



## The Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment approach at INRAE

### **An approach in line with INRAE HR policy**

INRAE, the French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment, was formed by the merger in 2020 of two French public research organisations: INRA and IRSTEA, both of which had already obtained HR Excellence in Research certification.

INRAE's leaders have confirmed their commitment to pursue the implementation of the European Charter for Researchers and its Code by taking all necessary steps to roll out the Institute's Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R). Since 2013, this commitment applies to all staff, not just the scientific community.

Committed to this process for over 10 years, numerous enacted HRS4R principles have already been implemented at the Institute, reinforcing the overall visibility of INRAE human resources policy. This is particularly the case in terms of recruitment, with the roll-out of systems in line with those recommended in the Open, transparent and merit-based recruitment approach.

In keeping with its structure and operational approach, INRAE has chosen to report on its recruitment policy for researchers in the broadest sense of the term, including research engineers, doctoral students and staff hosted in the context of international mobility schemes.

### **Recruitment of research and engineering staff at INRAE**

#### *Assessing needs*

Recruitment of research and engineering staff meets regulatory obligations. Moreover, INRAE has put in place a system aimed at transmitting recruitment needs based on requests from the research units, arbitration by reporting lines and recruitment that is aligned with defined needs, the objective being to recruit the 'right person' in the 'right location'. This system is coherent in principle and in content with current legislation and incorporates the entire process of identifying, qualifying and meeting hiring needs. This approach to arbitration identifies types of needs and ranks their importance at the unit, division and Institute level. It also makes it possible to activate all levers (competitive recruitment, mobility, recruitment of contractual staff), according to their relevance and within the limits of validated budgetary agreements. The system is integrated into the existing information and management system.

#### *Registration in an open competition*

All recruitment competitions are now digital. Online registration is facilitated by extensive communication materials for candidates as well as members of selection committees, including brochures, detailed information with the application file, and the online registration platform. An English version of the platform is available for research position competitions.

#### *Transparency of rules*

With a view to ensuring that recruitment satisfies expressed needs, detailed information is provided to candidates regarding the requirements of a position. This documentation includes a description of roles and responsibilities. Members of selection committees are also given the opportunity to refine the

recruitment criteria according to the need expressed, while respecting the rules applicable to all public service competitions (non-discrimination, impartiality, etc.). In this regard, training is provided to selection committee members to further develop their expertise. Training material has been produced to this end. In addition, selection committees for research staff competitions include an HR representative with human resources training who pays particular attention to this matter when examining applications.

Prior to all competitions, a calendar is established that includes a pre-selection and final selection phase. It is the responsibility of the chairperson of the selection committee to compose his or her committee so as to ensure availability during the predefined periods. Definitive calendars and composition of selection committees are published on the INRAE Jobs website. The rules governing the composition of selection committees appear in communication leaflets distributed to chairpersons. These leaflets also include a summary of regulations; a reminder concerning choice of establishment and the inclusion of an HR representative for all competitions.

### *Ethics*

INRAE has established rules of ethics to ensure fair treatment for everyone taking part in competitions. Thus, a person with an established bias in favour of or against a candidate —family or professional connections, for example— may not sit on a selection committee. Each committee member must submit a declaration of interests with regard to each candidate before the committees deliberate. The chairperson of the selection committee must define how potential conflicts of interests will be managed, on the basis of instructions issued by the human resources management team.

Candidates are contacted and informed on the progress of their application at the end of each phase. This information is sent to them by e-mail. Similarly, at the end of the final selection phase, applicants can contact the chair of the selection committee to obtain information on their assessment.

### *Communication*

A new bilingual website on employment opportunities and advantages of working at INRAE was published in 2020: [INRAE Jobs](#). It lists all of the Institute's job offers. A search bar on the home page can be used to filter offers by keywords, geographical location or type of contract. A share to social media option accompanies every job offer.

Visitors can subscribe to receive email notification when an ad matching their search criteria is published or when an open competition for recruitment is launched.

All the information posted on the INRAE Jobs website is available in English for the recruitment of research staff, post-doctoral students and doctoral students.

In addition, each year, open competitions for recruitment are promoted by extensive communications initiatives, including publications on job boards, at higher learning establishments and learned societies, to advertise offers to the widest possible audience, including via international media in the case of the recruitment of research staff. Communications efforts are similarly stepped up on professional social media platforms.

Information about the quality of work life at INRAE is included in every job offer to provide as much information as possible about the working environment at INRAE. In addition, a bilingual welcome booklet informs applicants about the Institute and how it operates.

In 2022, videos were added to certain open competition job offers to enrich descriptions of the working environment, job-related tasks and the professional benefits of working at INRAE.

Lastly, HR communication managers provide expertise to recruiters, by drafting job offers and providing advice regarding the relevance of different media used to advertise a recruitment campaign. All of this expertise appears in the 'Jobs and professions' section of the HR Intranet site.

#### *Guidance throughout an employee's career*

Researchers at INRAE are evaluated every two years. Engineers at INRAE are evaluated every five years. Evaluation committees are composed of in-house and independent experts who are specialists in the fields covered by the activities of the persons evaluated. These are advisory assessments carried out on the basis of reports written by the person being assessed. Guidance is provided on the continuation of their activities and projects. Any identified difficulties (regarding scientific production, for example) are transmitted to reporting lines so that support measures can be put in place.

#### *Welcoming international staff on INRAE teams*

Given the intrinsic nature of INRAE activities, the Institute values the broadening of its ties with the international community by regularly hosting staff from other countries in its research units. The globalisation of research and INRAE's European and international strategy pose major challenges in managing and supporting human resources.

In order to strengthen mobility schemes and intercultural awareness, the Institute is implementing a number of initiatives aimed at:

- supporting the hosting process with the publication of a website on INRAE international mobility programmes to provide interns, PhD students and research staff with a clearer view of the advantages of joining INRAE, and to facilitate their search for a host team and their understanding of French administrative formalities; <https://guide-accueils-internationaux.inrae.fr/>
- better securing and supporting international mobility schemes by implementing various means and mechanisms, including:
  - o contracts that permit the payment of allowances to hosted nationals as well as insurance coverage (health insurance, occupational accident insurance or civil and professional liability coverage), and
  - o an intranet platform for human resources departments that offers support resources to facilitate international mobility processes, such as standard hosting agreements and employment contract templates in French and English;
- proposing an incentive scheme for international mobility within INRAE to co-finance mobility that enhances the Institute's international strategy and in line with that of its scientific divisions;
- developing the 'MobINRAE' information system, designed to identify, track and assess incoming and outgoing international mobility activity in order to provide better support, enhancement and management;
- engaging in awareness-raising and intercultural mediation initiatives with all INRAE staff in order to foster successful collaboration in diverse working environments.

**Highlights:**

- Regulations that allow for positive answers to questions concerning the composition of selection committees (in terms of equal representation in particular).
- Publication of clear information before and during the different phases of the competitions for applicants and selection committees, with an English version of the platform available for research position competitions.
- Selection committees trained in the specifics of competitions.
- Numerous traceability documents.
- The widespread use of video conference calling during the interview phase for applicants residing abroad.
- A successful dematerialisation of the competitions while maintaining the possibility for applicants to choose the paper format for their application.
- The addition of videos to certain job offers to enrich descriptions of the working environment, job-related tasks and the professional benefits of working at INRAE.
- A guide to international mobility, in the form of a website, to facilitate the arrival and stay of foreign scientists at the Institute.

**Planned action:**

- Implement training for all selection committee members, including a component on fighting discrimination, stereotypes and implicit bias.
- Increase the number of videos presenting open competition job offers.

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