

Position Paper – Strategic focus: Balancing growth and stabilisation

Human Resources Service | INESC TEC

In the context of strategic foresight, INESC TEC faces the dual challenge of expanding its scientific and innovation capacity while safeguarding the institutional foundations that ensure long-term excellence. Meeting this balance depends on our ability to attract, develop, and retain talent in an increasingly competitive and fast-changing research ecosystem. After years of significant growth, INESC TEC must now invest deliberately in talent management, strengthening an agile HR model capable of addressing internal complexity, while meeting higher expectations of excellence and competitiveness aligned with international standards.

Attracting talent is not merely a response to staffing needs; it is a commitment to ensuring that our research, innovation, and support units are continuously infused with new skills, diverse perspectives, and future-ready competencies.

From an HR perspective, our future thinking strategy must balance growth with the creation of sustainable foundations that keep our people engaged, committed, and continuously developing. Stopping growth would risk losing momentum and competitiveness, while unchecked expansion would stretch our foundations and compromise quality. Our role as HR is to act as a strategic enabler/partner of this balance, ensuring that every new step in scale is matched with stronger people practices, clearer processes, and a resilient institutional identity. This balance demands deliberate action across the HR lifecycle:

- **Attract:** Attract with purpose, by identifying and anticipating needs through strategic workforce planning, focusing on the talent aligned with our priorities; strengthen and communicate a compelling, human-centred, and adaptive Employee Value Proposition; ensure recruitment processes are fair, transparent, and inclusive, fully aligned with OTM-R principles; increase INESC TEC's international visibility and reputation in order to position the organization as an employer of choice for top talent (e.g., HR4RS certification);
- **Develop:** Build transparent and predictable career paths rooted in recognition and merit and aligned with European excellence frameworks. Invest in relevant learning programs that combine technical expertise with transversal skills, fostering mobility, adaptability, and a culture of continuous learning across all career stages.
- **Retain:** Promote flexibility, well-being, and healthy working conditions. Actively listen to employees and shape a meaningful employee experience that responds to their needs and aspirations. Create spaces for dialogue, open communication, and co-creation, reinforcing an inclusive, intergenerational culture and a shared sense of purpose and belonging.

In short, we propose a balanced strategy: attracting with purpose, developing consistently, and retaining sustainably. By doing so, we transform HR into a strategic partner that anchors INESC TEC's growth in resilience, ensuring that people and science thrive together in the pursuit of sustainable excellence.