



C O D A U

Convegno dei Direttori generali  
delle Amministrazioni Universitarie



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH



**HRS4R** – **H**uman **R**esources **S**trategy for **R**esearchers

**THE EXPERIENCE OF ITALIAN UNIVERSITIES  
THAT HAVE RECEIVED  
THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S  
“HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AWARD”**

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## Table of contents

1.	Introduction.....	2
1.1.	Understanding the HRS4R and the European Charter for Researchers.....	2
1.2.	How to obtain the HR Excellence in Research Award.....	3
1.3.	The New European Charter for Researchers: what changes.....	4
2.	Participation of Italian Universities in HRS4R.....	5
2.1.	The Benefits of Participating in HRS4R.....	6
2.2.	Obstacles to Implementing HRS4R.....	7
3.	Good practices proposed by Italian universities.....	10

## 1. Introduction

Recent European strategies **prioritize researchers and research careers** to enhance EU competitiveness and attractiveness. This document showcases the experiences of the **fifteen Italian universities that participates in the European initiative known as Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)**. These universities have been recognized with the **HR Excellence in Research Award** by the European Commission.<sup>1</sup>

The document has **two main objectives**, aimed at two different categories of stakeholders.

The first objective is to **promote the participation of other research institutions in this initiative**, highlighting the benefits and sharing best practices regarding both the methodologies used to obtain the Award and the actions taken to support the attraction, retention, and career development of researchers.

The second objective is to **raise awareness among institutions responsible for defining the regulatory and funding framework, and for evaluating the national research system, regarding the obstacles** preventing Italian universities from fully implementing the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and from being more competitive on the international stage.

### 1.1. Understanding the HRS4R and the European Charter for Researchers

The "Human Resources Strategy for Researchers" (HRS4R) is an initiative of the European Commission in force since 2008 that certifies an institution's commitment and progress towards implementing the principles of the European Charter for Researchers ("Charter").

The Charter addresses researchers, employers, funders, and policymakers, defining their rights and responsibilities for the development of attractive research careers aimed at supporting EU research and innovation excellence. The principles of the Charter establish high-quality standards regarding ethical and professional aspects, research environment, working conditions, recruitment, evaluation, talent attraction, support provided to researchers for their activities, and career development.

Initially adopted by the European Commission in 2005<sup>2</sup>, the Charter was recently updated and published together with the **Recommendation of the Council of the European Union of 18 December 2023 on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe**.<sup>3</sup>

Since 2005, about 1500 European institutions have endorsed the Charter. Of these, 720 have been awarded the HR Excellence in Research Award by the European Commission.

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<sup>1</sup> The table containing the list of the fifteen universities, the year of the Award, and the link to their respective HRS4R web pages is available on page 5

<sup>2</sup> Commission Recommendation of 11 March 2005 on the European Charter for Researchers and on a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers - <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32005H0251>

<sup>3</sup> The new Charter for Researchers is contained in Annex II of the Council Recommendation of 18 December, 2023 - [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AC\\_202301640](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AC_202301640)

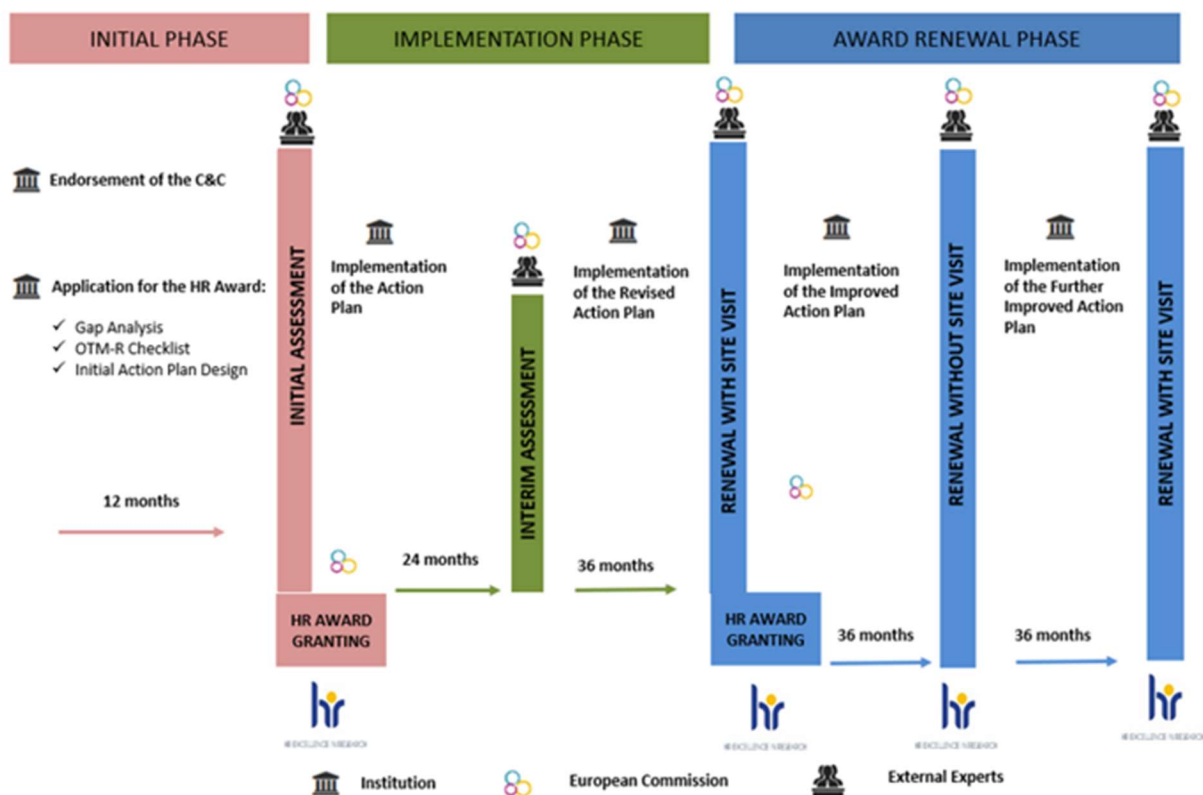
## 1.2. How to obtain the HR Excellence in Research Award

Institutions adhering to the HRS4R and demonstrating alignment of their policies and practices with the principles of the Charter receive the HR Excellence in Research Award from the European Commission. The process to obtain and maintain this Award over the years is based on a structured and monitored audit mechanism, which involves continuous evaluation in three-year cycles. The process, from application to all subsequent stages, is managed by the European Commission through an online platform (HRS4R e-Tool).

Among the essential requirements for the success of the HRS4R process are, for example:

- support from the highest institutional levels,
- active involvement of researchers, starting from the doctoral level, in defining needs and strategies,
- development of multi-year action plans, integrated with broader institutional strategies and designed based on the results of a thorough analysis of the implementation status of Charter principles within the institution (gap analysis),
- identification and monitoring of key performance indicators and targets to be achieved.

The figure below summarizes the process and timing of the HRS4R. Details are available on the official initiative website along with the **HRS4R Technical Guidelines for Institutions**.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/hrs4r>

### 1.3. The New European Charter for Researchers: what changes

Nearly 20 years after the first version, the European Charter for Researchers has been updated to address new challenges and integrate, among others, dimensions of open science and gender equality in research. Therefore, it is not a revolution but an **evolution** and **simplification** to facilitate implementation and promote dissemination outside the academic sector.

The new Charter, attached to the Council Recommendation of December 18, 2023, consists of 20 key principles classified into four pillars: a) ethics, integrity, gender, and open science; b) researchers assessment, recruitment and progression c) working conditions and practices; d) research careers and talent development.

As specified in the Recommendation, the Charter revision **will not compromise the path of institutions that have endorsed the principles of the 2005 version**. *Organisations that have endorsed the principles of the existing Charter and Code for Researchers are considered as continuing to endorse the new Charter for Researchers. This should apply in particular to institutions that have entered or completed the HRS4R process, for which the endorsement of the Charter for Researchers constitutes the first step.*<sup>5</sup>

In January 2024, the European Commission's DG RTD team, which supports in implementing the Charter, issued a clarifying note to institutions that either hold the Award or are initiating the process through the Commission's online platform (HRS4R e-Tool). The transition to the new Charter will occur gradually, requiring all institutions to continue referring to the 2005 Charter until they complete their current phase of the HRS4R process. Once this phase is concluded, institutions will set the path for the subsequent three-year phase under the new Charter.

The transition period will last three years (which is the duration of a complete HRS4R renewal phase) from the launch of the new HRS4R module on the dedicated online platform. After 2026, it will no longer be possible to start a new phase of the process according to the old procedure.

However, it will not be possible to transition to the new Researchers' Charter before the complete implementation of the new HRS4R module on the online platform, expected during 2024.

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<sup>5</sup> p.8 of the Recommendation of the Council of 18 December 2023

## 2. Participation of Italian Universities in HRS4R

In the last months of 2023, the fifteen Italian universities holding the HR Excellence in Research Award, listed in the table below, seized the opportunity of the publication of the new European framework for research careers and the new European Charter for Researchers to delve into the benefits and challenges of engaging with the HRS4R initiative.

On November 9, 2023, during the event titled "Enhancing Research Careers: Strategies and Tools Inspired by the European Charter for Researchers" organised by the Politecnico di Torino<sup>6</sup>, a panel discussion was held among representatives of eleven of the Italian universities holding the Award<sup>7</sup>. Numerous insights emerged on the benefits of implementing the European Charter for Researchers in their own universities and suggestions on how to best organize and manage the various phases of the process, engaging in dialogue with other participating universities interested in understanding how to obtain and retain the Award.

The report draws on the contributions from the discussion among these eleven universities, as well as the collective experiences shared by all fifteen institutions, as detailed in Chapter 3.

ANNO DELL'AWARD	UNIVERSITÀ	HRS4R SITO WEB
2010	University of Foggia	<a href="https://www.unifg.it/en/research/research-opportunities/human-resources-strategy-research-excellence-research-hrs4r">https://www.unifg.it/en/research/research-opportunities/human-resources-strategy-research-excellence-research-hrs4r</a>
2010	University of Camerino	<a href="https://www.unicam.it/ricerca/human-resources-strategy-for-researchers">https://www.unicam.it/ricerca/human-resources-strategy-for-researchers</a>
2012	University of Padua	<a href="https://www.unipd.it/en/hr-excellence-research">https://www.unipd.it/en/hr-excellence-research</a>
2012	University of Palermo	<a href="https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearisorseumane/carta-europea-ricercatori/carta-ricercatori-english-versione/">https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearisorseumane/carta-europea-ricercatori/carta-ricercatori-english-versione/</a>
2013	Politecnico di Torino	<a href="https://www.polito.it/en/polito/work-with-us/working-in-research/hr-excellence-in-research">https://www.polito.it/en/polito/work-with-us/working-in-research/hr-excellence-in-research</a>

<sup>6</sup> The event, sponsored by the Conference of Italian University Rectors, was organized by the Politecnico di Torino as part of the celebrations of the tenth anniversary since receiving the Award <https://www.polito.it/en/polito/work-with-us/working-in-research/hr-excellence-in-research/10-years-of-hr-excellence-in-research-awardpolito>

<sup>7</sup> The panel discussion, moderated by Chiara Lauritano from the Politecnico di Torino, was attended by the following representatives from universities holding the Award: Giovanna Apice from University of Naples Parthenope, Chiara Biglia from the Politecnico di Torino, Silvia Bolognini from the University of Udine, Denise Cuccia from the University of Florence, Clelia Dispenza from the University of Palermo, Viviana Gialain from the University of Padua, Melissa Mancini from the University of Camerino, Francesca Principato from the University of Calabria, Silvia Zabeo and Lucia Righi from Università Ca' Foscari Venezia. Prof. Francesca Spigarelli, one of the event's promoters as the national representative in the ERAC's standing working group on HR&Mobility, participated in the panel discussion, presenting the experience of the University of Macerata as the rector's delegate for the European Charter for many years until 2022.

2014	University of Macerata	<a href="https://www.unimc.it/en/research-bck/hrs4r">https://www.unimc.it/en/research-bck/hrs4r</a>
2015	Politecnico di Milano	<a href="https://polimi.it/en/scientific-research/research-at-the-politecnico/hr-excellence-in-research">https://polimi.it/en/scientific-research/research-at-the-politecnico/hr-excellence-in-research</a>
2016	University of Udine	<a href="https://www.uniud.it/en/research/charter-research-en?set_language=en">https://www.uniud.it/en/research/charter-research-en?set_language=en</a>
2017	Università Ca' Foscari Venezia	<a href="https://www.unive.it/pag/17614/">https://www.unive.it/pag/17614/</a>
2018	University of Florence	<a href="https://www.unifi.it/vp-10899-hrs4r-excellence-in-research.html">https://www.unifi.it/vp-10899-hrs4r-excellence-in-research.html</a>
2019	University of Insubria	<a href="https://www.uninsubria.eu/research/hr-excellence-research-uninsubria">https://www.uninsubria.eu/research/hr-excellence-research-uninsubria</a>
2020	Sapienza University of Rome	<a href="https://www.uniroma1.it/en/pagina/hr-excellence-research-award">https://www.uniroma1.it/en/pagina/hr-excellence-research-award</a>
2021	University of Naples "Parthenope"	<a href="https://www.uniparthenope.it/Portale-Ateneo/HRS4R">https://www.uniparthenope.it/Portale-Ateneo/HRS4R</a>
2022	University of Siena	<a href="https://en.unisi.it/research/hrs4r-human-resources-strategy-researchers">https://en.unisi.it/research/hrs4r-human-resources-strategy-researchers</a>
2022	University of Calabria	<a href="https://www.unical.it/ricerca/human-resources-strategy-for-researchers/?lang=en">https://www.unical.it/ricerca/human-resources-strategy-for-researchers/?lang=en</a>

## 2.1. The Benefits of Participating in HRS4R<sup>8</sup>

- **Prioritizes essential human resource policies** in institutional decision-making processes and strategic planning, elevating them from a peripheral to a central role
- **Establishes a framework for the organic development of new initiatives and services** geared towards career advancement, transferable skills, research promotion, mentorship of researchers, post-doctoral job placement, international scholar recruitment, promoting research environments, and Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI)
- Facilitates engagement in an **international network to acquire best practices from leading universities** in areas where our country may lack experience, such as career development, mentorship, gender equality, and ethics, while also **ensuring regular updates on key European policies and initiatives** pertaining to the European Research Area (such as research assessment)

<sup>8</sup> "The discussion on the benefits of participation in the HRS4R was inspired by: CESAER (2018) White paper on "Sharing experiences with the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers" (<https://www.cesaer.org/news/sharing-experiences-with-human-resources-strategy-for-researchers-122/>)



- Fosters **cross-functional collaboration** within administrative units by sharing information, identifying synergies, and addressing common needs, thereby streamlining and optimizing processes and workflows
- Encourages **interaction among personnel from diverse administrative units and researchers at various career stages**, to design new initiatives and the assessment of their impact
- **Promotes skill development within administrative units of participating universities**, focusing on innovative strategies and services to support research, attract international scholars, and facilitate researcher career development, particularly in the early stages
- Advocates for **modernization and streamlining of recruitment processes in line with Open, Transparent, Merit-based principles**
- **Ensures alignment with key features of Horizon 2020, as reaffirmed in Horizon Europe** (such as the obligations outlined in Article 18 of the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement (MGA) and demonstrating a commitment to providing a conducive working and research environment consistent with European Charter principles from the proposal stage of Marie Skłodowska Curie projects
- Enhances **international visibility** as a university offering an enabling environment for research and researcher development, thereby bolstering the capacity to attract and retain top-tier researchers.
- Acts as a **catalyst for innovation**, driving transformative processes, **including cultural** shifts centered on principles of inclusivity, dedication, respect, and collaboration
- Encourages universities to undertake rigorous **self-assessment processes**

## 2.2. Obstacles to Implementing HRS4R

- As envisaged in the EU Council Recommendation of 18 December 18, 2023, **Member States should encourage the implementation of the new Charter, including through dedicated incentives, in view of making it a structural tool in support of researchers and research careers**<sup>9</sup>. Greater support from the Ministry to universities for implementing Charter principles is highly desirable. Unlike in other European countries, there are no national incentives or funding for supporting career services for researchers covering profiles from R1 to R4 and implementing HRS4R<sup>10</sup>. It would be extremely useful at the national level to conduct an analysis of regulatory compliance with C&C principles and other European policies (e.g., principles related to Gender Equality Plan and COARA Agreement), to increase awareness of obstacles and make it available to all research entities that need to conduct Gap Analysis
- **National/regional agencies or other umbrella organizations that could facilitate and guide universities in the HRS4R process would be beneficial.** Currently, the only existing support is within the research working group of CODAU, specifically the HRS4R subgroup, which brings together administrative coordinators of HRS4R from Italian universities that have already obtained the HR Excellence in Research Award

<sup>9</sup> p.15 of the Recommendation of the Council of 18 December 2023

<sup>10</sup> In Italy, the MUR could promote a measure similar to what MISE had implemented in the past for the creation of TT Offices in Universities or extend to Universities what is already provided for in Legislative Decree November 25, 2016, no. 218, concerning 'Simplification of the activities of public research bodies pursuant to article 13 of Law August 7, 2015, no. 124.'

- National recruitment processes should better reflect provisions related to the **OTM-R checklist**, sometimes not compatible with national regulations
- To facilitate the attraction of researchers from abroad, **modernization of human resources offices and recruitment procedures** should be supported (e.g., structure and language of competition notices, equivalence of qualifications, language proficiency of staff, welcoming services)
- Among the Charter principles, it is required that in the selection process, experiences of **international mobility and mobility between sectors and disciplines** are considered an added value in the advancement of a researcher's career, while in our national system, they are often seen as obstacles
- **Teaching experience** should also be adequately recognized in evaluation systems according to the Charter, which is not adequately taken into account, for example, in the National Scientific Qualification process
- Activities aimed at **providing researchers with transversal skills** that are easily transferable to the EU labor market and building interoperable successful careers across all sectors of society should be promoted. In this regard, the creation of permanent discussion forums among all stakeholders (e.g., MUR, CRUI, ANVUR, CoDAU, Confindustria) would be desirable. Such forums would also have the advantage of enhancing academia-industry collaboration and raising awareness outside the academic sector of the skills and added value that researchers bring
- The proliferation of European initiatives related to researchers' careers, yet lacking integration among them, such as **HRS4R**, **COARA (Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment)**<sup>11</sup>, and **GEP (Gender Equality Plan)**<sup>12</sup>, calls for **coordinated action at the European level**. This would also involve Member States to ensure that virtuous universities adhering to these initiatives do not have to multiply efforts across multiple parallel platforms with different implementation modalities and timelines
- For the Charter, **selection committees should reflect an adequate balance between men and women**, but gender representation cannot practically be ensured by national regulations
- As in other countries, **incentives could be envisaged to address the gender imbalance that grows as a researcher's career progresses**, including allowing positive actions in selections in favor of the underrepresented gender
- **Rigidities persist in contractual forms that prevent seizing funding opportunities and expose universities to seeking borderline solutions or discourage young talents from participation, thus making Italian Host Institutions less attractive**. For instance, existing or currently being adopted national regulations are not fully compatible with the requirements for contracting Marie Skłodowska Curie Fellowship winners, both for Doctoral Networks and Postdoctoral Fellowships (in terms of duration, amount, teaching obligations, selection, etc.). The opportunity offered by the Ministerial decree on the direct calls (*chiamata diretta*) also presents issues due to its incompatibility with all funding schemes
- **Greater visibility and recognition should be given at the national level to institutions holding the Award**, for instance, by incorporating it into ANVUR guidelines, acknowledging the value and impact of the actions undertaken by these institutions on talent development, attraction, and retention

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<sup>11</sup> <https://coara.eu/>

<sup>12</sup> [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/democracy-and-rights/gender-equality-research-and-innovation\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/democracy-and-rights/gender-equality-research-and-innovation_en)

- At the national level, there is a need to **raise awareness about the nature of the Charter's principles**, which do not solely concern researchers and research activities. The Charter aims to valorize the work of everyone within the academic community, fostering valuable synergies between researchers and administrative technical staff

### 3. Good practices proposed by Italian universities

In the following pages, the fifteen universities share their experiences, each one presenting its own good practices related to the methodology and organizational structure adopted to achieve (and maintain) the Award, as well as the actions implemented.

An effort has been made to condense a wealth of information into a limited space, typically about two pages per university, with an invitation to delve deeper through the provided web links or by contacting the designated individuals.

The order follows that of the table on page 5, which references the date on which the university received the Award.



## GOOD PRACTICES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FOGGIA

### IN IMPLEMENTING HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS

#### Website:

<https://www.unifg.it/en/research/research-opportunities/human-resources-strategy-research-excellence-research-hrs4r>

#### HRS4R steps completed:

- *HR Excellence in Research Award*: obtained on March 10, 2010;
- Assessment & Site Visit: completed on July 22, 2014;
- Interim Assessment: completed on July 22, 2014;
- HR Excellence in Researcher Award: renewed on January 22, 2015;
- Assessment of Second Interim Review: completed on May 9, 2018;
- Second Site Visit: completed on *December 23, 2020*
- Interim Assessment: completed on March 16, 2023;
- HR Excellence in Researcher Award: renewal scheduled for 2024.

#### Description:

The University of Foggia (hereinafter UniFG) has drawn up a short report as a way of charting the progress made towards the goals of the HR Strategy for Researchers and its compliance with the C&C principles.

UniFG was the first university in Italy, and the second in Europe, to obtain the HR recognition, as the certification process started in March 2010 as a promoter of the C&C principles.

#### HRS4R at the University of Foggia

HRS4R at UniFG aims to promote the professional development of researchers throughout their career, acknowledge the value of geographical and cross-sector mobility as a key asset to increase scientific expertise and improve the professional development of researchers as well as encourage researchers and employers/sponsors to pursue the aims laid down by C&C.

The strategy results are annually assessed by UniFG as part of the long-term strategy. It is subsequently used a three-year period, as suggested by the European Commission.

The new 2021-2023 HRS4R at UniFG is the result of several different stages which involved the entire academic community: a participating, inclusive and productive project so that everyone could offer their contribution – knowingly and concordantly – as for the competences in their different areas of expertise.

This process was coordinated by the Human Resources Body and the HR Strategy Unit of UniFG and involved, in different phases, the main stakeholders: researchers, Rector Delegates, administrative staff directly involved in the planned actions, the Rector, the General Director, the Academic Senate and the Board of Directors.



Each stakeholder participated following a procedure suited to the peculiarities of the requests. The stages of the process were as follows:

April 15, 2021	<p>Organization of the webinar "The Charter &amp; Code and HRS4R in the new ERA".</p> <p>The webinar was aimed at the entire academic community, specifically at researchers and newly hired administrative staff, and was to illustrate the contents of the C&amp;C and the envisaged review process.</p> <p>The webinar was held by Olivier Fontaine and Michele Rosa-Clot (DG Research and Innovation of the European Commission). There were 177 participants, including Italian and foreign researchers, administrative staff, Rector delegates, the Director General and the Rector.</p> <p>At the end of the webinar, an open-ended questionnaire was given to all the participants to collect ideas, suggestions and best practices tested in other universities, for the 2021-2023 HRS4R.</p>
May 2021	<p>UniFG completed monitoring the 2018-2020 HRS4R, including the OTM-R. The monitoring, approved by the HR Body on June 8 2021, by the Academic Senate and the Board of Directors respectively on June 16 and 30, 2021, made it possible to verify the effectiveness of the 2018-2020 HR strategy.</p> <p>The results obtained from the monitoring process contributed to defining the 2021-2023 HRS4R.</p>
June 2021	<p>One of the main aspects observed during the Assessors' visit in 2019 was the need to integrate the HR strategy into UniFG strategic plan as much as possible. Consequently, most of the new actions performed as part of the 2021-2023 HRS4R refer to objectives included in the 2022 strategic plan of UniFG. Other actions have been planned by the HR Body.</p> <p>The draft of the 2021-2023 HRS4R (and the related OTM-R) was sent via email to the Rector, the General Director, the Rector Delegates and the Managers of the administrative personnel involved in the planned actions to recommend further actions and/or modify the existing ones and/or the related indicators.</p>
June 2021	<p>The Academic Senate and the Board of Directors approved the final monitoring of the 2018-2020 HRS4R and the OTM-R.</p>
July 2022	<p>The Academic Senate and the Board of Directors approved the human resources strategy for the period 2021-2023.</p>
July 2022	<p>The Academic Senate approved the interim monitoring of the HRS4R and OTM-R for the period 2021-2023.</p>
May 2023	<p>Start of monitoring the achievement of OTM-R objectives for the year 2022.</p>

### HRS4R for 2021-2023 at UniFG

The strategic actions included in the HRS4R for the 2021-2023 period can be grouped into three



macro categories:

1. actions already included in 2018-2022 HRS4R and still ongoing;
2. new actions already started/ongoing;
3. actions being completed

UniFG is currently in the process of developing the new HRS4R strategy for the 2024-2026 period, considering the objectives included in the strategic plan of the University for the 2023-2025 period, which was approved in the joint session of the Academic Senate and the Board of Directors on November 7, 2023.



UNIVERSITÀ  
di CAMERINO



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

## GOOD PRACTICES OF UNICAM – University of Camerino IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS

**Reference website:** <https://www.unicam.it/ricerca/human-resources-strategy-for-researchers>

**HRS4R phases Completed** (*insert the dates and comments, if any*):

- Obtaining the HR Excellence in Research Award: May 2010
  - Preparation of Gap Analysis and Action Plan HRS4R: 2009
- Renewals:
  - 2014 (external assessment with site visit)
  - 2017 (external assessment without site visit) and adoption of the OTM-R POLICY
  - 2021 (external assessment with on-line visit) Concluded: May 2022

### **Description:**

UNICAM's **organisational structure** involves the involvement of various delegates of the Rector and administrative areas with a view to maximizing participation of the entire academic community. This operational strategy was systematized and implemented following the 2014 Site Visit of the EU evaluators and with the establishment, through Rector's Decree No. 115 of 7 March 2016, subsequently amended by Rector's Decree No. 423 of 19 October 2021, of the Human Resources Quality Control Unit for Research (*Italian abbreviation: PQURU*), which meets periodically, operates in close synergy with the University Quality Control Unit, and is made up of the following roles:

- Rector's Delegate for policies related to *HRS4R* (Coordinator)
- Vice-rector for equal opportunities, safeguarding and protection of personal data
- President of the committee for equal opportunities, wellbeing at work, and against discrimination and mobbing
- Rector's Delegate for international research funding
- Director General of the University
- 2 Early-stage researchers
- 2 Fixed-term researchers
- 2 University teachers-researchers designated by the Rector upon proposal of the delegate for policies related to *HRS4R*
- Head (or delegate) of the Research and Technology Transfer Division
- Head (or delegate) of the Division of Human Resources, Organisation and Development
- Head (or delegate) of the Communication, Academic Bodies and Public Engagement Division
- Head (or delegate) of the *School of Advanced Studies*
- Head (or delegate) of the Libraries and Higher Education Division
- Head (or delegate) of the Student Services Division
- Head (or delegate) of the Planning, Teaching, and Quality Systems Division





UNIVERSITÀ  
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HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

The **methodology** adopted by UNICAM is based on the use of the questionnaire, intended as a participatory process that allows the various actors involved to express their opinions, in order to “take a photograph” that reflects the complexity and heterogeneity of the academic community in its different levels and roles. The opinions and any margins for improvement revealed through the questionnaire serve as a starting point for the discussion on the state of the art regarding the implementation of the forty principles expressed by the European Charter for Researchers and for the subsequent development of an action plan based on the OTM-R criteria. In this way, the action plan is capable of responding to the needs expressed, allowing the involvement of the entire community, and encouraging reflection on the topics covered by the questionnaire. This process, in the medium and long term, has demonstrated the ability to generate impact in terms of trust, satisfaction and willingness to commit of the entire UNICAM community. A key feature of the questionnaire design is usability understood as a clear and exhaustive, but also concise structure, in order to contain the compilation time and limit abandonment phenomena as much as possible. The questions in the questionnaire are therefore classified and traced back to the exploration of macro-dimensions, in order to evaluate the degree of compliance with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers. The answer possibility is set on a numerical Likert scale ranging from 1 (minimum degree) to 4 (maximum degree). The analysis of the results focused on the positive evaluation index (PEI) of the points present in the questionnaire, identifying the principles with PEI lower than 0.65 as critical. For each critical item that emerged, the PQRU identified a set of specific improvement actions which were incorporated into the document that collects the general lines of intervention. This document, subsequently approved by the Academic Senate, was the starting point for defining the actions to be included in the University plan, sent to the expert evaluators of the EU Commission for the purposes of evaluating the renewal of accreditation. If participation in the questionnaire is not satisfactory, or in any case does not meet expectations, *Focus Groups* are proposed to present the questionnaire and explain the action framework that encompasses it, promoting not only awareness of the European Charter for Researchers and the principles contained therein, but also the awareness of its importance, and the active involvement of the entire university community. The focus group turned out to be a good practice for increasing the engagement of the different community segments and the rate of participation in the questionnaire.

In terms of **good practices**, in addition to the markedly participatory approach and the alignment of the HRS4R strategy with a broader University strategy already mentioned, the following stand out:

- Continuous Research Training, both theoretical through different formats (info-days, seminars, etc.) and laboratory-based (focus groups, cafés, etc.), with particular attention to researchers in the early stages of their career. The approach is to provide support at different levels in terms of knowledge of the funding opportunities, access mechanisms of research funding and management of the funded projects, encouraging the ‘coagulation’ of energies and aggregations on topics susceptible to important convergences, in coherence with the three Pillars of fundamental and collaborative research identified by UNICAM as priorities. Particular attention is dedicated to the topics of Open Science, Impact, Intellectual Property, and Transversal Skills. Training is directly managed by the Research and Technology Transfer Area,



upon coordination of the reference Rector's Delegates, and it involves both internal and external experts from different sectors.

- Systematisation of the scouting activity for selection and communication of research funding opportunities, news, and research funding instruments through a weekly newsletter. All funding opportunities are saved in a Database - in the web section of the Research and Technology Transfer Area - in which all the UNICAM researcher can find summary sheets, useful documents, and a direct reference to the person responsible for supporting the pre-award phase.
- Facilitation and simplification of access for researchers at all levels, via a computerised procedure - in the web section of the Research and Technology Transfer Area that coordinates this activity - to the following new services:
  - Pre-screening of project proposals to be submitted under the first and second Pillars of *Horizon Europe*;
  - Support in planning project proposal focused on the PI;
  - Knowledge Tank for the collection, dissemination, and promotion of "*Curiosity Driven*" inventions;
  - Support for Innovation (patents);
  - Protection of software, apps and data.
- In compliance with the principle of the Charter of Commitment towards public opinion, the UNICAM Communication and Public Engagement Division of UNICAM issues an online magazine "Scienza e Lode" [Science and Honors], which introduces the topics of Research and Science to the general public through insights, curiosities, videos, and interviews, with the aim of not only disseminating the University's research activities, but also of making known and understanding how useful the work of researchers is to the community, how full of challenges, as well as the risks, everyday life and difficulties, and emotions related a discovery, a success or a failure.
- Establishment of the figure of the "Trusted Advisor" (article 12 of the UNICAM Code of Ethics and Conduct), as a point of reference in the University for complaints in relation to violations of the ethical standards set out in the Code.
- Services for Well-Being in the workplace: Starting from 'listening activities' of the university community (Focus Group meetings and questionnaire), a shared plan of actions linked to the WELL-BEING of the person was defined, intended in its broadest sense, in order to improve the quality of the working environment. In particular, the following services have been developed: Psychological Counselling And Well-Being, Oncology, Sleep Disorders, Allergology, and Nutrition.
- Creation of a Researcher Welcome Pack, dedicated to researchers at all levels, who have just arrived at UNICAM, so as to offer a brief overview of the university, opportunities, and support services, as well as provide information and contacts on life in the town, and on procedures related to visas and documents, in order to support a rapid and successful adaptation to the UNICAM research community.



UNIVERSITÀ  
DI CAMERINO



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

- The Communication and Public Engagement Area has also created software to catalogue and monitor all public engagement activities carried out during the year within the University by academic/research staff, with the aim of facilitating subsequent data collection work, necessary to often implement the dissemination and diffusion activities required in research projects, and in the awareness of how these monitoring systems are also fundamental for the evaluation of the University by external bodies.



## GOOD PRACTICES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PADUA IN IMPLEMENTING THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS

### Website:

<https://www.unipd.it/>

<https://www.unipd.it/en/hr-excellence-research>

### HRS4R steps:

- *Declaration of commitment to the implementation of a human resources strategy for researchers incorporating the European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for their Recruitment (C&C): 14/01/2009*
- *Internal analysis: 2010-2011*
- *HR Excellence in Research Award: 26/02/2012*
- *Renewal: 11/09/2014 (mid-term evaluation) and 02/03/2018 (mid-term evaluation without site visit for inclusion in the new procedure)*
- *Site visit: 20/09/2021*

### Description

In **October 2008** the University of Padua (UNIPD) joined the Group of Italian Universities (the so-called **Camerino Group**) that decided to promote the implementation of C&C and to support the HR strategy for researchers.

On **14 January 2009**, the University of Padua, together with the Universities of Camerino, Foggia, Palermo, Udine, Ferrara, Urbino, Verona, School of Advanced Studies Sant'Anna in Pisa, and the University of Eastern Piedmont-Vercelli, signed the ***Declaration of Commitment for the implementation of a Human resources strategy for Researchers incorporating the European charter for researchers and a code of conduct for their recruitment (C&C)***".

Subsequently, on **6 June 2009**, the University of Padua joined the **'EU Human Resources Strategy Group'** by signing the relevant *'Declaration of Participation in the EU Human Resources Strategy Group'* and began the process of implementing the C&C principles.

The **HR Excellence in Research Award** was obtained on **26 December 2012** and **renewed in 2014** following an internal review. In **2017**, UNIPD entered the **"New Procedure"**, which consisted in the adoption of new templates and the submission of an additional document (***OTM-R checklist***) for the implementation of an Open, Transparent and Merit-based recruitment procedure. A second internal analysis was submitted, following which **the Award was confirmed on 2 March 2018**.

On **20 September 2021**, the **site visit** took place remotely, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As UNIPD only benefited from one *site visit*, the EC proposed to make a further site visit at the end of the current cycle (3rd cycle), which will take place between the end of 2024 and the beginning of 2025.



## **Methodology/organisational structure/working tools adopted to ensure the successful implementation of the HRS4R process**

### **Working methodology:**

Following the signing of the commitment to implement the Human resources strategy for Researchers UNIPD distributed a **questionnaire to all researchers** (Researchers, Associate and Full Professors, Laboratory Technicians) to know their opinion regarding the level of implementation of the C&C principles.

In addition, the C&C principles were analysed and compared with Italian legislation and the university regulations. The results of the questionnaire, combined with the internal analysis, led to the first Action Plan.

The following action plans were drawn up on the basis of the university's strategies and consultation with stakeholders.

In 2021, a second questionnaire was proposed to researchers to identify the level of knowledge of HRS4R and satisfaction with the implementation of the C&C principles.

**Regular meetings** are organised with the Steering Committee (SC) and Working Group (WG) to review the implementation of the Action Plan and discuss the problems that emerged. Currently, the two groups are collecting proposals for the formulation of new actions to be included in the 2024-2026 plan.

Every year a **questionnaire** to monitor the status of **implementation of individual actions** and highlight any variations, delays or problems, is distributed and then its results are discussed at SC and WG meetings. For the past few years, the questionnaire has been filled out via Google Forms, allowing faster data collection and assessment.

### **Organisational Structure:**

Since the declaration of participation in the EU Human Resources Strategy Group, a **university Committee** was identified to oversee the implementation of the Charter for Researchers at UNIPD. This Committee was initially composed by the Pro-Rector for Research, the Rector's Delegate for the Promotion of Opportunities for Young Researchers, the Head of the Research and Technology Transfer Area, the Heads of the Research Service and of the International Research Service and the administrative contact person for C&C at the International Research Service. The Committee was supported by a group of young researchers (Group of non-permanent young researchers of the Padua University) to act as advisors.

Over the years, the Committee has undergone some changes to better adapt to the demands of the EC.

The Academic Senate (AS) approved the 2017-2019 Action Plan on 9 May 2017; at the same time, it renamed the Committee (**C&C Committee**) and included new members. The Committee was composed by the following members: Vice-Rector for Research and Coordination of the University Scientific Commission (President), Vice-Rector with responsibility for Personnel, Vice-Rector for Organisation and Management Processes, Manager of the Research and Technology Transfer Area and Head of the International Research Service, identified as the administrative support office.



According to the EC, 4 representatives of "researchers" were also included for each career stage from R1 to R4 (R1 First Stage Researcher, R2 Recognised Researcher, R3 Established Researcher, R4 Leading Researcher).

On 10 November 2020, the Academic Senate approved a further change to the Committee, that was substituted by **the Steering Committee (SC)**, composed by members of top management, to oversee the HRS4R process and **the Working Group (WG)**. The SC and the WG included representatives of all stakeholders involved in the implementation of the HRS4R and in the planning and monitoring of actions.

The **Steering Committee** consisted of the Vice-Rector for Scientific Research and Coordination of the University Scientific Commission, the Deputy Vice-Rector, the Vice-Rector for Organisation and Management Processes and Merchandising, the Coordinator of the Council of Departmental Directors, the Contact Person for Human Resources Strategy for Researchers - HRS4R, the Head of Research and Business Relations, the Head of Human Resources, the Head of Teaching and Student Services and the Head of International Relations.

The **Working Group** was composed by one representative from each category of researchers, R1 to R4, by the Directors of the following Offices: Economic and Welfare, Doctoral and Postgraduate, Organisational Development, Teaching Staff, Global Engagement, International Research, Public Engagement, and by the Coordinator of the Department Directors' Council.

With the election of the new Rector and the appointment of new Vice-Rectors, some members of the SC were replaced and new figures were added to respond to specific actions in the field of equal opportunities on the one hand, and doctoral and postgraduate studies on the other (respectively: the Delegate for Equal Opportunities Policies, the Vice-Rector for Doctoral and Postgraduate Studies, and the President of the Guarantee Committee). The Delegate for Communication and Scientific Dissemination, the Director General and the Coordinator of the Council of Doctorate Courses joined the SC.

The WG is composed of the managers of the areas and directors of the offices involved and the representatives of the R1 to R4 researchers. The Director of the Communication and Marketing Area and the Director of the Communication Office have been included for their direct involvement in some actions.

In order to ensure a connection between the two groups, a **University Representative for HRS4R** accreditation was appointed.

### Good practices and implemented actions

Some examples of good practices identified by the assessors are:

- The integration of the HRS4R strategy into the University's overall Strategic Plan and the continuous adaptation of the Action Plan according to the university's needs.
- The use of an integrated monitoring system for the implementation of the Action Plan and alignment with national legislation.
- The use of a survey to collect feedback before the Action Plan, useful for the identification of strengths and weaknesses of the implementation.
- The establishment of a steering group to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan.



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Strengths emerged during the site visit:

- The commitment to attracting young talents through dedicated university funding (STARS programme) and the support offered to researchers through dedicated training and the specific Talent@Unipd programme.
- Progress in implementing gender balance to facilitate the transition to a gender-balanced university.
- The efforts made to improve the well-being of researchers and students.
- The promotion of mobility and internationalisation and the investment in teaching innovation skills aimed at teaching staff and doctoral students.



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

## GOOD PRACTICES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PALERMO IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS

**Reference website:** <https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearisorseumane/carta-europea-ricercatori/carta-ricercatori-english-versione/>

### HRS4R phases completed

- o *HR Excellence in Research Award*: April 2010
- o Interim assessment conclusion: October 2012
- o Conclusion of assessment & site visit: June 2014
- o Renewals: 2017 (external assessment), 2019 (internal assessment), 2023 (external assessment with site visit)

### Description:

UNIPA has recently reconfigured the organisational structure that promotes the implementation of the HRS4R process. The leading figures are the *Rector's Delegate for the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for Recruitment (Rector's Delegate)* and the *Head of Human Resources*, who coordinate the *Steering Committee (SC)* and the *Charter and Code Working Group (C&CWG)* respectively.

The SC is composed of the Vice-Chancellors/Directors for "Liveability and Working Wellbeing", "Quality, Development and Relations with Departments", "Research, Technology Transfer and Relations with the Administration", "Inclusion, Equal Opportunities and Gender Policies," "Third Mission, Strategic Planning and Cooperation with the Territory", one full professor, two associate professors and one researcher. The SC ensures the alignment between the HRS4R process and the University's strategic plans, verifies that planned actions, in terms of both substance and method, meet the needs of researchers, and supports the C&CWG in finding the resources needed to implement the actions. The SC meets every 3 months.

The C&C Working Group involves technical-administrative and managerial staff (TA-G) from different areas and business units (Recruitment, Careers, External Collaborations and Appointments, Staff Training, Research Design and Funding, PhDs, Research Quality Assessment and Third Mission, Technology Transfer, Third Mission, Libraries). Each of the members of the C&C Working Group is responsible for the implementation of one or more actions of the action





HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

plan. The C&C Working Group meets every 2 months, in the presence of the Rector's Delegate C&C.

UNIPA considered the direct involvement of researchers in the HRS4R process strategic in order to spread awareness of the principles of the Charter and Code, stimulate discussion and comparison between researchers from different scientific-disciplinary areas, and foster mutual understanding and appreciation between researchers and TA-G staff. This is why it created the **HRS4R Ambassador**. The Directors of the 16 Departments designated two researchers for each career stage (R1, R2, R3 and R4), balancing gender and belonging to different scientific and cultural areas and favouring researchers with training and research experience abroad. About half of the 128 Ambassadors expressed willingness to actively participate in four Focus Groups, one for each of the four pillars of the European Charter (Ethics, Recruitment, Working Conditions, Training). The HRS4R Ambassadors are directly involved by the C&CWG in the design and verification of the effectiveness of the actions

#### *Specific actions implemented*

Traditionally, the Rector's Delegate, together with the C&CWG, has designed and organised annual cycles of seminars for the interdisciplinary and transversal training of young researchers. As part of the new HRS4R Action Plan 2023-2025, UNIPA is developing a multi-year project for the CONTINUOUS AND TRANSVERSAL TRAINING OF ALL RESEARCHERS. The project includes initiatives specifically aimed at researchers in training (PhD students, post-doctoral fellows, researchers), senior researchers (associate and full professors) and initiatives aimed at everyone. The lecturers of the training courses will be external experts and UNIPA staff. The aim of the courses will also be to train future teacher-trainers among UNIPA professors, researchers and TA-G staff.

The courses aimed **at all** have as their training objectives (i) strategies for conflict management and resolution; (ii) stress management in the professional context; (iii) time management and concentration techniques; (iv) team working and leadership; (v) innovation and creative thinking; (vi) tools for assessing health and safety risks in laboratories and for identifying improvement actions. The courses, seminars and workshops for **trainee researchers** are intended to (i) promote greater awareness of the role and career of the researcher, in academic and non-academic settings; (ii) foster researchers' access to scientific research funding instruments and mobility at the European level; (iii) enhance public speaking, video and written skills; (iv) create awareness of the ethical, legal and philosophical implications of research, of environmental and social sustainability, of the gender dimension in research content and of technological innovation. The courses for **senior researchers** aim at (i) developing strategies for the supervision and professional guidance of other researchers (mentoring, coaching, team building, leadership); (ii) training on recruitment and selection processes; (iii) implementation of the OTM-R policy; (iv) training in scientific research funding instruments, networking and support for international mobility, preparation of project proposals and financial management of projects.



## GOOD PRACTICES OF THE POLITECNICO DI TORINO

### IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS

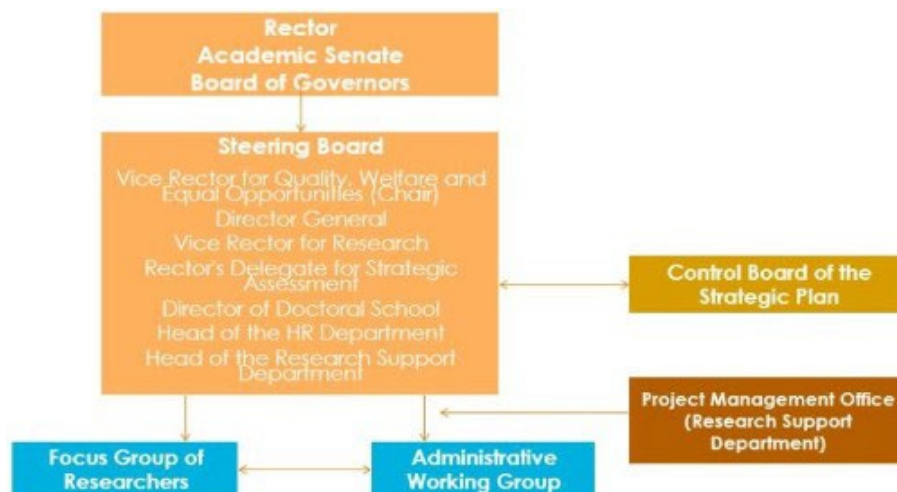
**Reference website:** <https://www.polito.it/en/polito/work-with-us/working-in-research/hr-excellence-in-research>

#### HRS4R phases completed:

- **HR Excellence in Research Award:** 14 November 2013
- **Interim assessment** conclusion: 18 January 2016
- Conclusion of the **Award renewal & Site visit:** 14 April 2021 (very positive assessment from the assessors: *"The whole approach of PoliTO towards HRS4R is admirable. Any issues which have been praised during this assessment are actually models of good practice"*)

#### Description:

The **organizational structure**, created ad hoc and shown below, **ensures institutional support for the initiative, integration in the University's broader global strategy, involvement of researchers and of all stakeholders, monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plan, compliance with the European accreditation deadlines and rules and agile and efficient coordination of the entire process.** It also promotes the activation of synergies among the structures of the Administration and the comparison among support staff and researchers at different career stages, enabling the definition and the implementation of new shared actions and the optimization of processes and activity flows.



The STEERING BOARD, chaired by the Vice-Rector for Quality, Welfare and Equal Opportunities, collaborate with:

- The FOCUS GROUP of RESEARCHERS, which meets once a year to provide opinion regarding the implementation of the principles of the European Charter in the University and to make suggestions about the Action Plan to be developed and is consulted about new initiatives involving research staff. The Focus Group, established in 2012 at the launch of the HRS4R process, is periodically renewed and strengthened through a call for expressions of interest to join sent to all researchers and professors, research fellows and doctoral candidates.



The composition of the Focus Group ensures an equal representation of the different scientific cultures and researchers' roles and gender. To ensure the involvement of the entire community and the possibility of free expression, in 2018 and 2023 a questionnaire about the level of implementation of the 40 principles of the European Charter in the University was sent to all the academic community and then used to define the Gap Analysis and the Action Plan.

- The ADMINISTRATIVE WORKING GROUP, which meets once a year to monitor implementation of each initiative of the Action Plan, using a common template. It is composed of the contact persons for each action designated by the heads of the Departments/Services involved.
- the PROJECT MANAGEMENT OFFICE, at the Career Center Division of the Research, Technology Transfer and Innovation Department, which maintains relations with the European Commission, supports the Vice-Rector for Quality in coordinating the initiative and ensures compliance with the requirements of the European Commission for HRS4R.

A TEAM on Office365 was set up as a tool for facilitating collaboration among the stakeholders.

**A key success factor was the complete integration of the HRS4R into the University's Strategic Plan, starting with the Action Plan 2019-2021: all actions are directly linked to the priorities of the POLITICOIMPACT Strategic Plan 2018-2024 and integrated into the corresponding Action Plan and monitoring system.**

#### **GOOD PRACTICES – INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT POST-DOC RESEARCHERS' CAREER**

Politecnico supports researchers in the early stage of their postdoctoral careers and promotes transparency in career opportunities through numerous new actions and measures: [Permanent Observatory on Academic Careers](#) – Seeks to collect and examine all data regarding the distribution of fixed-term research contracts to be used in the personnel planning to limit the inflation of fixed-term contracts and foster a linear and transparent career path starting from the Ph.D. level.

[Onboarding](#) – Welcome meeting to guide newly-recruited research fellows and fixed-term assistant professors to plan their career.

[Individual Development Plan](#) – online tool realized together with the Focus Group of Researchers to support postdocs in planning their career path and facilitating communication with the supervisor, clarifying mutual expectations and defining tools and methods to achieve career and research objectives.

[Individual coaching](#) - one-to-one path made of 4 meetings with a with an occupational psychologist aimed primarily at postdocs to focus on their career development.

[Courses on transferable skills](#) - Training opportunities on skills useful within and beyond the academic career, with a focus for postdocs on skills useful for strengthening collaboration with companies and entrepreneurial skills.

[Support for the participation in individual funding calls](#) – Support for participation in individual funding calls - Dedicated services to support the participation in research funding calls that have an impact on the impact (e.g. ERC, MSCA, FIS, FISA).

[Researcher Ombudsperson](#) – In July 2019 Politecnico di Torino was the first university in Italy, the Politecnico di Torino to appoint a Researcher Ombudsperson. In line with the provisions included in the 'Complaints and Appeals' principle of the European Charter, the Researcher Ombudsperson is the person in charge of intervening informally to deal with complaints/appeals of researchers, including those concerning conflicts between early-stage researchers and their supervisors, acting in full autonomy and independence.

## GOOD PRACTICES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MACERATA IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS

Reference website: <https://www.unimc.it/en/research-bck/hrs4r>

**HRS4R phases completed** (*insert dates and any comments*):

- o *HR Excellence in Research Award*: 9 December 2014
- o Interim assessment conclusion: March 2018
- o Conclusion of assessment & site visit: December 2021, with immediate logo reward

**Description:**

*Methodology/organizational structure/work tools adopted to ensure the positive implementation of the HRS4R process*

Since 2012, a special working group named "**Excellence in Research Task Force - ERT**", composed of representative staff from all the researchers categories (full professors, doctoral students, research fellows - Italian/foreign - male/female), has been appointed by Rectoral Decree to supervise the development and implementation of the Strategy and of the various subsequent Action plans. The presence of teaching staff and young researchers together with administrative staff (not with mere secretarial functions) represented a great innovation for the University; this criterion was also proposed for other working groups (e.g. the one on Open Science).

The working group was progressively extended to include all the pro-rectors or delegates with skills related to the themes of the European Charter for Researchers. The aim was to integrate the actions of the HRS4R Strategy with the various University policies (e.g. Open Science, Research Evaluation, etc.). By doing so, the Strategy has no longer been considered just as another "burden to cope with"; on the contrary, it has become a framework, within which the different research strategies can be developed in a synergic vision, in line with the ERA principles.

Over the last three years, the actions of the Strategy have been integrated into the Activities and Organizational Plans, in order to further stimulate the achievement of the target values envisaged by the Action Plans.

*Concrete actions carried out*

In general, the implementation of the Strategy has played the role of a real drive for research innovation in the University, in line with the principles of the ERA. Among the various actions carried out, the following are worth mentioning:

- Creation of a **mentoring service** ([Mentor Club](#)) to support young researchers (PhD students, research fellows) in career orientation, both in the academic and non-academic field.
- Creation in 2020 of a **psychological support service** (available in Italian and English) for students and doctoral candidates.
- Starting from 2021, the start of a **plan to implement the principles of Open Science**, whose actions were: adoption of the first "University Policy for open access to scientific publications and for the management of research data"; creation of a handbook for researchers on how to manage and store research data, in compliance with the GDPR legislation and the FAIR principles; and creation of a support service for researchers for drafting their data management plans. The hiring of a data steward is expected soon.

Significant changes have occurred over the last 10 years in relation to the recruitment methods, in line with the principles of the **OTM-R**. The following activities are mentioned below:

#### STANDARDIZATION OF RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES (for all career stages)

- Drafting of forms and checklists for selection commissions
- Standardization of procedures linked to career positions (templates, procedures, etc.)
- Drafting of a standard call form for hiring research collaborators, used by all the university's departments.

E-RECRUITMENT: completion of the e-recruitment processes for all researcher positions through the purchase of the PICA platform, with the aim of guaranteeing a more efficient and transparent process.

PROMOTION OF VACANCY POSITIONS AVAILABLE not only at UNIMC, but also in Italy and abroad.

EVALUATION: greater attention to the degree of autonomy, creativity and research skills during the evaluation phase of the recruitment process.

TRANSPARENCY OF THE INFORMATION provided to the candidates following the selection procedures. A report on the strengths and weaknesses of the applications is sent to each participant at the end of the selection process.

Last but not least, thanks to the network of the Excellence in research assessors, UNIMC is partner of the project: [CARDEA: Career Acknowledgement for Research \(Managers\) Delivering for the European Area](#).

The project leverages the expertise gained by Coordinator Mary Kate O'Regan (UCC) and other partners (all are pioneer institutions in obtaining the Logo) in developing researchers' skills, and is aimed at encouraging the creation of tools for promoting the development and acknowledgement of research managers in Europe.

## **POLITECNICO DI MILANO'S BEST PRACTICES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS**

**Reference website:** <https://polimi.it/en/scientific-research/research-at-the-politecnico/hr-excellence-in-research>

**HRS4R phases completed:**

- Obtaining *HR Excellence in Research* Award: 2015
- Interim assessment concluded: 2018
- Assessment & site visit concluded: 2022

**Description:**

In 2014, Politecnico di Milano began the process of adhering to the HRS4R principles and process, following all the steps required. In 2015, the European Commission gave a favourable opinion on recognising Politecnico with the **HR Excellence in Research** award. Today, Polimi works on a daily basis to fully adhere to the founding principles of the European Charter for Researchers, integrating and aligning its path to these principles in order to create an optimal working environment and improve the processes related to the generation, transfer, sharing and dissemination of knowledge and technological development, and career development of researchers.



In the start-up phase (2014), a Gap Analysis was conducted identifying critical areas to be prioritised in the implementation phase of the strategy. The most relevant issues concerned safety, working conditions and the attractiveness for researchers. Since then, Polimi has defined a series of action plans and has been awarded the Certificate of Excellence twice.

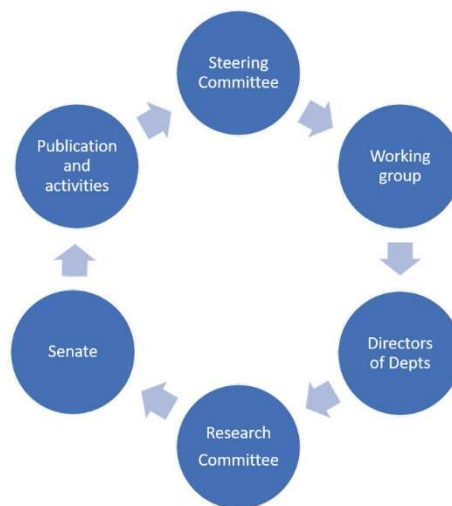
A Working Group - representative of the entire research community and renewed every three years - was set up to initiate work with the aim of achieving the HRS4R certificate. The Working Group includes one representative from each of the following categories: PhD students, fixed-term researchers, associate professors, full professors and an institutional representative.

In addition, a Steering Committee was set up (2022), consisting of a representative set of professors from the polytechnical community, to intervene upstream by suggesting strategic actions and supporting the HRS4R process.

The Working Group, supported by the Research Office, which acts as secretariat of the entire HRS4R process, evaluated the results of the Gap Analysis in detail and opened a discussion on possible actions to be taken. The constant dialogue between the Research Office, the Working Group and the Steering Committee is a

strength that makes it possible to map and identify areas for improvement and to bring to the attention of the decision-making process issues that are relevant to the achievement of the goals set and stated in the Action Plan.

In order to be able to reach all action recipients in a comprehensive manner, following a consultation with the Heads of the 12 Departments, the Steering Committee and the Working Group jointly outlined a draft Action Plan with the specific actions to be implemented and the related KPIs. The document is first shared with the University Research Committee for an initial assessment and acknowledgement of any requests for amendment and clarification, and then with the Academic Senate for final approval and subsequent publication on the University's website.



In 2021, the process for the renewal of the certificate was started with European Commission's Site Visit experts. Preparation for the visit involved a large number of actors.

The monitoring of activities carried out by the Secretariat and the Human Resources led to the subsequent definition of new activities in line with the 2020-2022 multi-year strategic plan. The need to develop strategies and implement defined actions in the fields of research, also working on interdisciplinarity, and also within the framework of international alliances, resulted in possible actions falling under the following three pillars:

- **Individual:** enhance human values and needs, placing the human being at the centre of the paths we will follow, enhancing talent and the ability to understand and address the great technological and social challenges.
- **Global Campus:** ensure physical spaces and innovative services that foster the integration of national and international students, professors, researchers and alumni who distinguish themselves in the world.
- **Impact:** Increase the contribution that Polimi can generate for society, scientific and technological innovation for sustainable and inclusive development.

Following these pillars, all HRS4R related activities and actions were adapted accordingly to ensure that the work carried out over these three years are consistent with both the strategy and the overall vision. The actions are part of Polimi's intense activity to improve: (a) internal processes, (b) performance, (c) the environment in which researchers and students live, (d) the quality of services offered, and (e) the possibility of experiencing the most international and open environment possible.

All this work will be done by taking diversity as an absolute value.



To achieve the set goals, the reference values are in line with those set out in the European Charter for Researchers. This allows for a single, fluid vision, and above all it allows for common and clear goals, as follows: talent development, strengthening PhD programmes, gender equality, lifelong learning, individual scholarship.

In 2022, Polimi received the Assessors' Site Visit, following which a number of recommendations for the work to be carried out in the coming years were taken up, and in August 2022, the award of 'HR Excellence in Research' was confirmed.



**GOOD PRACTICES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF UDINE  
IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS**

**Website:** [https://www.uniud.it/en/research/charter-research-en?set\\_language=en](https://www.uniud.it/en/research/charter-research-en?set_language=en)

**Completed HRS4R phases:**

- Awarded HR Excellence in Research: **20 May 2016**
- Conclusion of the Interim assessment: **14 January 2019**
- Conclusion of assessment & site visit: **21 March 2023. The Award was confirmed with full positive assessment.**

On 25 January 2022, the University of Udine adopted the *Policy of the University of Udine for an Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers - Summary Document* published here:

[https://www.uniud.it/en/research/charter-research-en/otm-r-policy/otm-r-policy?set\\_language=en](https://www.uniud.it/en/research/charter-research-en/otm-r-policy/otm-r-policy?set_language=en)

**Description:**

The task of monitoring the progress of the implementation of the Charter & Code principles within the University, of defining the appropriate actions to guarantee their concrete implementation, of elaborating and implementing the Human Resources Strategy and the Action Plan of the University, as well as of identifying the criteria for self-assessment regarding the implementation of the Action Plan, is currently carried out by the Charter & Code Working Group.

The Charter & Code Working Group, appointed by Rector's Decree, currently consists of one representative for each Department, one foreign researcher employed by the University of Udine, one representative of the Italian Association of PhD students and PhDs, one representative of the administrative staff in the Human Resources and General Affairs Department and one representative of the administrative staff in the Research Services Area. In order to fully complete the composition of the Charter & Code Working Group, the University will also employ someone from overseas.

The *Rector's Representative for the implementation of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers* was appointed as both chairperson and coordinator for the Working Group.

The Charter & Code Working Group has been set up so as to ensure the involvement of an adequate and representative number of young researchers while respecting gender equality, operating in accordance with the principles of democracy and collegiality.

*Actions carried out*

The actions implemented by the University of Udine covered several areas. Among them, the following are worth mentioning:

- Adoption of an OTM-R Policy: a summary document has been drawn up, published in both Italian and English on the web page dedicated entirely to the Charter and the Code, which summarizes all the principles and rules governing recruitment; it is noteworthy that the OTM-R Policy also includes a number of commitments made by the University to improve the recruitment system.

- Filling in an annual OTM-R Checklist: every year, the Charter & Code Working Group fills in the OTM-R Checklist tool to check the progress of the actions implemented by the University of Udine to improve its recruitment system.
- A highly detailed and comprehensive web page was set up on the University's website, dedicated entirely to the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers; the contents of the page are published in both Italian and English.
- Design and dissemination of postcards within the academic community – both on paper and on social media – were created, on the one hand, with the aim of helping people understand what the Charter and Code is and, on the other, to convey knowledge of the principles it covers.
- Organization of the *Charter & Code 30 minutes With*, a series of meetings aimed at raising awareness of the principles set out in the Charter and Code, are videos lasting a maximum of 30 minutes, in which the *Rector's Representative for the implementation of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers* talks to experts from inside and outside the University on various topics related to the Charter and Code; during the meetings, the actions implemented by the University of Udine are also presented. The videos are available on the University's YouTube channel; at the end of each video there is a questionnaire aimed at assessing the usefulness of the videos.
- Periodic organization of focus groups open to the entire academic community, aimed at understanding how widespread the knowledge of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers within the University is and what actions need to be implemented as a priority.
- English translation of the University regulations and their publication on the University website.
- Implementation of the PhD Policy, through the implementation of various actions, such as, for example, the distribution of a *Vademecum* to doctoral candidates at the beginning of their training; the adoption of Guidelines governing the relationship between PhD students and their supervisors; the introduction of an annual register of PhD students' activities; the annual administration of a satisfaction questionnaire to PhD students; the implementation of training activities aimed at enabling PhD students to acquire transversal skills (e.g. organizational, linguistic and IT skills, public speaking, etc.); the establishment of the PhD Award for the best theses (aimed at rewarding high quality research each year and encouraging new PhD students to carry out their activities to high and innovative standards); the organization of the PhD Expo (i.e. a showcase for the research activities carried out by PhD students); the provision of an adequate work desk for each and every PhD student and of a common coffee area; the organization of a PhD Welcome Day; the organization of a graduation ceremony; organization of annual event aimed at presenting the various University's PhD programs.
- Implementation of a large number of actions aimed at spreading a culture of gender and inclusion; among the many actions implemented are: the adoption of Gender Budgeting which started in 2019 and annually thereafter; the adoption of the 2022-2023 Gender Equality Plan; the adoption of Guidelines for the "Alias Identity" and the "Alias Career" at the University of Udine; the organization of various courses aimed at fostering the dissemination of a culture of equal opportunities and inclusion (e.g. the Course on Equal Opportunities and Inclusion, the Course on Diversity, Equality and Inclusion, the Course on Personalized Medicine, etc.); the implementation of awareness-raising actions for the greater involvement of women in research, especially in the scientific area; the preparation of specific University publications aimed at disseminating the culture of equal opportunities and non-discrimination; the

implementation of a campaign against gender-based violence; the mapping of architectural barriers and their progressive elimination.

- Actions to raise awareness of research integrity, such as: the adoption and the review of the Code of Ethics and Conduct of the University of Udine; the organization of a cycle of informative meetings aimed both at analyzing in depth the contents of the Charter & Code and at highlighting the practical effects of their implementation; the greater accountability of young and expert researchers through the adoption of Guidelines aimed at clarifying how the relations between young researchers and their supervisors should be; the diffusion of anti-plagiarism software and provision of the necessary information and training; the adoption of internal Regulations for the protection of personal data.

- Actions aimed at improving the dissemination and impact of research results, among which include: the appointment of the Rector's Delegate for the so-called Third Mission; the organization of many public engagement events aimed at bringing the community closer to the world of research; the support for the protection of industrial property, for the commercialization of patents and for the creation of the University's start-ups; the creation, in cooperation with local businesses, of dedicated laboratories/workshops aimed at providing researchers with adequate equipment to carry out their research (Uniud Lab Village); the implementation of the University's social media, including the YouTube channel of the University of Udine and PlayUniud; the strengthening of the collaboration with the local community (Fondazione Friuli, Cantiere Friuli, etc.); the adoption of an Open Access Policy; the adoption of a Research Archive (the so-called IRIS System); the organization of events aimed at spreading the culture of open science.

- Actions aimed at improving working conditions, professional development and training opportunities for the employees of the University of Udine, by providing researchers with wider access to research funds, Campus Libraries, e-resources, resources for open access publishing, anti-plagiarism software, training events, etc.; by offering more opportunities for career progression; by making adequate space and equipment as well as a common area available to researchers; by carrying out actions aimed at reducing the risk of discrimination and at ensuring the gender balance; by eliminating architectural barriers; by opening new libraries, laboratories, etc.; by organizing training activities and offering an information service about them through an online notice board; by creating a newsletter for researchers with information on calls, events and training; by providing specific Job Placement services; by setting up a special e-mail address which can be used by anyone within the University who needs assistance on the key issues of the Charter and Code.

Finally, it should be noted that the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and the importance of their implementation within the University of Udine were also highlighted in the University's Strategic Plan 2022-2025.



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH



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Ca'Foscari  
Venezia

## GOOD PRACTICES OF UNIVERSITÀ CA' FOSCARI VENEZIA IN IMPLEMENTING THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS

**Website:** <https://www.unive.it/pag/17614/>

**Completed HRS4R phases:**

- Letter of endorsement 12/11/2015
- *HR Excellence in Research Award*: 11/05/2017
- Approval of Interim assessment: 09/08/2019
- Approval after the site visit: 13/10/2023

**Description:**

The application procedure by Università Ca' Foscari to obtain the HR Excellence Award officially started on 12/11/2015, when the Endorsement Letter was sent by the Rector to the European Commission.

Previously, the **Steering Committee** was established and endorsed by a Rector's Decree, and it is composed by representatives of the entire research community (R1-R4), including the Rector's Delegate for Research and the Rector's Delegate for Staff Enhancement, and the **Working Group** made up of administrative representatives from the HR and Research areas to manage the accreditation process.

The composition of the Steering Committee/ Panel of researchers is an as-careful-as-possible representation of the different scientific areas of the university, the different categories of researchers (R1-R4) and guarantees the respect for the principle of gender equity.

The composition of the Working Group brought together various professionals from the Research Area and the Human Resources Area who could interact with the Panel in the process of carrying out the GAP Analysis of the Action Plan.

**Good practices relating to: methodology/organizational structure/work tools adopted to ensure the positive implementation of the HRS4R process;**

- In the first accreditation phase, a survey was sent to all researchers, in which they indicated their perception of the application of the European Researchers' Charter within the University; at the same time the Working Group analyzed the regulations and internal practices in force at Ca' Foscari. The combined analysis of the results of these two processes formed the basis for the construction of the first Action Plan.

- The University is committed to ensuring that its strategy effectively responds to the needs of its researchers (and other staff involved in research activities as well), who have declared that they are satisfied with their involvement (through institutional bodies and face-to-face meetings). Stakeholders feel that the decisions made are also their decisions.
- During the evaluation process, in all its phases, additional specific documentation was provided to the assessors, very detailed and with updated and exhaustive figures, which allowed the assessors to get a more concrete idea of the situation of Ca' Foscari.

### Good practices related to concrete actions carried out

During the different evaluation phases, the assessors identified the following good practices:

- The HRS4R strategy is **aligned with the broader University strategy** (Strategic plan) with particular attention to attracting and retaining talents, both international and Italian. Through the implementation of the principles of the Charter and the Code, Ca' Foscari is trying to **guarantee the implementation of working conditions and an institutional culture such as to have a community of knowledge and researchers ready to face global challenges**.
- Among the best practices cited, we can mention the **efficiency of support services and measures for career development** such as Marie Curie +1 (one additional year of funding for winners of MSCA Fellowships) and direct calls for recruitment of national and international talents, which has created a favorable environment in particular for the recruitment of ERC grantees (24 so far) and MSCA Fellows (almost 180).
- **Training activities**, in particular for online teaching but also in transversal skills for research activity.

The University promotes actions aimed at improving the working conditions of researchers by committing itself to supporting them in their professional and professional careers and on a personal level. Some examples that evaluators have found to be "excellent" are:

- The **Supplementary Health Plan**, which guarantees benefits such as the reimbursement of some public and private services. The University offers researchers and their close relatives (R1-R4) the opportunity to join the plan by paying a low fee.
- Promotion of the **digital transition of administrative processes** to reduce burdens on researchers, e.g. online platform that allows researchers to view the availability of funding for their research projects, online timesheets, etc.
- **Mental health support/psychological support** - Smart DESK, which involves listening and support from professional psychologists external to the University.

In general, Ca' Foscari University was highly appreciated and, among the best practices explicitly highlighted, was **attention to work-life balance**.



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HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

## UNIVERSITY OF FLORENCE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS

Website: <https://www.unifi.it/vp-10899-hrs4r-excellence-in-research.html>

### HRS4R current status:

- *HR Excellence in Research Award:*
  - 13 October 2017: Gap Analysis and Action Plan sent to the European Commission
  - 12 December 2018: “*HR Excellence in Research*” award granted
- Interim assessment:
  - 25 February 2021: Internal Assessment Report sent to the European Commission
  - 14 June 2021: European Approval of the roadmap and of the new Action Plan
- Award Renewal preparation:
  - Site visit planned for autumn 2024, required documentation in preparation

### Description:

In order to ensure the effective planning and monitoring of the activities required for the “Human Resources Strategy for Researchers” the University of Florence has set up a Steering Group and a Working Group dedicated to HRS4R activities, as required by European procedures.

The Steering Group is in charge of the strategic/political planning of the HRS4R activities guaranteeing the coherence and consistency of the proposed Actions with the University's strategic initiatives. The composition of this group was updated in January 2023, it is chaired by the University Rector and includes the Vice-Rector for Research, the Delegate for Academic Personnel, the Delegate for Legality and Transparency and a representative of the Department of Statistics, Informatics and Applications 'G. Parenti'.

The HRS4R Working Group, which composition was also updated at the beginning of 2023, currently includes technical-administrative staff members, representing the University's offices and services active in the areas covered by the European Charter and Code, namely:

- European and International Research (group coordination)
- National Research
- Recruitment of Academic and Research Staff
- PhD Programme
- Internationalisation



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HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

- Communication Services
- Products and Tools for Institutional Communication and for students
- KTO-Intellectual/Industrial Property and Joint Labs
- University Library System
- Orientation and Job Placement
- Public Engagement Initiatives and Events
- University IT System

The HRS4R Working Group meets every 2/3 months to monitor the progress in the implementation of the planned actions, and periodically prepares an overall report about the status of each Action for the evaluation of the Steering Group. The Steering Group meets every 4/6 months and, considering the reports and analyses submitted periodically by the members of the Working Group, provides guidance and indications on the steps to be taken and about the needed corrective measures, if any.

In order to ensure the constant involvement of the Academic Community in the HRS4R process, the University of Florence periodically carries out dedicated surveys. The first edition of the survey took place in 2015, followed by a second one in 2020 and a third one launched in early October 2023. Professors and researchers are asked on this occasion to express, anonymously, their opinion on the level of implementation within the university of the principles of the Charter and the Code, answering approximately 40 multiple-choice questions. For each of the four chapters of the European Charter, participants are then asked to indicate the level of priority given to each issue.

The outcome of the surveys conducted and of the periodic checks carried out by the Working Group both at the level of national and local reference regulations and of applied practices, is then periodically used to update the Gap Analysis and to provide useful data and information to the University Governance for the planning of the HRS4R Action Plan.

The Gap Analysis and Action Plans prepared are also submitted periodically to the governing bodies for approval and are subject to constant coordination with the University's Strategic Plan.

The 2021-2023 Action Plan promoted by the University of Florence includes about 10 actions related to: support initiatives for early-career researchers, promotion of tenure track paths, promotion of fundraising to carry out research activities, revision of the University website to facilitate the identification of career paths available for all interested parties, Open Science, Mobility and activities to raise awareness and involvement of the Academic Community in the HRS4R path.



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

## **BEST PRACTICES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF INSUBRIA IN IMPLEMENTING THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS**

**Reference website:** <https://www.uninsubria.eu/research/hr-excellence-research-uninsubria>

### **Phases of HRS4R completed (dates and any comments):**

- Achievement of HR Excellence in Research Award: February 25, 2019
- Conclusion of interim assessment: June 1, 2021 (results received on October 21, 2021)
- Conclusion of assessment & site visit: scheduled for October 21, 2024

### **Description:**

#### **Methodology:**

An Implementation Committee has been introduced to coordinate the project, comprising administrative heads of the main areas involved (faculty and staff recruitment, communication, research, internationalization, general affairs) and governance members (delegates of the rector for equal opportunities, strategic planning). Biannual meetings are planned to assess the project's progress and any corrective actions. The action plan has been integrated into the strategic plan. For each activity, responsible organizational units, involved organizational units, objectives, and monitoring tools have been identified. The objectives of the organizational units have been integrated into the performance plan. This methodology has allowed greater involvement of personnel, facilitating the achievement of predefined objectives.

#### **Actions:**

The action plan has been structured to optimize and enhance existing practices at the University and address some existing critical issues. It has been articulated into 22 actions, divided into three categories: Communication, Formalization, and Development. Communication actions aim to optimize the impact of undertaken actions, both internally within the institution among faculty and administrative staff, and externally towards the student community and the territory. Formalization actions are aimed at defining and refining existing practices, often not adequately valued. Development actions aim to implement new solutions to comply with parts of the Recruitment Code and the Researchers' Charter not yet applied.

#### **Benefits/Obstacles:**

In our specific case, the main benefits obtained, among those highlighted by the working group, were as follows:

- It constitutes a framework within which to organically develop new actions and services oriented towards career development, transferable skills, research and researcher





HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

valorization, young researcher supervision, Post-doc job placement, attraction of scholars from outside, and promotion of the research environment and RRI.

- It promotes interaction between Central Administration Areas, allowing sharing of information on existing activities, identifying overlaps and common needs, and thus integrating and optimizing processes and activity flows.
- It ensures alignment with some novelties of Horizon 2020 (e.g., obligations of Article 32 of the new MGA; demonstration from the Marie Curie proposal stage that the Host Institution is committed to implementing the principles of the Charter).

The main obstacles were as follows:

- Activities and skills of the Human Resources Areas of Italian Universities are traditionally focused on selection and hiring processes and administrative aspects of researchers' careers, with personnel often lacking an advanced level of English language proficiency.
- There are still rigidities in contractual forms that do not allow seizing funding opportunities. For example, the only instrument currently compatible for contracting Marie Skłodowska Curie Fellowship winners is the research grant, but there are increasingly numerous cases of fellows who do not meet the eligibility conditions for the grant because they exceed the maximum of 6 years of grant indicated in Article 24 of Law 240/2010 or because the Fellowship months are less than 12 (as can happen in Innovative Training Networks). There are no other contractual forms that do not involve teaching obligations and have a duration and amount compatible with Marie Curie rules.

In addition to the above, it is noted:

- General difficulty in internally understanding the development potential of the project and consequently involving the university community in the process.
- High time commitment of human resources involved.



## **GOOD PRACTICES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS AT SAPIENZA UNIVERSITY OF ROME**

**Relevant website:** <https://www.uniroma1.it/en/pagina/hr-excellence-research-award>

**HR Excellence in Research Award: November 2020**

**Interim assessment conclusion: November 2022**

### **1. Methodological approach and management structure**

The implementation and the related monitoring activities of the Action Plan have been characterized by an inclusive and participatory methodological approach, aimed at involving the entire academic and research community, the governing bodies of Sapienza and the management structures directly or indirectly responsible for full implementation of policies promoting the compliance with the C&C principles.

This approach is expressed, in particular, in the aspects:

- The strong commitment by the Governance in guiding and supervising the implementation of the Action Plan and in promoting the participation and involvement of the entire university community;
- The wide active participation in the process by professors and researchers;
- The particular attention paid to identifying and satisfying the needs expressed by professors and researchers, in particular Early Stage Researchers, as drivers for university development;
- The full involvement of the technical-administrative staff involved in career management and support for researchers' activities;
- Using the implementation process of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers as an opportunity to introduce innovative institutional changes in the university;
- Sharing the implementation activities of the Action Plan with other universities and partner bodies in Sapienza international networks (e.g. the CIVIS alliance and the UNICA network).



The implementation of the Action Plan, in line with the inclusive and participatory methodological approach previously described, is characterized from the following key elements:

- The role of the HRS4R technical-scientific Committee, chaired by the Deputy Rector for Quality and valorisation of research activities, and composed of representatives of Governance, teaching and research staff (of all categories) and technical-administrative staff. The technical-scientific committee has the task of guiding, supervising and constantly monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan, also through the possible introduction of corrective actions, and is supported by the HRS4R Management Committee, responsible for operationally managing the activity implementation and monitoring;
- The organisation of operational implementation and monitoring activities into 5 main areas of intervention and in particular:
  1. Promotion of the university's attractiveness towards foreign researchers;
  2. Improvement of training opportunities on soft skills;
  3. Promotion of the Third Mission of the University;
  4. Update of University regulations;
  5. Dissemination and strengthening of knowledge of the main University regulations related to compliance with the C&C principles.

## **2. Good practice: transversal training program on soft skills for Early Stage Researchers**

The enhancement of human capital operating in the R&I field represents the main objective of Sapienza Action Plan.

In order to concretely implement this objective as well as to the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for their recruitment, Sapienza annually organizes a transversal training program on soft skills, aimed at doctoral students, research fellows, scholars, researchers, specifically aimed at enhancing skills required in the academic field and in the job market.

The initiative, whose first edition dates back to 2020, covers topics ranging from methods of participation in European R&I funding programs to tools for valorising and managing research



SAPIENZA  
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

results, from the protection of Intellectual Property to the ethical implications of research, from scientific communication to the Third Mission, from entrepreneurship to scientific computing tools and Big Data. More in detail. The path is organised into 5 thematic areas, each of them including a series of training modules, part of which are in English, to encourage the participation of Young Researchers from other institutions within RIS4CIVIS:

- Thematic area A) International planning in the R&I field
- Thematic area B) Scientific computing tools, Big Data and potential of Research Infrastructures
- Thematic area C) Research Data Management
- Thematic area D) Scientific communication and ethics
- Thematic area E) Third Mission, Public Engagement and Entrepreneurship.

The webinars, which also represent an opportunity for contamination between doctoral students and researchers from different scientific-disciplinary areas, demonstrate ever-increasing interest from researchers year after year: with reference to the last edition, there was an overall participation in the various modules by over 9 thousand attendees.



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

## **BEST PRACTICES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAPLES "PARTHENOPE" IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS**

**Reference website:** <https://www.uniparthenope.it/Portale-Ateneo/HRS4R>

### **HRS4R completed phases:**

- *HR Excellence in Research* Award obtained on 04.05.2021.
- Interim Assessment closed on 28.09.2023.

### **Description:**

The University of Naples "*Parthenope*" has undertaken the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) process with the establishment of a dedicated Commission to offer assistance and support in the implementation of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

The Commission for the management of the HRS4R process was appointed by Rector's Decree No. 480 of 30.07.2018 and still consists of the Steering Committee, the Working Group, and the Researchers' Focus Group. In the first phase, in compliance with recommendations received from the European Commission, the Commission for the management of the HRS4R process was enlarged by R.D. no. 222 dated 14.04.2020 to increase the level of involvement of the University by widening the composition and including a contact person for each Department, to share internally the HRS4R process aimed to the award "HR Excellence in Research".

After obtaining the label on 04.05.2021, following the change of Governance, the HRS4R Commission has been reconstituted by R.D. no. 411 of 17.10.2023, in particular, the Steering Committee, in which the role is linked to the Rector's delegations. Moreover, an expansion of the composition of the other working groups has also been agreed upon in order to increase the representativeness of the academic community through a sort of rotation of members. This would bring added value to the work carried out.

The Commission for the management of the HRS4R process periodically reports to the Rector on the progress of the HRS4R process. The Steering Committee plays a strategic steering role; the Working Group deals with the management of the HRS4R process, the implementation of the Action Plan and the monitoring of the overall progress of the HRS4R process; the Researchers' Focus Group plays a consultative role in the HRS4R process.



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

At present, the University is undergoing the implementation phase and has received positive feedback from the European Commission as for the Interim Assessment on 28.09.2023.

Many actions have already been carried out, such as the establishment of a Technology Transfer Office, the implementation of back-up IT systems to protect research data, the adoption of a Gender Equality Plan and a Gender Balance Sheet, the provision of training courses for students and all staff (lecturers/professors, researchers, and technical-administrative staff) aimed at acquiring hard and soft skills for improving research performance.

Nevertheless, the Action Plan must be constantly monitored in order to verify the established indicators and implement corrective actions while the process is under way.

Furthermore, recruitment procedures and practices must be implemented, starting from the first stage of identifying the profiles from the announcement; in this regard, summary sheets have been submitted to be attached to the announcement in order to provide clear idea of the open job positions in English.

Being understood that the process needs constant improvements, as suggested by the European Commission. Indeed, the University's website has weaknesses concerning the access to information, which is for some sections only partially in English, and the OTM-R policy. Therefore, corrective actions will have to be carried out in the next 36 months.

Naples, 22.11.2023

The Working Group Coordinator

*Dr. Giovanna Apice*

## UNIVERSITY OF SIENA GOOD PRACTICES

### IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS

**Reference website:** <https://en.unisi.it/research/hrs4r-human-resources-strategy-researchers>

**Completed HRS4R phases:**

- o Received the HR Excellence in Research Award: 11 March 2022
- o Interim assessment: the internal review is scheduled to take place in March 2024
- o Assessment & site visit: –

**Description of the initial phase:**

The implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers is a long-term process involving different university components and structures that must collaborate and work in synergy. Significant institutional support from the university's governance is therefore essential.

USiena has confirmed its commitment in the following planning documents:

**1. The Integrated Performance Plan (now PIAO)**

USiena's plan to apply for the HRS4R award was included for the first time in the 2018/2020 Performance Plan, approved by the Council in July 2018, and was then re-proposed in the plans of the following years up until 2021/2023. In particular, the objective Human Resource Excellence aimed to "Enhance the University's capacity to attract international lecturers with professional expertise. Establish a reference and reception point. Adopt good practices under the European Charter for Researchers. Submit an application for the Human Resources Excellence in Research Award". This objective was assigned to the Research, Libraries, Internationalization and Third Mission Area - ARBI3.

**2. Strategic Plan 2022-2024**

The Strategic Planning Document 2022-2024 (approved by the Council on 22 December 2021) reaffirmed USiena's intent to internationalize its research: the university aims to put itself in a position to take part and play a leading role in international research projects. To this end, because it is important to have full knowledge of the context, targeted actions must be implemented to support the university's researchers. The implementation of HRS4R is one of the six initiatives identified with the aim of achieving this goal.

To implement this strategy, an initial working group called Human Resources Excellence (GDL HRE) was set up on 20 December 2018, coordinated by the International Relations Division, with the scientific contribution of the Rector's Delegate for Internationalization. The group includes several administrative structures: in addition to the International Relations Division, the Research Division, the Teaching Staff Office and Santa Chiara Lab, the University Centre for Interdisciplinary Innovation.

In 2019, the group carried out preparatory work for the submission of the application; in particular, it mapped the organizational processes, the types of existing international visiting professors and researchers, and indicated the acceptance, entry and reception procedures for each category.

In May 2020 USiena initiated the HRS4R process by submitting a Letter of Endorsement. In July 2020, USiena received the Letter of Commitment.

Preparatory activities for the application were completed by the aforementioned HRE working group. The following main activities were carried out:

1. Drafting of the three documents to be sent to the European Commission: Gap-Analysis, OTM-R and Action Plan. Period: January to October 2021.
2. March 2021: Creation of a web page in Italian and English dedicated to the initiative. The webpage was inserted under the "Research" menu and is updated by one of the members of the HRS Working Group.
3. Activation of a shared HRS4R account for managing the application. All members of the HRE working group were added to the account as delegate accounts. The email is hrs4r@unisi.it
4. The Unisi research community was administered a survey on the implementation of the principles of the Charter and the Code. The content of the questionnaire, as well as the method and schedule for its completion, were agreed with the University Survey Policy Committee. The report, drafted in Italian and English, can be found here: <https://www.unisi.it/indaginidiateneo/la-carta-europea-dei-ricercatori>
5. The Gap analysis and OTM-R checklist were shared with the following administrative structures: Doctoral Research Office; Planning, Organization and Evaluation Division; Teaching Staff Division; Single Guarantee Committee.
6. July 2020: a steering committee was appointed to assist the HRS Working Group in preparing the application.
7. It was later deemed necessary to expand the committee's membership to include R1 and R2 researchers and increase the number of female members.
8. Drafting of the Action Plan, which was approved by the University's governing bodies in October 2021.

On 15 November 2021, USiena submitted its application for HR Excellence in Research. In March 2022, the HRS4R application was assessed favourably, and USiena was therefore awarded the HR Excellence in Research.

In the subsequent implementation phase, a new HRS working group was set up, which is working in synergy with the project Team overseeing HR management issues within the NRRP (NextGenerationEU recovery plan)





HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

## GOOD PRACTICES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALABRIA

### IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS

**Web Site:** <https://www.unical.it/ricerca/human-resources-strategy-for-researchers/?lang=en>

**HRS4R Phases Completed** (*inserire le date ed eventuali note di commento*):

- Obtaining of *HR Excellence in Research* Award: **May 11, 2022**
- Conclusion of the Interim assessment:
- Conclusion of assessment & site visit:

#### **Description:**

The application procedure of the University of Calabria (Unical) for the HR Excellence Award officially began on March 19, 2021, with the Endorsement Letter sent by the Rector to the EC; concurrently, with a Rectoral Decree, a **Steering Committee** and a **Working Group** were appointed to oversee the accreditation process. The composition of the Committees was carefully calibrated to (i) represent the different scientific areas of the university and all categories of researchers at any level of academic careers, (ii) meet the principle of gender equity, and (iii) ensure the necessary technical/administrative support for the execution of the planned activities. Members of the Governance (Rector's delegates) and academic bodies (academic senators and administrative managers) were included in the Steering Committee, ensuring that all observations from the academic community were effectively conveyed to the highest levels of the university's political management, following a so-called bottom-up approach.

#### **Internal Analysis**

Through internal analysis, started on March 25, 2021, the University has examined its own situation in terms of compliance and consistency of University Regulations with the 40 principles listed in the Charter and Code (C&C), identifying any critical issues and defining its strategy in the action plan.

The internal analysis work has followed two synergistic paths:

- 1) Identification of Objective GAPS (through periodic activities of Focus Groups)
- 2) Perception assessment of the entire academic community (through a Survey)

The Committees, divided into 4 Focus Groups (one for each thematic area of C&C), conducted a detailed analysis of the current implementation of the C&C principles - through the examination of the University's internal regulations and practices regarding Human Resources involved in research activities - as well as the external constraints imposed by National legislation, collecting all the information within a **self-assessment matrix**; the matrix highlights critical areas requiring a priority intervention by the University and areas for improvement in which the University must continue to invest with actions that increase the positive perception of the researchers.

In light of the critical issues identified by the 4 Focus Groups and considering it necessary to base the internal analysis also on direct feedback from the entire academic community, an **internal survey** was prepared to be submitted to all researchers, at any career level; the aim was to assess their level of agreement with each statements presented in the survey, in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the University's policies in relation to the principles of the C&C. The questions were



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HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

proposed limited to those principles and areas that need improvement and/or for which it is necessary to probe the researchers' perception to define specific actions and strategies to be included in the Action Plan.

Before submission, the survey was tested by a group of researchers (Red Team) who volunteered to refine the wording of all survey questions, which was then officially approved by the Academic Senate. To raise awareness among all researchers of completing the survey, which achieved a response rate of 70%, a team of young researchers (Ph.D. students and research fellows) from various departments was mobilized. This effort was also supported by a broad internal promotion and communication campaign coordinated by the FG on Communication strategy (FG6).

The results of the survey were then analyzed by the Working Group, assisted by the Unical Statistical Office, and cross-referenced with the OTM-R Checklist and self-assessment matrices previously completed by FG 1-4. This **combined approach** provided an objective evaluation of UNICAL's performances against the 40 principles of the C&C, serving as a starting point for the GAP Analysis. Based on the GAP Analysis and the OTM-R Checklist, the Action Plan was drafted (by FG5), perfectly integrated with the University Strategic Plan, the GEP, and the Performance Plan. The Action Plan, together with the complete documentation, was sent to the European Commission after approval by the Academic Senate.

All activities were supported by a massive internal communication action coordinated by FG6 and directed at the entire UNICAL community; this effort mainly concerned promotion on the UNICAL portal through a **web page dedicated** to the HRS4R path entitled "*UniCal longs 4 excellence*," **videos** related to the principles of C&C, workshops for the academic community, and interviews in the media.

#### **Granting of the "HR Excellence in Research Award"**

On 11 May 2022, the EC awarded Unical the HR Excellence in Research Award; a special mention was given to the HRS4R website and videos.

The University is implementing the Action Plan, carrying out the activities outlined with a view to concluding the first 2 years of the implementation phase coordinated by the APIC (Action Plan Implementation Committee). The APIC is made up of members of the Governance and researchers at any career levels, supported by the Working Group, coordinated by the staff of the Research, Innovation, and Social Impact Area (ARIIS).

#### **Best practices/Concrete actions implemented**

- **PhD 3.0:** training program aimed at PhD students on the valorisation of the results of their research through a path aimed at business creation, Intellectual Property rights, management of EU funds and participation in competitive calls.
- **REPORT:** digital platform for the management and reporting of University research projects, aimed at improving the management of the administrative processes of monitoring and reporting research in all its phases. REPORT also acts as a document repository and interfaces with other University IT systems.
- **Young Researchers:** as part of Ministerial Decree 737/2021, Unical has allocated funds to support the training and participation of young researchers in competitive calls funded at EU and National level, committing to implement direct recruitment procedures for the winners of these calls.
- **Quality recruitment:** Unical has opened a call for renowned professors and scholars, in order to recruit world-class scientists who can stimulate the birth of new collaborations and research, scientifically contaminating the University's researchers, **increasing the quality of research and teaching** on campus and its **competitive and attractive value**.