

Survey on working conditions at the Institute of Molecular Biology „Acad. Roumen Tsanev“ , Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IMB – BAS)

Results and Summary

Period of conduct: 23.01-29.01.2024 г.

Respondents: PhD students and researchers, holding academic positions at the Institute of Molecular Biology „ Acad. Roumen Tsanev“, BAS - 48 people

Completed the survey: 29 respondents (60%), of which:

- Assistants - 4
- PhD students- 6
- Assistant professors - 11
- Postdoctoral researchers - 1
- Associated professors - 7
- Professors - 3

About 60% of the respondents are under 30 years old. In the survey, after filling in a short personal information, questions were divided into 4 categories as follows

1. Ethical and professional aspects.
2. Staff recruitment.
3. Work conditions and social security.
4. Training/Education.

The questions required scoring depending on the respondents' degree of agreement: from 1 to 5: (1: disagree; 5: strongly agree) or N/A (not applicable). The questions themselves are based on the 40 principles of the "European Charter for Scientists" and the "Code of Conduct for the Selection of Scientists".

Based on the obtained results, it can be concluded that the scientists at IMB-BAS are satisfied with the conditions provided by the Institute: even in the lowest rated categories, nearly half of the respondents rated the current state with 4 and 5.

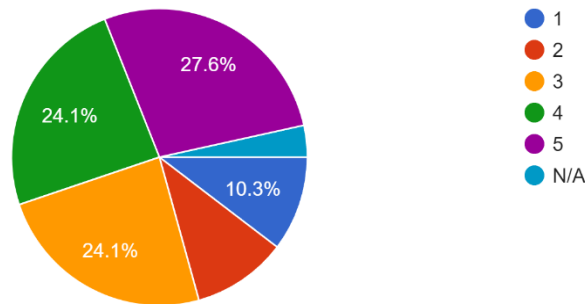
The answers were divided according to the level of satisfaction of the respondents, based on the criteria indicated in the table:

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION	AVERAGE SCORE
LOW	3,6 and below
MEDIUM-LOW	3,7-4,00
MEDIUM-HIGH	4,1-4,5
HIGH	above 4,5

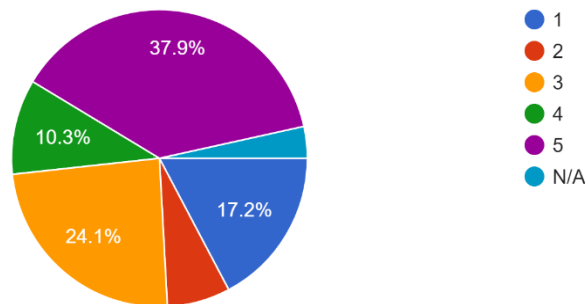
The following areas were identified as most in need of improvement (low level of satisfaction):

"Ethical and professional aspects":

- **Good practices in scientific research:** IMB-BAS provides/ensures a safe workplace, takes the necessary precautions for the health of the personnel. Complies with the requirements for the protection of confidentiality, as well as for obtaining all necessary approvals prior starting work/research” . **Average score 3.5**

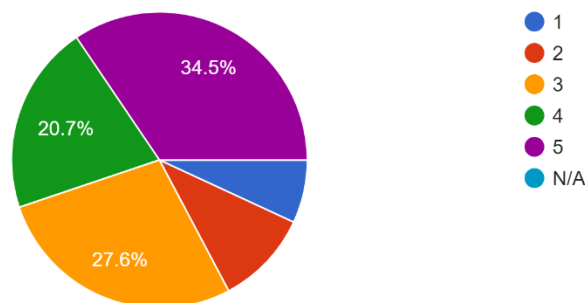


- **Public engagement:** IMB-BAS ensures that the research activities of its scientists are disclosed to the public so that they are well understood by non-specialists, and this improves the public's opinion of science. **Average score 3.46**



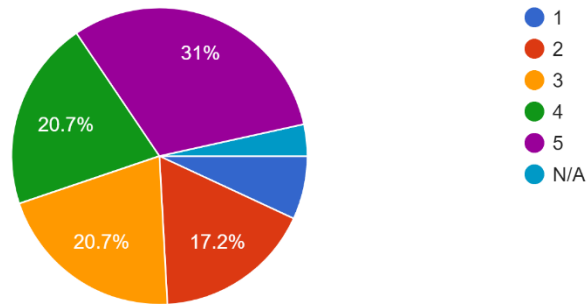
"Staff recruitment":

- **Recruitment:** IMB-BAS has established recruitment procedures that are open, efficient, and transparent. The job advertisements are detailed and include a description of the knowledge and competencies required. They also include a description of the working conditions, career prospects, as well as adequate deadlines for submission and processing of the job applications. **Average score 3.65**

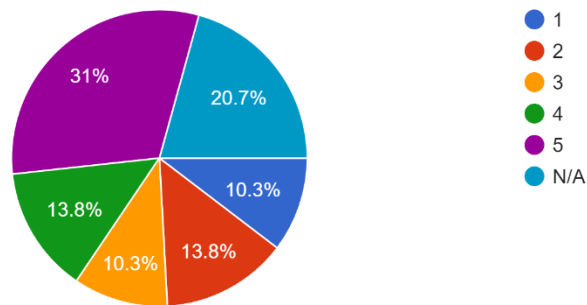


"Work conditions and social security":

- **Funding and Salary:** IMB-BAS ensures that scientists at all career stages receive fair and attractive salaries with adequate and fair social benefits (sick leave, maternity leave, unemployment benefits, etc.) In accordance with existing national legislation and with national or branch collective agreements. **Average score 3.5**



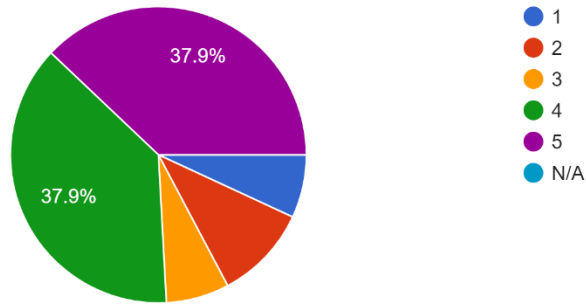
- **Complaints/appeals:** IMB-BAS has established appropriate procedures for handling complaints/appeals from scientists, including those regarding conflicts between supervisor/s and scientists at an early stage of their careers, providing all research staff with assistance in resolving conflicts, disputes, and complaints, to promote fair treatment. **Average score 3.5**



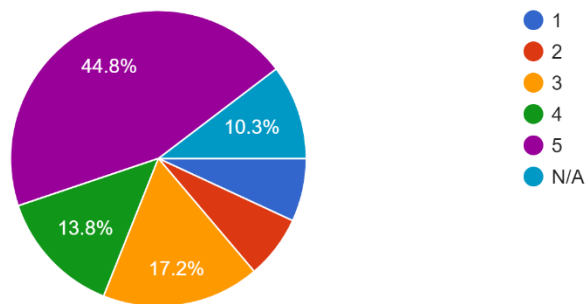
Areas that need improvement to a lesser extent (average level of satisfaction):

"Ethical and professional aspects ":

- **Professional attitude:** The scientists working at IMB-BAS are familiar with the strategic goals of the Institute and with its governing bodies to whom they should report and coordinate their scientific research. **Average score 3.9 (low score from junior scholars and men)**

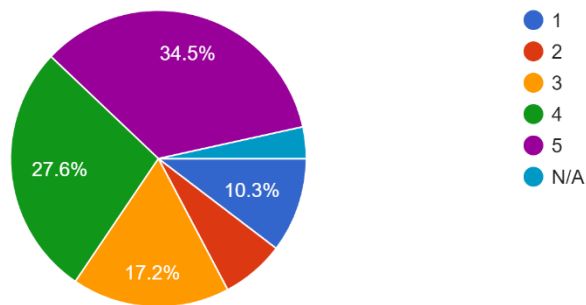


- **Periodic evaluation/appraisal system:** IMB-BAS regularly implements a system for evaluating the professional results of scientists, in a transparent manner, by an independent commission. **Average score 3.9 (low score from junior scholars)**

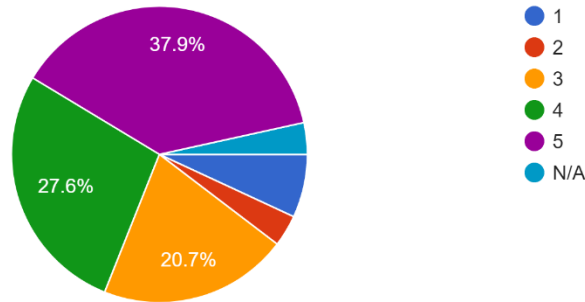


"Staff Recruitment":

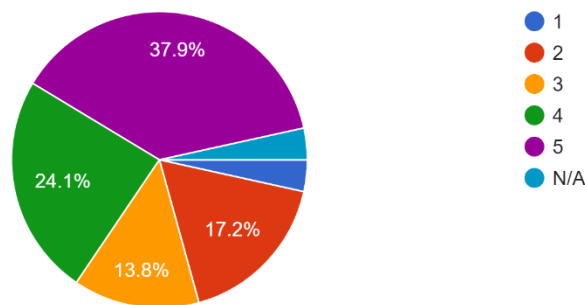
- **Recruitment:** In IMB-BAS, the standards for employment, especially at the beginning of the scientific career, are clearly defined. Access is also made easier for disadvantaged people or for scientists returning to a research career after a break. **Average score 3.70 (low score from junior scholars)**



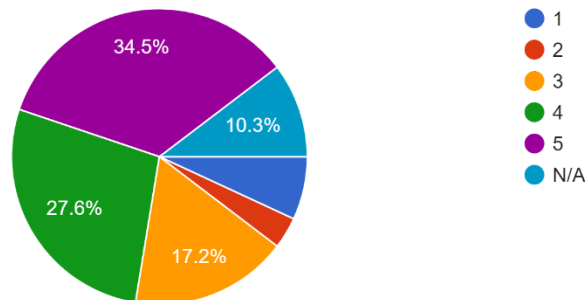
- **Selection:** IMB-BAS ensures that the personnel selection committee strives to build a team with extensive experience and competences, with an adequate balance between genders, and the members of the committee are from different sectors and disciplines, including from other countries (if possible) and with relevant experience in assessing candidates. **Average score 3.90 (low score from junior scientist)**



- Transparency*: During the recruitment process, IMB-BAS informs about the selection criteria, the number of available positions and the prospects for career development. After the selection process, IMB-BAS informs the candidates about the strengths and weaknesses of their applications. **Average score 3.80 (low grade from junior scholars)**

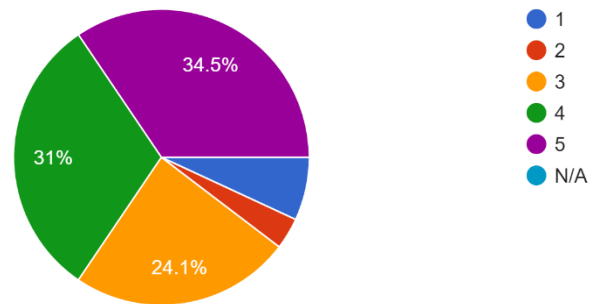


- Recruitment of postdoctoral fellows*: IMB-BAS has clear rules and guidelines for the recruitment and appointment of postdoctoral researchers, considering that the postdoctoral status is transitory. Its main purpose is only to provide additional opportunities for the professional development of a research career, without the position being long-term. **Average score 3.90 (low grade from junior scholars)**

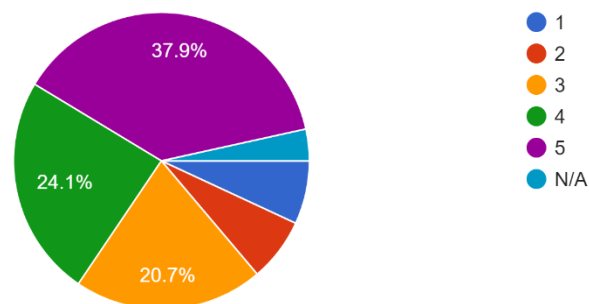


"Work conditions and social security ":

- Career development*: IMB-BAS has a strategy for the career development of scientists at all stages of their career and provides guidance and/or mentoring for the personal professional development of each scientist. **Average score: 3.80**



- **Access to career advice:** IMB-BAS has a strategy for the career development of scientists and the information in it is accessible and transparent. Everyone can get career advice from their PI or HR specialist. **Average score 3.80**



In the category "Training" is observed a **high degree of satisfaction with the current conditions**. The average rating of the respondents is **4.20**.

- **Relations with the scientific supervisor:** IMB-BAS promotes and supports good practices in the relationships between scientific supervisors and trainees (structured/regular monitoring of the progress and results of doctoral 'research; feedback through reports and seminars, etc.). **Average score 4.2**

- **Scientific guidance and managerial responsibilities:** At IMB-BAS, senior scientists who are supervisors or mentors of young scientists build a constructive and positive relationship with them to create conditions for an effective transfer of knowledge and for further successful development of young scientists' career. They manage to successfully combine this role with their other roles as career advisors, leaders, project coordinators, managers, and science communicators. **Average score 4.20**

- **Continuing professional development:** IMB-BAS provides training, seminars, conferences and e-learning for scientists at every stage of their career to continuously improve themselves by regularly updating and expanding their skills and competencies. Average score 4.0

- **Guidance:** IMB-BAS ensures that early-career scientists have someone they can consult to and get help with their professional duties. The mentor has the time, expertise, and commitment to provide the appropriate support for the young scientist's progress. **Average score 4.30**

The scientists at the Institute of Molecular Biology "Roumen Tsanev" are most satisfied with the conditions provided by their employer in the following categories:

- **Ethical principles:** IMB-BAS applies ethical principles and has integrated good practices in scientific research in the Institute's Code of Ethics, adopted in 2020. **Average score 4.50**
- **Non-discrimination:** IMB-BAS does not discriminate against scientists based on gender, age, ethnic, national or social origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, language, specific needs, political opinion, social or economic status. **Average score 4.50**
- **Recognition of mobility:** IMB-BAS considers mobility to be a valuable contribution to the professional development of scientists (e.g. staying in another country/region or in a different research environment (public or private) or changing from one discipline or sector to another, whether in early career stages or later). **Average score 4.60**
- **Working conditions:** IMB-BAS guarantees (when appropriate) work flexibility that supports the successful conduct of scientific research in accordance with existing national legislation and balancing it with family responsibilities. **Average score 4.60**
- **Seniority:** Career advancement requires only the level of qualification,, in accordance with the needs of the position for which the candidate has applied. IMB-BAS recognizes and assesses qualifications, focusing on the individual's achievements rather than the reputation of the institution where the qualifications were obtained. **Average score 4.50**
- **Stability and permanence of employment:** IMB-BAS ensures that scientists are appointed to permanent employment contracts and work for a very briefly on temporary ones (according to national legislation). **Average score 4.60**
- **Importance of mobility:** IMB-BAS positively evaluates geographical, intersectoral, inter- and transdisciplinary and virtual mobility, incl. mobility between the public and private sectors, as an important means of enhancing the scientific and professional knowledge of researchers. **Average score 4.60**
- **Co-authorship:** Co-authorship is viewed positively in staff evaluations. IMB-BAS implements strategies, practices and procedures that ensure an environment where all scientists are recognized and listed and/or cited in the context of their actual contributions, such as co-authors of articles, papers, patents, etc. **Average score 4.50**

The results were also analyzed on the overall work experience of the scientists at IMB-BAS and found that, on average, colleagues with less experience gave lower ratings: an average score of 4.00 compared to 4.40. This difference could be due to several reasons:

- ✓ Scientists closer to the beginning of their scientific career are in a less favorable position than the rest, and their working conditions need more improvement;
- ✓ More experienced scientists have been selected over time - those who are most satisfied with the working conditions have remained at the Institute;
- ✓ Less experienced scientists are not well acquainted with the regulatory framework, as well as their rights and obligations, and for this reason give lower ratings to some questions;

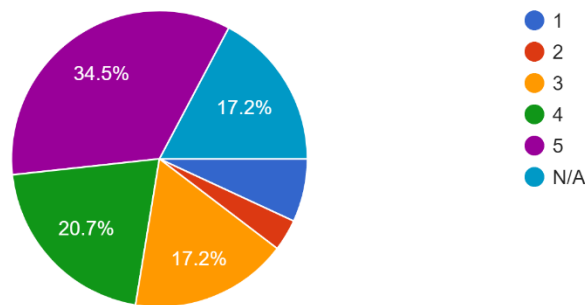
The evaluations mainly by junior staff weighed in identifying the areas needing the most improvement. In addition to the areas indicated above, scientists with shorter working experience

indicate several additional areas with low ratings, which, otherwise fall into the group of medium-rated categories in the analysis of all responses. **Therefore, it is good to consider these conditions together with the lowest-rated ones as needing the most improvement.**

Of the respondents, there are 18 women and 11 men. There are no significant differences in the degree of satisfaction with the working conditions at IMB-BAS between the two genders (average scores around 4.15). Women identified as **areas for most significant improvement:** complaints/appeals, public engagement, good practice in the scientific research, and funding and salaries. Men, in addition to good research practices, also point to a new area in need of improvement: professional attitude. **The average score from men was 3.45, while the average from all respondents was 3.90.**

The scientists gave the following answers to the final questions:

- Are you planning to stay at the IMB-BAS permanently?



- Would you recommend IMB-BAS to a colleague as a good place to develop a scientific career?

