communication channels and ways of providing information. Computerisation of communication is a necessity for us and, in order to speed up communication and processes, the introduction of electronic signatures for all employees is worth considering. On the other hand, new communication platforms need to be treated cautiously and with knowledge of the current atmosphere at the Institute. Clear and targeted email communication, with a clearly specified group of recipients, is still a valid and useful tool which should not be abandoned. Internal "chat" and discussion fora can also be counterproductive. New ways of sharing information and feedback forms are not always a step in the right direction. It is necessary to be aware of potential misuse of information and the attempts to provoke controversy in order to change the opinions of people by manipulation of some of them. If a moderated and managed discussion forum were to be set up, in which it would be possible to comment on various topics and would be available exclusively to our employees, it would certainly be a way to strengthen information sharing among those who are open to discussion.

A major task should be to improve communication among people from different workplaces. It is necessary to reduce rivalry and established rituals, especially of some working group leaders, who hinder information sharing and block discussions which are beyond their influence and group. Getting to know each other, as co-workers and colleagues of one Institute, does not have to lead to mutual rivalry between research groups of different departments. It is desirable to start investing in building team cohesion through activities that will connect the interest in pursuing a common goal.

Another major task is the approach to the vision of the Institute with a discussion across the Institute, it is important to know the opinions and expectations of employees, who certainly fundamentally influence its future directions and contribute to their fulfilment. Are we able to formulate new ideas and strategic directions? It cannot be work of a closed, limited group of people. It would be worth considering to find out how efficient the VRI is from the perspective of other institutions. The stronger

a person we have for doing VRI´s promotion, the better will be the way of showing our Institute in a good light including the results achieved.

An internal offer of courses and trainings is needed because systemic development is unavailable. It is necessary to strengthen communication, but the level of empathy, communication and presentation in many colleagues is very low. There is also a need to develop other soft skills which are necessary for normal performance of work and cannot be limited to a selected group of leaders. At present, the "system" of various trainings, briefings and familiarization with different regulations and updated directives is beyond one´s ability to familiarize with and orientate in anything. If an online form of training is introduced in order to reduce the claim to get acquainted with everything (online OSH courses, first aid, waste management, animal protection, GMO, training of reference vehicle drivers, including any other required internal training), it will be highly beneficial and a step in the right direction.

A highly welcome activity would be the concept of leading young scientists and researchers at the VRI to promote better relationships, greater research awareness and easier cooperation between departments - a certain formalized adaptation process would be a good start for initial orientation. An activity in the form of on-boarding is also useful in order to facilitate the basic process for each new employee; set up an integration system and prepare the way of working within the adaptation cycle. There is also a great need for systematic support in submitting project and grant applications.

Working environment refers not only to technical equipment, but also to modification of the premises - it refers not only to heavy investments, but it is necessary to be attentive and provide, e.g., small items. For example, for taking short rest breaks during the work process - to have a little walk on the grounds, tables or places for a short rest for meetings within the premises with the opportunity to have lunch with colleagues outside the dining room. It is also possible to improve communication here and strengthen relationships among the employees.

Disclose key information, clearly specify partial activities of the Institute and indicate our readiness to participate in some activity, either at the level of the Institute or within the framework of partnership and external cooperation. Clearly specify what we can do and what we can offer. It is necessary to specify and monitor which information will leave the Institute, who will monitor its publication and how to publish information in a fairly short time so that the message remains to be information and not just an archival record. It is of the utmost importance to raise staff awareness of the activities taking place in other research groups and departments. We have stopped using the tools to strengthen cooperation. An example from the past is holding of "intra-institutional seminars", which were beneficial, although they were not supported by some of the leaders. The benefits of these seminars were not only a support of younger colleagues´ presentations and sharing information about their work, but presentations in a foreign language were, among others, preparation for "conferences". The opportunity for employees to participate in company´s internal events brought about the opportunity to get acquainted with the methodology, approach and functioning of a particular research team and the operation of the department. Appliances and collaboration could be shared across research groups, creating personal relationships and improving communication. Support for such activities has to be unambiguous and the participation of department leaders and leaders of research groups must be encouraged. Teaching skills and presentation skills development is crucial for many employees, but due to a lack of basic research,

there is not much to be presented. The presentation and subsequent sharing of opinions and discussions within the working group but also beyond it are absolutely essential.

The promotion and protection of intellectual property, and sharing and access to information regarding ethics make an important whole. Publishing constitutes a topic in itself. We need to clearly define what good practice should be and what should be written. It is necessary that information reach employees in advance and, in particular, address those who author publications. In this area, communication is very poor and information spreads indirectly and changes as it goes.

It is also necessary to precisely define the activities and work of the Ethics Committee, including the procedures for its establishment, in order to ensure its independence across a wide range of opinions; the committee will objectively assess necessary cases.

In addition to support of information sharing with colleagues who do not communicate in the Czech language, communication in English is an area which we must start to be consistently developed. It is therefore necessary to consider strengthening of language competencies of key administrative support staff, and not only them, so that they might be able to flexibly deal with the requirements of colleagues and visitors who communicate in English.

If we consider a comprehensive evaluation of research activities carried out by individual employees, it would be very appropriate, in addition to self-evaluation and evaluation by the leader (superior employee), to extend the evaluation beyond the Institution "employee attestation system", and the Attestation Committee which would consist of both internal and external members who would evaluate research outcomes of the assessed employees.

Marginal activities that can be postponed or are not currently a priority:

11 Tools for assessment of candidates in the selection process
13 Update of Internal Wage Regulations at the VRI
 6 Update of Internal OSH Regulations
26 Mentoring system at the VRI

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