HR Excellence in Research

Action Plan

Action Plan

Case number

2024RO223209

Name Organisation under review

The Oncology Institute „Prof. Dr. Ion Chiricuţă" Cluj Napoca (IOCN)

Organisation's contact details

Republicii 34-36, Cluj-Napoca, Cluj, 400015, Romania

1. Organisational Information

Please provide a limited number of key figures for your organisation. Figures marked * are compulsory.

STAFF & STUDENTS

	FTE
Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research *	32
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality) *	0
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation) *	1
Of whom are women *	25
Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor. *	5
Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level *	3
Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level *	2
Total number of students (if relevant) *	0
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff) *	32

RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)

	€
Total annual organisational budget	807154,44
Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)	395746,02
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)	254306,24
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	0

ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE (a very brief description of your organisation, max. 100 words)

Founded in 1929, the Oncology Institute "Prof. Dr. Ion Chiricuță" Cluj-Napoca (IOCN), is a comprehensive center in Romania under the direct authority of the Ministry of Health. It provides preventive, curative, and palliative medical services in oncology, along with extensive educational and research activities. The Institute coordinates fundamental, clinical, translational, and population-based research. It is a source of innovation and has developed an integrated platform for research, patient care, and education, aimed at benefiting patients and ensuring their well-being and improved quality of life.

2. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice

Please provide an overview of the organisation in terms of the current strengths and weaknesses of the current practice under the four thematic headings of the Charter and Code at your organization.

Note: Click on the name of each of the four thematic headings of the Charter and Code to open the editor and provide your answer.

Ethical and professional aspects*   ⌄

Strengths and Weaknesses (max. 800 words)

Strengths

- The hospital has an Ethics Committee that reviews and approves the implementation of all research projects, ensuring compliance with ethical standards.

- Research involving human subjects is governed by international regulations, including GDPR, with data anonymized and used strictly for biomedical research purposes.

- All participants in research studies provide informed consent prior to involvement.

- Laboratory activities adhere to Good Practice rules, including the use of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to maintain quality and consistency.

- Research results are validated through publication in ISI-indexed journals with impact factors, and undergo peer review by specialists in the biomedical field.

- The research infrastructure is state-of-the-art, designed to meet the needs of both fundamental and translational research.

- Development of integrated research approaches based on imaging and histological evaluations, fostering multidisciplinary collaboration.

Weaknesses

- The number of researchers is limited, affecting the critical mass needed to achieve remarkable results.

- Research project funding lacks predictability, creating challenges in long-term planning.

- A very small percentage of grants are allocated relative to the national research budget.

- There is a lack of public-private partnerships to support research activities and facilitate the practical application of research findings in medical practice.

Recruitment and selection*   ⌄

Strengths and Weaknesses (max. 800 words)

Strengths

The filling of teaching and research positions for an indefinite period at IOCN is conducted through a public competition process, organized in full compliance with national legislation and the institution's internal regulations. Announcements of these competitions are published on IOCN's official website as well as on the EURAXESS portal to ensure transparency and broad accessibility.

For vacancies arising within the framework of specific funding contracts or projects managed by IOCN, recruitment is carried out via transparent public procedures, with job postings made available on the institutional website, EURAXESS, and the national jobs portal jobs.mcid.gov.ro.

IOCN applies its own competition methodology for recruiting research positions, which establishes differentiated recruitment and selection criteria tailored to the qualification level required for each vacant post. This methodology promotes flexibility regarding candidates' experience and age, explicitly prohibiting any form of age discrimination. Furthermore, there are no restrictions based on gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, reflecting the institution's commitment to equal opportunity.

Retired staff members are also eligible to apply for fixed-term contracts through these competitions, in accordance with applicable legal provisions. Additionally, IOCN maintains a balanced gender representation across its workforce, reinforcing its dedication to diversity and inclusion.

Weaknesses

The inability to hire a larger number of researchers on permanent positions, which limits the growth of a critical mass of researchers within the hospital. This constraint is due to a maximum staffing quota allocated to our institution, restricting the expansion of the research team despite increasing demands and opportunities.

The training and development of specialists within research projects is successfully carried out; however, there is a significant challenge in retaining the most talented researchers beyond these projects. This is largely due to the lack of available permanent positions outside the fixed-term contracts tied to specific research projects, leading to a potential loss of highly skilled personnel to other institutions or sectors.

Working conditions*

Strengths and Weaknesses (max. 800 words)

Strengths

The research infrastructure is state-of-the-art, fully equipped to meet the needs of fundamental and translational research, as well as clinical support activities such as genetic and genomic testing. This advanced infrastructure enables cutting-edge investigations and fosters innovation across multiple biomedical domains.

The working environment is collegial and supportive, emphasizing gender equality and fostering a non-conflictual yet competitive atmosphere. This culture encourages collaboration while promoting healthy scientific competition among researchers.

Weekly meetings are held where research progress is reviewed, and challenges are openly discussed to identify effective solutions. These regular interactions facilitate continuous improvement, knowledge exchange, and timely problem-solving within research teams.

Weaknesses

There is a lack of institutional access to comprehensive online databases and full-text publications due to insufficient funding allocated for these resources. This limitation restricts researchers' ability to stay updated with the latest scientific literature, impeding their capacity to conduct thorough literature reviews and integrate current knowledge into their work. Enhancing access to these essential digital resources is crucial for maintaining research quality and competitiveness at an international level.

Training and development*

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Strengths and Weaknesses (max. 800 words)

Strenghts

There is a strong openness and commitment to supporting training and specialization programs at the European and international levels for researchers employed both within the institute and on research projects. These opportunities aim to facilitate the return of researchers and the transfer of valuable knowledge and skills back to their original laboratories and research groups, thereby enhancing the overall expertise and innovation capacity of the institute.

National legislation provides the right to study leave, granting researchers up to 10 days per year to participate in educational or training activities. This legal provision supports continuous professional development and helps researchers stay current with advancements in their fields.

Weaknesses

There is a lack of funding to support the development of specialists as trainers at the European and international levels, which limits the institute's capacity to participate in and implement international training scholarships and programs. This funding gap restricts opportunities to build expertise in delivering high-quality training and knowledge transfer beyond national borders, hindering the institute's potential to become a recognized center for specialist education and capacity building on the international stage.

3. Actions

The Action Plan and HR Excellence in Research strategy must be published on an easily accessible location of the organisation's website.

Please provide the web link to the organization's Action Plan/HR Strategy dedicated webpage(s). Multiple links must be comma separated.

https://iocn.ro/strategie-resurse-hrs4r/#1751279141534-5e7d7eeb-0920 (https://iocn.ro/strategie-resurse-hrs4r/#1751279141534-5e7d7eeb-0920)

Please fill in the list of all individual actions to be undertaken in your organisation's HR Excellence in Research to address the weaknesses or strengths identified in the Gap-Analysis. The listed actions should be concise, but detailed enough for the assessors to evaluate the level of ambition, engagement and the expected implementation process. The institution should strive to provide a detailed plan, not just an enumeration of actions.

Note: Choose one or more of the principles automatically retrieved from the GAP Analysis with their ratings.

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 1

In line with the commitment to enhance the research environment and promote ethical and professional standards, the Oncology Institute "Prof. Dr. Ion Chiricuță" Cluj-Napoca (IOCN) has developed and formally approved its Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R). This strategic document is fully aligned with the principles and guidelines set out in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

GAP Principle(s)

(++) 4. Professional attitude

(++) 6. Accountability

(++) 7. Good practice in research

(+/-) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results

(+/-) 9. Public engagement

(+/-) 10. Non discrimination

(+/-) 11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems

(+/-) 12. Recruitment

(++) 13. Recruitment (Code)

(++) 14. Selection (Code)

(+/-) 16. Judging merit (Code)

(++) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code)

(++) 21. Postdoctoral appointments (Code)

(++) 23. Research environment

(++) 24. Working conditions

Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)

biannual 2025-2026

Proposed ACTIONS

Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
Steering committee, ethics board, research coordinator, ethics committee, RUNOS	Documents and Website: Guide for the Implementation of the HRS4R Code and Charter & Portal of Good Ethical Practices Annual Training of Research Staff on Ethical Conduct and Methodology: During 2024, all research departments conducted annual training sessions focused on the Code of Ethical Conduct, professional ethics, and gender equality principles. These sessions aimed to inform researchers about applicable research regulations, with a particular focus on equal opportunities, gender balance, and the ethical framework guiding research activities. Additionally, researchers were updated on institutional, national, and European regulations affecting research integrity and conduct. Researcher Involvement in IOCN Research Projects (2024): In 2024, the following categories of researchers were involved in ongoing research projects at IOCN: Number of PhD students (doctoral researchers): 5 Number of postdoctoral researchers: 2 Actions Implemented: Information and Training Sessions: Targeted training for representative researchers across all career stages (R1-R4), focusing on forming working groups or clusters at research center level. These clusters will further promote and embed the principles of the HRS4R Code and Charter. Online Dissemination: Regular publication and email distribution of new and updated documents related to HRS4R procedures and ethical guidelines, ensuring broad internal awareness. Website Updates: Continuous improvement of the institutional website (both Romanian and English versions) to ensure better accessibility and visibility of relevant documents, training materials, and ethical codes. Performance Indicators: Yearly Growth in Trained Researchers: An annual increase of 1–2% in the number of researchers trained on professional ethics, gender equality, and HRS4R principles. Research Output in

Proposed ACTIONS

	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
		High-Impact Publications (ISI-indexed journals): At least 15 researchers per year actively included as authors in ISI-indexed publications, covering fundamental, translational, and clinical research domains.

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 2

		Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
Develop and disseminate comprehensive policies to guide ethical research practices within the IOCN research community, covering the following areas: Research Conduct: Establish clear protocols for study design and execution, data management, results reporting, and intellectual property rights. Research Integrity: Define procedures for reporting and investigating research misconduct, including designated reporting channels, investigation committees, and appropriate disciplinary measures. Equity and Inclusion: Implement guidelines and best practices to promote inclusion, diversity, gender equality, and equal opportunities across all research activities, fostering a constructive and professional working environment. (T1 – Ethical and Professional Aspects)	**GAP Principle(s)** (++) 2. Ethical principles (++) 4. Professional attitude (++) 6. Accountability (++) 7. Good practice in research (+/-) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results (+/-) 10. Non discrimination (+/-) 11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems (+/-) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code) (++) 22. Recognition of the profession (++) 23. Research environment (++) 28. Career development (+/-) 30. Access to career advice (+/-) 31. Intellectual Property Rights (++) 38. Continuing Professional Development	Ongoing Regular evaluation (biannually and annual)

Proposed ACTIONS

	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
	Ethics board, ethics committee, medical director, research coordinator, steering committee, legal department, financial department	Documents and Website – Ethics Section https://iocn.ro/consiliul-etic/#1710931592111-34dd6f9a-1061 A comprehensive document on research ethics will be developed. The document will include: Protocols for conducting research studies, data management, results dissemination, and intellectual property rights. Procedures for reporting and investigating research misconduct, including clear reporting channels, composition and roles of investigation committees, and defined disciplinary measures. Guidelines for promoting inclusion, diversity, gender equality, and equal opportunities in all research activities. Monitoring and Indicators: Indicator: Number of Principal Investigators (PIs) and researchers trained per quarter/year. Target: Minimum of 2–3 researchers trained annually, with gradual increase over the years as institutional capacity grows. Visibility: The Ethics section on the IOCN website will be regularly updated with: The full ethics document Contact information for the Ethics Committee and reporting channels

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 3

		Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
Developing the Personnel Research, Development, and Innovation Statute in alignment with the European HRS4R strategy (Charter & Code) and the National Law on Research, Development, and Innovation Staff Regulations adopted in 2024. (T1 Ethical and Professional Aspects)	**GAP Principle(s)**	
	(++) 1. Research freedom	Ongoing Regular evaluation (biannually and annual)
	(++) 2. Ethical principles	
	(++) 3. Professional responsibility	
	(++) 4. Professional attitude	
	(++) 5. Contractual and legal obligations	
	(++) 6. Accountability	
	(++) 7. Good practice in research	
	(+/-) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results	
	(+/-) 9. Public engagement	
	(+/-) 10. Non discrimination	
	(+/-) 12. Recruitment	
	(++) 13. Recruitment (Code)	
	(++) 14. Selection (Code)	
	(++) 15. Transparency (Code)	
	(+/-) 16. Judging merit (Code)	
	(+/-) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code)	

Proposed ACTIONS

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
(++) 22. Recognition of the profession	
(++) 23. Research environment	
(++) 24. Working conditions	
(++) 25. Stability and permanence of employment	
(++) 26. Funding and salaries	
(++) 27. Gender balance	
(++) 28. Career development	
(++) 36. Relation with supervisors	
(+/-) 37. Supervision and managerial duties	
(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development	
(++) 39. Access to research training and continuous development	
(+/-) 40. Supervision	

Proposed ACTIONS

	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
	Medical Director, Research and Development Coordinator, Steering Committee	To ensure wide accessibility and transparency regarding the rights and obligations of research, development, and innovation (RDI) personnel, the following key documents will be made available: Staff Statute for Innovation, Development, and Research: This comprehensive document outlining the legal, ethical, and professional framework for RDI staff will be accessible on the HRS4R page of the hospital website. To ensure wide accessibility and transparency regarding the rights and obligations of research, development, and innovation (RDI) personnel, the following key documents will be made available: Staff Statute for Innovation, Development, and Research: This comprehensive document outlining the legal, ethical, and professional framework for RDI staff will be accessible on the HRS4R page of the university website. The Research, Development, and Innovation Personnel Code: A clear and detailed guide to the roles, responsibilities, and conduct expectations for all RDI staff. The Research, Development, and Innovation Personnel Code: A clear and detailed guide to the roles, responsibilities, and conduct expectations for all RDI staff.

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 4

Reviewing methodologies for recruiting research positions in line with the OTM-R strategy. Establishing objective criteria for selecting members of evaluation committees. (T2 Recruitment and Selection)

GAP Principle(s)

(+/-) 12. Recruitment

(++) 13. Recruitment (Code)

(++) 14. Selection (Code)

(++) 15. Transparency (Code)

(+/-) 16. Judging merit (Code)

(++) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code)

(+/-) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code)

(++) 20. Seniority (Code)

(++) 22. Recognition of the profession

(++) 26. Funding and salaries

(++) 27. Gender balance

(++) 28. Career development

(++) 29. Value of mobility

(+/-) 30. Access to career advice

Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)

Regular evaluation (biannually and annual)

Proposed ACTIONS

	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
	Medical Director, Research and Development Coordinator, Steering Committee	Documents and Website Methodology for Recruitment of Teaching and Research Positions available. Methodology for Enhancing Selection Criteria for evaluation committees and interview panels. Encouragement of applications from external and international candidates, with selection committees composed of internal, external, and international members where appropriate if is needed.

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 5

Action 5	GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
Improving Working Conditions for Researchers: Promote a healthy work-life balance by enhancing support services focused on burnout prevention and occupational health. Integrate gender considerations into research practices. Incorporate disability inclusion within research activities. (T3 Working Conditions and Social Security)	(+/-) 11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems	Regular evaluation (biannually and annual)
	(+/-) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code)	
	(++) 22. Recognition of the profession	
	(++) 23. Research environment	
	(++) 24. Working conditions	
	(++) 25. Stability and permanence of employment	
	(++) 26. Funding and salaries	
	(++) 27. Gender balance	
	(++) 28. Career development	
	(++) 29. Value of mobility	
	(+/-) 30. Access to career advice	
	(+/-) 31. Intellectual Property Rights	
	(+/-) 32. Co-authorship	
	(+/-) 34. Complains/ appeals	
	(++) 36. Relation with supervisors	
	(+/-) 37. Supervision and managerial duties	

Proposed ACTIONS

	GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
	(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development	

Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
Medical Director, Research and Development Coordinator, Steering Committee, RUNOS, psychologist	Indicators for Improving Working Conditions for Researchers Number and types of support services provided for burnout prevention and occupational health — reported annually. Percentage of researchers reporting satisfactory work-life balance, measured through regular surveys. Number of research projects or initiatives integrating gender considerations in research practices. Percentage of researchers engaged in activities that incorporate gender aspects into their projects.

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 6

Promoting awareness of equality issues and fostering positive attitudes toward diversity. (T3 Working Conditions and Social Security)

GAP Principle(s)

Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)

(++) 4. Professional attitude

(++) 7. Good practice in research

(+/-) 10. Non discrimination

(+/-) 12. Recruitment

(++) 22. Recognition of the profession

(++) 23. Research environment

(++) 24. Working conditions

Regular evaluation (biannually and annual)

(++) 25. Stability and permanence of employment

(++) 28. Career development

(+/-) 30. Access to career advice

(+/-) 35. Participation in decision-making bodies

(++) 36. Relation with supervisors

(+/-) 37. Supervision and managerial duties

Proposed ACTIONS

Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
Medical Director, Research and Development Coordinator, Steering Committee	Awareness-raising through the publication of the Code of Ethical and Professional Conduct on the website (https://iocn.ro/documente-organizatorice/), highlighting diversity and inclusion within the hospital community, and promoting the prevention of discrimination (including discriminatory language), violence (including violence based on prejudice and gender identity), harassment, and sexual harassment. Indicators: Number of persons trained per year Inclusion of women in leadership positions

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 7

		Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
Creating and Developing Human Resources by: Attracting and preparing high-performing researchers to join project teams as PhD students (R1), with mentorship provided by senior researchers (R3 and R4). Organizing courses and continuous training programs for researchers. (T4 Training and Development)	**GAP Principle(s)**	
	(++) 2. Ethical principles	Regular evaluation (biannually and annual)
	(++) 3. Professional responsibility	
	(++) 4. Professional attitude	
	(++) 7. Good practice in research	
	(++) 13. Recruitment (Code)	
	(++) 14. Selection (Code)	
	(++) 15. Transparency (Code)	
	(+/-) 16. Judging merit (Code)	
	(++) 17. Variations in the chronological order of CVs (Code)	
	(++) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code)	
	(+/-) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code)	
	(++) 20. Seniority (Code)	
	(++) 21. Postdoctoral appointments (Code)	
	(++) 22. Recognition of the profession	
	(++) 23. Research environment	

Proposed ACTIONS

	GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
	(++) 24. Working conditions	
	(++) 25. Stability and permanence of employment	
	(++) 27. Gender balance	
	(++) 28. Career development	
	(+/-) 30. Access to career advice	
	(-/+) 33. Teaching	
	(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development	
	(++) 39. Access to research training and continuous development	
	(+/-) 40. Supervision	

Proposed ACTIONS

	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
	Medical Director, Research and Development Coordinator, Steering Committee, Genomics and Genetics Center Coordinator	Documents and website: Announcements on programs for experienced, senior researchers and/or PI's (R3 and R4) through continuing education courses offered in collaboration with other prestigious universities/hospitals. Training of young researchers in the research projects. Indicators: • number of researchers participating in research projects in cooperation with other institutions/universities/hospitals.

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 8

Targeting external and internal funding sources—including government grants, private and industry partnerships, and internal university funds—to support researchers in maintaining continuity between external grants and to ensure equal access to research infrastructure for all researchers. (T4 Training and Development)

GAP Principle(s)

Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)

(++) 1. Research freedom

Regular evaluation (biannually and annual)

(++) 3. Professional responsibility

(++) 4. Professional attitude

(++) 5. Contractual and legal obligations

(++) 6. Accountability

(++) 7. Good practice in research

(+/-) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results

(++) 13. Recruitment (Code)

(++) 14. Selection (Code)

(++) 15. Transparency (Code)

(++) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code)

(+/-) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code)

(++) 24. Working conditions

(++) 27. Gender balance

(++) 28. Career development

(++) 29. Value of mobility

Proposed ACTIONS

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
(+/-) 40. Supervision	

Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
Medical Director, Research and Development Coordinator, Steering Committee	Actions: - updating the services offered by the research centers on the hospital pages - update the infrastructure available for research at the university on Engage in the Romanian Research Infrastructure System (EERTIS) platform. Indicators: • number of researchers from the research department and also clinical department: Grant/trial success rate of national and international grants: at least 1% Interdisciplinary Research Projects: 4-6 projects trials annually

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 9

HRS4R process evaluation in IOCN Synthesis of the implementation process of the Action Plan in its initial phase (2026-2028) Consultation campaign with the hospital community on the implementation process of the Action Plan in the initial phase (2026-2028) to analyze gaps (T4 Training and development)

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
(++) 3. Professional responsibility	2028 Final Evaluation
(++) 4. Professional attitude	
(++) 6. Accountability	
(++) 7. Good practice in research	
(+/-) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results	
(+/-) 9. Public engagement	
(+/-) 10. Non discrimination	
(+/-) 11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems	
(+/-) 12. Recruitment	
(++) 22. Recognition of the profession	
(++) 23. Research environment	
(++) 24. Working conditions	
(++) 25. Stability and permanence of employment	
(++) 26. Funding and salaries	
(++) 27. Gender balance	
(++) 28. Career development	

Proposed ACTIONS

	GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
	(+/-) 30. Access to career advice	
	(+/-) 31. Intellectual Property Rights	
	(+/-) 32. Co-authorship	
	(+/-) 34. Complains/ appeals	
	(+/-) 35. Participation in decision-making bodies	
	(++) 36. Relation with supervisors	
	(+/-) 37. Supervision and managerial duties	
	(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development	
	(++) 39. Access to research training and continuous development	
	(+/-) 40. Supervision	

Proposed ACTIONS

	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
	Medical Director, Research and Development Coordinator, Steering Committee	Documents and website: Summary report on the implementation process of the Action Plan in the IOCN in the period 2026-2028 with: - the key indicators followed and their assessment during this period Report on the hospital community consultation campaign and perception regarding the implementation of HRS4R in IOCN GAP Analysis OTM-R Checklist Action Plan for future development - significant research results of the hospital Indicators: • number of researchers which benefits from these programs

Unselected principles:

The establishment of an Open Recruitment Policy is a key element in the HR Excellence in Research strategy. Please also indicate how your organisation will use the Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment Toolkit and how you intend to implement/are implementing the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment. Although there may be some overlap with a range of actions listed above, please provide a short commentary demonstrating this implementation. If the case, please make the link between the OTM-R checklist and the overall action plan. (max. 1000 words) *

An important and current priority for IOCN is to ensure that the recruitment process is firmly grounded in the principles of openness, transparency, and meritocracy, thereby guaranteeing that the most qualified candidates are selected for available positions. Upholding these principles not only fosters fairness but also promotes the international mobility of researchers, facilitates knowledge exchange, and ultimately enhances the overall quality of research conducted at the institution.

IOCN is committed to fully respecting and implementing all the principles outlined in the European Charter for Researchers and the EU Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. Accordingly, the recruitment and selection procedures applied at IOCN are governed by fundamental principles that ensure equal access to employment opportunities for all individuals. These principles align with constitutional provisions on equality, merit, and ability while adhering to both national and international legal frameworks.

Importantly, the Charter & Code principles apply universally across IOCN, covering the recruitment of all staff members regardless of their professional category. To date, all staff appointments have been conducted through a competitive selection process that emphasizes fairness and merit. Strengthening adherence to open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment practices will further enhance the transparency of the hiring process, broaden opportunities to attract high-performing personnel with outstanding qualifications, and thereby reinforce IOCN's institutional human resource capacity.

To formalize these commitments, IOCN will develop and publish its Open, Transparent, and Merit-based Recruitment (OTM-R) policy, available in both Romanian and English. This policy will clearly articulate the hospital's dedication to these principles and outline concrete measures for their implementation. In addition, IOCN will create an internal recruitment guide that specifies OTM-R-aligned procedures and best practices, including standardized guidelines and templates for advertising vacancies.

Furthermore, recognizing the importance of consistent application of these principles, IOCN plans to provide targeted training sessions for all staff involved in recruitment activities. These training programs will cover the OTM-R principles, the new policy, and the associated guidelines to ensure that recruitment processes are conducted fairly, transparently, and effectively, in line with the highest European standards.

If your organisation already has a recruitment strategy which implements the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment, please provide the web link where this strategy can be found on your organisation's website. Multiple links must be comma separated:

URL:

4. Implementation

General overview of the expected overall implementation process of the action plan: (max. 1000 words)

The proposed Human Resources (HR) strategy of IOCN embodies a strong commitment to ethical principles, transparent processes—including recruitment and selection—enhancing working conditions, and facilitating continuous training and development for all researchers. This strategy upholds the values of autonomy, research freedom, equitable access to organizational activities and resources, and public accountability, all essential for the smooth and effective functioning of the institute.

Recognizing that the research ecosystem is undergoing significant transformations at both national and international levels, the IOCN HR strategy addresses the evolving environment where human resources play a pivotal role. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of current needs and challenges, an internal review was conducted in 2025, involving active participation from the entire research community.

Since the submission of the letter of commitment in 2024, the Steering Committee (SC) and the Working Group (WG) have been actively engaged in guiding the process. The SC is chaired by the Director of IOCN, while the WG is coordinated by an experienced researcher at the R3 level. Both groups convene regularly and are prepared to expand membership if necessary to bolster the implementation of the strategy effectively.

The HR strategy aligns fully with IOCN's 2022-2026 organizational Strategic Plan, integrating key frameworks such as the European Charter for Researchers, the Code of Conduct, and the Open, Transparent, and Merit-based Recruitment (OTM-R) principles as foundational guidelines. Through this strategic plan, IOCN aims to maintain and strengthen its reputation as a leading institution in research quality and innovation.

The research community will be consistently informed about the principles of the Charter & Code and OTM-R, ensuring transparency and engagement. Researchers themselves will play an active role during the implementation phase, as their feedback will be crucial to identifying any shortcomings in adherence to the principles, enabling timely analysis and corrective action.

The SC will maintain continuous oversight of the implementation process, monitoring progress, reporting any deviations from the planned timeline, and proposing corrective measures as needed. Any required actions will be subject to approval by the Scientific Council, ensuring governance and accountability.

To support effective oversight, IOCN will develop a monitoring system dedicated to tracking compliance with the Charter & Code and OTM-R principles. This system will provide a clear, comprehensive view of the implementation status and help pinpoint areas requiring improvement.

While awaiting the outcome of the external review, IOCN will persist with the execution of the action plan and remain proactive in submitting all necessary documentation to the European Commission. This transparency will offer a clearer picture of the current implementation status and demonstrate IOCN's commitment to continuous progress.

Make sure you also cover all the aspects highlighted in the checklist below, which you will need to describe in detail:

Note: Click on each question of the checklist to open the editor.

How will the implementation committee and/or steering group regularly oversee progress?*   ⌄

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

For each action outlined in the Action Plan, a responsible coordinator from the involved unit(s) has been designated to ensure that the respective indicators are met within the expected timeframe. The Steering Committee (SC) regularly monitors the progress of these actions and reports any deviations from the established schedule.

Periodic meetings between the SC and the Working Group (WG) will be held to review the implementation progress. Detailed reports on the development of the Action Plan will be prepared and shared accordingly.

Any actions that require further steps or adjustments will be proposed by the WG and submitted to the Scientific Council of IOCN for approval, ensuring proper governance and oversight.

To facilitate an effective internal analysis, the WG and SC developed a comprehensive questionnaire based on the 40 principles and general conditions of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct. This questionnaire is organized into four key dimensions: (1) Ethical and professional aspects; (2) Recruitment; (3) Working conditions and social security; and (4) Training. Each principle has been transformed into clear, assessable statements.

At regular intervals, representatives from key stakeholder groups—including researchers at various career stages (R1 to R4), PhD students, and postdoctoral fellows—are invited to complete the questionnaire. The responses are then analyzed and discussed to assess the progress in implementing the HRS4R strategy, as well as to identify areas needing improvement.

To address any identified challenges, several dedicated meetings of the HRS4R Working Group and Steering Committee will be convened with the goal of devising and implementing new solutions. This iterative process ensures continuous improvement and alignment with best practices.

How do you intend to involve the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?*

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

The successful implementation of the HRS4R (Human Resources Strategy for Researchers) at IOCN relies heavily on the active involvement and engagement of the entire research community and key stakeholders. Recognizing that effective change can only be achieved through inclusive participation, the institute has prioritized transparent communication and collaborative decision-making throughout the process.

To this end, several meetings of the HRS4R Working Group (WG) were organized, bringing together representatives from all relevant stakeholder groups, including researchers at all career stages (R1 to R4), PhD students, and postdoctoral fellows. These meetings provided a crucial platform for open dialogue and exchange of ideas, ensuring that the perspectives and concerns of diverse groups were fully represented.

One of the key steps undertaken by the WG was the development of comprehensive questionnaires based on the 40 principles outlined in the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct. The questionnaires were carefully tailored to reflect the specific realities and challenges faced by different categories of researchers within the institute. Once drafted, these questionnaires were distributed to the respective stakeholder groups for completion.

Importantly, the process did not end with the mere distribution of the questionnaires. The WG facilitated dedicated sessions where the results were collectively reviewed and discussed. During these discussions, participants were encouraged to share their experiences, highlight any obstacles encountered in the implementation of the principles, and propose practical solutions. This interactive approach ensured that the feedback collected was not only quantitative but also rich in qualitative insights.

The incorporation of stakeholder feedback into the ongoing refinement of the HRS4R action plan underscores IOCN's commitment to a participatory and responsive implementation process. By actively listening to researchers' voices, the institute ensures that the measures adopted are relevant, effective, and aligned with the actual needs of its scientific community.

Moreover, this inclusive approach fosters a sense of ownership among researchers and staff, motivating them to actively contribute to and support the implementation of the HRS4R strategy. It also enhances transparency and trust, critical factors in maintaining morale and encouraging sustained engagement.

In summary, the involvement of the research community and stakeholders in drafting, discussing, and refining the HRS4R questionnaires, as well as in shaping the solutions, is a testament to IOCN's dedication to embedding the Charter and Code principles into its institutional culture. This collaborative process not only strengthens the strategy's relevance and impact but also promotes a positive and inclusive research environment conducive to excellence and innovation.

How do you proceed with the alignment of organisational policies with the HRS4R? Make sure the HRS4R is recognized in the organisation's research strategy, as the overarching HR policy.   *

⌄

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

All the methodologies, strategies, and procedures outlined in the proposed IOCN HRS4R Action Plan are fully aligned with the institution's broader organizational policies. This alignment ensures coherence across all operational levels and fosters a unified approach to research, human resources, and institutional development. By integrating the HRS4R framework into existing policies, IOCN reinforces its commitment to creating a supportive and ethical research environment that promotes excellence, transparency, and fairness.

The HRS4R principles are explicitly acknowledged and embedded within IOCN's overarching research strategy, highlighting the strategic importance of human resources development in achieving the institute's research goals. Furthermore, the HRS4R framework will be formally incorporated into the Human Resources (HR) policy, guaranteeing that recruitment, retention, professional development, and working conditions for researchers are managed consistently and in accordance with the Charter and Code principles.

This deliberate integration facilitates policy coherence, ensuring that the HRS4R is not treated as a standalone initiative but rather as a fundamental component of IOCN's organizational culture and governance. It aligns research ambitions with ethical standards, recruitment transparency, training opportunities, and equitable working conditions, all of which contribute to strengthening the institute's research capacity and reputation.

Additionally, the ICMPP HRS4R represents a dedicated and specialized chapter within IOCN's research strategy. This inclusion signifies the institute's recognition of the unique challenges and needs of the research community and underscores its commitment to fostering an environment conducive to scientific innovation and researcher development. The special status of this chapter ensures that HRS4R-related actions and policies receive ongoing attention and resources, further embedding these principles into the fabric of IOCN's research operations.

Through this integrated and strategic approach, IOCN positions itself as a forward-looking research institution that values the development and well-being of its researchers as central to its mission, thereby enhancing both its national and international standing in the scientific community.

How will you ensure that the proposed actions are implemented?*   ⌄

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

The implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) at IOCN has been designed as an inclusive and participatory process, actively involving the research community and key stakeholders at every stage. This approach ensures that the strategy reflects the real needs and perspectives of those directly engaged in research activities.

To facilitate this, several meetings of the HRS4R Working Group (WG) were convened. These meetings brought together a diverse group of representatives from the main stakeholder categories, including researchers across all career stages (R1 through R4), PhD students, and postdoctoral researchers. The diversity of participants was essential to capturing a comprehensive understanding of the institutional environment, as well as the challenges and opportunities faced by researchers at different points in their careers.

During these sessions, the WG collaboratively drafted detailed questionnaires based on the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct. The questionnaires were designed to assess the current state of research practices, working conditions, recruitment, training, and professional development within the institute. Once finalized, the questionnaires were distributed among the stakeholder groups to collect broad and representative feedback.

Following the collection phase, the WG organized focused discussion sessions with each stakeholder group to review the questionnaire responses. These discussions were crucial for identifying the practical issues researchers encounter in their daily work and the barriers to fully implementing the Charter and Code principles. Participants were encouraged to openly share their experiences, concerns, and suggestions for improvement.

The feedback received was carefully analyzed and integrated into the ongoing refinement of the HRS4R implementation plan. This iterative process ensured that the strategy remains relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of the research community. Moreover, by incorporating the voices of researchers and other stakeholders, IOCN fosters a culture of transparency, mutual respect, and shared responsibility.

This active engagement has not only improved the quality and applicability of the HRS4R action plan but has also strengthened the commitment of researchers and staff to the values of openness, fairness, and excellence that underpin the Charter and Code. Overall, the inclusive process has laid a solid foundation for sustainable improvements in the research environment at IOCN, supporting its goal to become a center of excellence recognized nationally and internationally.

HR Excellence in Research

Action Plan

Action Plan

Case number

2024RO223209

Name Organisation under review

The Oncology Institute „Prof. Dr. Ion Chiricuţă" Cluj Napoca (IOCN)

Organisation's contact details

Republicii 34-36, Cluj-Napoca, Cluj, 400015, Romania

1. Organisational Information

*Please provide a limited number of key figures for your organisation. Figures marked * are compulsory.*

STAFF & STUDENTS

	FTE
Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research *	32
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality) *	0
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation) *	1
Of whom are women *	25
Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor. *	5
Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level *	3
Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level *	2
Total number of students (if relevant) *	0
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff) *	32

RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)	€
Total annual organisational budget	807154,44
Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)	395746,02
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)	254306,24
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	0

ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE (a very brief description of your organisation, max. 100 words)

Founded in 1929, the Oncology Institute "Prof. Dr. Ion Chiricuță" Cluj-Napoca (IOCN), is a comprehensive center in Romania under the direct authority of the Ministry of Health. It provides preventive, curative, and palliative medical services in oncology, along with extensive educational and research activities. The Institute coordinates fundamental, clinical, translational, and population-based research. It is a source of innovation and has developed an integrated platform for research, patient care, and education, aimed at benefiting patients and ensuring their well-being and improved quality of life.

2. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice

Please provide an overview of the organisation in terms of the current strengths and weaknesses of the current practice under the four thematic headings of the Charter and Code at your organization.

Note: Click on the name of each of the four thematic headings of the Charter and Code to open the editor and provide your answer.

Ethical and professional aspects*   ⌄

Strengths and Weaknesses (max. 800 words)

Strengths

- The hospital has an Ethics Committee that reviews and approves the implementation of all research projects, ensuring compliance with ethical standards.

- Research involving human subjects is governed by international regulations, including GDPR, with data anonymized and used strictly for biomedical research purposes.

- All participants in research studies provide informed consent prior to involvement.

- Laboratory activities adhere to Good Practice rules, including the use of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to maintain quality and consistency.

- Research results are validated through publication in ISI-indexed journals with impact factors, and undergo peer review by specialists in the biomedical field.

- The research infrastructure is state-of-the-art, designed to meet the needs of both fundamental and translational research.

- Development of integrated research approaches based on imaging and histological evaluations, fostering multidisciplinary collaboration.

Weaknesses

- The number of researchers is limited, affecting the critical mass needed to achieve remarkable results.

- Research project funding lacks predictability, creating challenges in long-term planning.

- A very small percentage of grants are allocated relative to the national research budget.

- There is a lack of public-private partnerships to support research activities and facilitate the practical application of research findings in medical practice.

Recruitment and selection*   ⌄

Strengths and Weaknesses (max. 800 words)

Strengths

The filling of teaching and research positions for an indefinite period at IOCN is conducted through a public competition process, organized in full compliance with national legislation and the institution's internal regulations. Announcements of these competitions are published on IOCN's official website as well as on the EURAXESS portal to ensure transparency and broad accessibility.

For vacancies arising within the framework of specific funding contracts or projects managed by IOCN, recruitment is carried out via transparent public procedures, with job postings made available on the institutional website, EURAXESS, and the national jobs portal jobs.mcid.gov.ro.

IOCN applies its own competition methodology for recruiting research positions, which establishes differentiated recruitment and selection criteria tailored to the qualification level required for each vacant post. This methodology promotes flexibility regarding candidates' experience and age, explicitly prohibiting any form of age discrimination. Furthermore, there are no restrictions based on gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, reflecting the institution's commitment to equal opportunity.

Retired staff members are also eligible to apply for fixed-term contracts through these competitions, in accordance with applicable legal provisions. Additionally, IOCN maintains a balanced gender representation across its workforce, reinforcing its dedication to diversity and inclusion.

Weaknesses

The inability to hire a larger number of researchers on permanent positions, which limits the growth of a critical mass of researchers within the hospital. This constraint is due to a maximum staffing quota allocated to our institution, restricting the expansion of the research team despite increasing demands and opportunities.

The training and development of specialists within research projects is successfully carried out; however, there is a significant challenge in retaining the most talented researchers beyond these projects. This is largely due to the lack of available permanent positions outside the fixed-term contracts tied to specific research projects, leading to a potential loss of highly skilled personnel to other institutions or sectors.

Working conditions* ⌄

Strengths and Weaknesses (max. 800 words)

Strengths

The research infrastructure is state-of-the-art, fully equipped to meet the needs of fundamental and translational research, as well as clinical support activities such as genetic and genomic testing. This advanced infrastructure enables cutting-edge investigations and fosters innovation across multiple biomedical domains.

The working environment is collegial and supportive, emphasizing gender equality and fostering a non-conflictual yet competitive atmosphere. This culture encourages collaboration while promoting healthy scientific competition among researchers.

Weekly meetings are held where research progress is reviewed, and challenges are openly discussed to identify effective solutions. These regular interactions facilitate continuous improvement, knowledge exchange, and timely problem-solving within research teams.

Weaknesses

There is a lack of institutional access to comprehensive online databases and full-text publications due to insufficient funding allocated for these resources. This limitation restricts researchers' ability to stay updated with the latest scientific literature, impeding their capacity to conduct thorough literature reviews and integrate current knowledge into their work. Enhancing access to these essential digital resources is crucial for maintaining research quality and competitiveness at an international level.

Training and development* ⌄

Strengths and Weaknesses (max. 800 words)

Strenghts

There is a strong openness and commitment to supporting training and specialization programs at the European and international levels for researchers employed both within the institute and on research projects. These opportunities aim to facilitate the return of researchers and the transfer of valuable knowledge and skills back to their original laboratories and research groups, thereby enhancing the overall expertise and innovation capacity of the institute.

National legislation provides the right to study leave, granting researchers up to 10 days per year to participate in educational or training activities. This legal provision supports continuous professional development and helps researchers stay current with advancements in their fields.

Weaknesses

There is a lack of funding to support the development of specialists as trainers at the European and international levels, which limits the institute's capacity to participate in and implement international training scholarships and programs. This funding gap restricts opportunities to build expertise in delivering high-quality training and knowledge transfer beyond national borders, hindering the institute's potential to become a recognized center for specialist education and capacity building on the international stage.

3. Actions

The Action Plan and HR Excellence in Research strategy must be published on an easily accessible location of the organisation's website.

Please provide the web link to the organization's Action Plan/HR Strategy dedicated webpage(s). Multiple links must be comma separated.

https://iocn.ro/strategie-resurse-hrs4r/#1751279141534-5e7d7eeb-0920 (https://iocn.ro/strategie-resurse-hrs4r/#1751279141534-5e7d7eeb-0920)

Please fill in the list of all individual actions to be undertaken in your organisation's HR Excellence in Research to address the weaknesses or strengths identified in the Gap-Analysis. The listed actions should be concise, but detailed enough for the assessors to evaluate the level of ambition, engagement and the expected implementation process. The institution should strive to provide a detailed plan, not just an enumeration of actions.

Note: Choose one or more of the principles automatically retrieved from the GAP Analysis with their ratings.

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 1

	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
In line with the commitment to enhance the research environment and promote ethical and professional standards, the Oncology Institute "Prof. Dr. Ion Chiricuță" Cluj-Napoca (IOCN) has developed and formally approved its Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R). This strategic document is fully aligned with the principles and guidelines set out in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.	

GAP Principle(s)

(++) 4. Professional attitude

(++) 6. Accountability

(++) 7. Good practice in research

(+/-) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results

(+/-) 9. Public engagement

(+/-) 10. Non discrimination

(+/-) 11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems

(+/-) 12. Recruitment   biannual 2025-2026

(++) 13. Recruitment (Code)

(++) 14. Selection (Code)

(+/-) 16. Judging merit (Code)

(++) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code)

(++) 21. Postdoctoral appointments (Code)

(++) 23. Research environment

(++) 24. Working conditions

Proposed ACTIONS

Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
Steering committee, ethics board, research coordinator, ethics committee, RUNOS	Documents and Website: Guide for the Implementation of the HRS4R Code and Charter & Portal of Good Ethical Practices Annual Training of Research Staff on Ethical Conduct and Methodology: During 2024, all research departments conducted annual training sessions focused on the Code of Ethical Conduct, professional ethics, and gender equality principles. These sessions aimed to inform researchers about applicable research regulations, with a particular focus on equal opportunities, gender balance, and the ethical framework guiding research activities. Additionally, researchers were updated on institutional, national, and European regulations affecting research integrity and conduct. Researcher Involvement in IOCN Research Projects (2024): In 2024, the following categories of researchers were involved in ongoing research projects at IOCN: Number of PhD students (doctoral researchers): 5 Number of postdoctoral researchers: 2 Actions Implemented: Information and Training Sessions: Targeted training for representative researchers across all career stages (R1-R4), focusing on forming working groups or clusters at research center level. These clusters will further promote and embed the principles of the HRS4R Code and Charter. Online Dissemination: Regular publication and email distribution of new and updated documents related to HRS4R procedures and ethical guidelines, ensuring broad internal awareness. Website Updates: Continuous improvement of the institutional website (both Romanian and English versions) to ensure better accessibility and visibility of relevant documents, training materials, and ethical codes. Performance Indicators: Yearly Growth in Trained Researchers: An annual increase of 1–2% in the number of researchers trained on professional ethics, gender equality, and HRS4R principles. Research Output in

Proposed ACTIONS

	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
		High-Impact Publications (ISI-indexed journals): At least 15 researchers per year actively included as authors in ISI-indexed publications, covering fundamental, translational, and clinical research domains.

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 2

		Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
Develop and disseminate comprehensive policies to guide ethical research practices within the IOCN research community, covering the following areas: Research Conduct: Establish clear protocols for study design and execution, data management, results reporting, and intellectual property rights. Research Integrity: Define procedures for reporting and investigating research misconduct, including designated reporting channels, investigation committees, and appropriate disciplinary measures. Equity and Inclusion: Implement guidelines and best practices to promote inclusion, diversity, gender equality, and equal opportunities across all research activities, fostering a constructive and professional working environment. (T1 – Ethical and Professional Aspects)	**GAP Principle(s)** (++) 2. Ethical principles (++) 4. Professional attitude (++) 6. Accountability (++) 7. Good practice in research (+/-) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results (+/-) 10. Non discrimination (+/-) 11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems (+/-) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code) (++) 22. Recognition of the profession (++) 23. Research environment (++) 28. Career development (+/-) 30. Access to career advice (+/-) 31. Intellectual Property Rights (++) 38. Continuing Professional Development	Ongoing Regular evaluation (biannually and annual)

Proposed ACTIONS

Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
Ethics board, ethics committee, medical director, research coordinator, steering committee, legal department, financial department	Documents and Website – Ethics Section https://iocn.ro/consiliul-etic/#1710931592111-34dd6f9a-1061 A comprehensive document on research ethics will be developed. The document will include: Protocols for conducting research studies, data management, results dissemination, and intellectual property rights. Procedures for reporting and investigating research misconduct, including clear reporting channels, composition and roles of investigation committees, and defined disciplinary measures. Guidelines for promoting inclusion, diversity, gender equality, and equal opportunities in all research activities. Monitoring and Indicators: Indicator: Number of Principal Investigators (PIs) and researchers trained per quarter/year. Target: Minimum of 2–3 researchers trained annually, with gradual increase over the years as institutional capacity grows. Visibility: The Ethics section on the IOCN website will be regularly updated with: The full ethics document Contact information for the Ethics Committee and reporting channels

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 3

	GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
Developing the Personnel Research, Development, and Innovation Statute in alignment with the European HRS4R strategy (Charter & Code) and the National Law on Research, Development, and Innovation Staff Regulations adopted in 2024. (T1 Ethical and Professional Aspects)	(++) 1. Research freedom	Ongoing Regular evaluation (biannually and annual)
	(++) 2. Ethical principles	
	(++) 3. Professional responsibility	
	(++) 4. Professional attitude	
	(++) 5. Contractual and legal obligations	
	(++) 6. Accountability	
	(++) 7. Good practice in research	
	(+/-) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results	
	(+/-) 9. Public engagement	
	(+/-) 10. Non discrimination	
	(+/-) 12. Recruitment	
	(++) 13. Recruitment (Code)	
	(++) 14. Selection (Code)	
	(++) 15. Transparency (Code)	
	(+/-) 16. Judging merit (Code)	
	(+/-) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code)	

Proposed ACTIONS

	GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
	(++) 22. Recognition of the profession	
	(++) 23. Research environment	
	(++) 24. Working conditions	
	(++) 25. Stability and permanence of employment	
	(++) 26. Funding and salaries	
	(++) 27. Gender balance	
	(++) 28. Career development	
	(++) 36. Relation with supervisors	
	(+/-) 37. Supervision and managerial duties	
	(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development	
	(++) 39. Access to research training and continuous development	
	(+/-) 40. Supervision	

Proposed ACTIONS

	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
	Medical Director, Research and Development Coordinator, Steering Committee	To ensure wide accessibility and transparency regarding the rights and obligations of research, development, and innovation (RDI) personnel, the following key documents will be made available: Staff Statute for Innovation, Development, and Research: This comprehensive document outlining the legal, ethical, and professional framework for RDI staff will be accessible on the HRS4R page of the hospital website. To ensure wide accessibility and transparency regarding the rights and obligations of research, development, and innovation (RDI) personnel, the following key documents will be made available: Staff Statute for Innovation, Development, and Research: This comprehensive document outlining the legal, ethical, and professional framework for RDI staff will be accessible on the HRS4R page of the university website. The Research, Development, and Innovation Personnel Code: A clear and detailed guide to the roles, responsibilities, and conduct expectations for all RDI staff. The Research, Development, and Innovation Personnel Code: A clear and detailed guide to the roles, responsibilities, and conduct expectations for all RDI staff.

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 4

Reviewing methodologies for recruiting research positions in line with the OTM-R strategy. Establishing objective criteria for selecting members of evaluation committees. (T2 Recruitment and Selection)

GAP Principle(s)

Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)

(+/-) 12. Recruitment

(++) 13. Recruitment (Code)

(++) 14. Selection (Code)

(++) 15. Transparency (Code)

(+/-) 16. Judging merit (Code)

(++) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code)

(+/-) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code)

(++) 20. Seniority (Code)

(++) 22. Recognition of the profession

(++) 26. Funding and salaries

(++) 27. Gender balance

(++) 28. Career development

(++) 29. Value of mobility

(+/-) 30. Access to career advice

Regular evaluation (biannually and annual)

Proposed ACTIONS

	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
	Medical Director, Research and Development Coordinator, Steering Committee	Documents and Website Methodology for Recruitment of Teaching and Research Positions available. Methodology for Enhancing Selection Criteria for evaluation committees and interview panels. Encouragement of applications from external and international candidates, with selection committees composed of internal, external, and international members where appropriate if is needed.

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 5

Improving Working Conditions for Researchers: Promote a healthy work-life balance by enhancing support services focused on burnout prevention and occupational health. Integrate gender considerations into research practices. Incorporate disability inclusion within research activities. (T3 Working Conditions and Social Security)

GAP Principle(s)

(+/-) 11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems

(+/-) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code)

(++) 22. Recognition of the profession

(++) 23. Research environment

(++) 24. Working conditions

(++) 25. Stability and permanence of employment

(++) 26. Funding and salaries

(++) 27. Gender balance

(++) 28. Career development

(++) 29. Value of mobility

(+/-) 30. Access to career advice

(+/-) 31. Intellectual Property Rights

(+/-) 32. Co-authorship

(+/-) 34. Complains/ appeals

(++) 36. Relation with supervisors

(+/-) 37. Supervision and managerial duties

Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)

Regular evaluation (biannually and annual)

Proposed ACTIONS

	GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
	(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development	

Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
Medical Director, Research and Development Coordinator, Steering Committee, RUNOS, psychologist	Indicators for Improving Working Conditions for Researchers Number and types of support services provided for burnout prevention and occupational health — reported annually. Percentage of researchers reporting satisfactory work-life balance, measured through regular surveys. Number of research projects or initiatives integrating gender considerations in research practices. Percentage of researchers engaged in activities that incorporate gender aspects into their projects.

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 6

Promoting awareness of equality issues and fostering positive attitudes toward diversity. (T3 Working Conditions and Social Security)

GAP Principle(s)

Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)

(++) 4. Professional attitude

(++) 7. Good practice in research

(+/-) 10. Non discrimination

(+/-) 12. Recruitment

(++) 22. Recognition of the profession

(++) 23. Research environment

(++) 24. Working conditions

(++) 25. Stability and permanence of employment

(++) 28. Career development

(+/-) 30. Access to career advice

(+/-) 35. Participation in decision-making bodies

(++) 36. Relation with supervisors

(+/-) 37. Supervision and managerial duties

Regular evaluation (biannually and annual)

Proposed ACTIONS

	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
	Medical Director, Research and Development Coordinator, Steering Committee	Awareness-raising through the publication of the Code of Ethical and Professional Conduct on the website (https://iocn.ro/documente-organizatorice/), highlighting diversity and inclusion within the hospital community, and promoting the prevention of discrimination (including discriminatory language), violence (including violence based on prejudice and gender identity), harassment, and sexual harassment. Indicators: Number of persons trained per year Inclusion of women in leadership positions

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 7

Creating and Developing Human Resources by: Attracting and preparing high-performing researchers to join project teams as PhD students (R1), with mentorship provided by senior researchers (R3 and R4). Organizing courses and continuous training programs for researchers. (T4 Training and Development)

GAP Principle(s)

(++) 2. Ethical principles

(++) 3. Professional responsibility

(++) 4. Professional attitude

(++) 7. Good practice in research

(++) 13. Recruitment (Code)

(++) 14. Selection (Code)

(++) 15. Transparency (Code)

(+/-) 16. Judging merit (Code)

(++) 17. Variations in the chronological order of CVs (Code)

(++) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code)

(+/-) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code)

(++) 20. Seniority (Code)

(++) 21. Postdoctoral appointments (Code)

(++) 22. Recognition of the profession

(++) 23. Research environment

Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)

Regular evaluation (biannually and annual)

Proposed ACTIONS

	GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
	(++) 24. Working conditions	
	(++) 25. Stability and permanence of employment	
	(++) 27. Gender balance	
	(++) 28. Career development	
	(+/-) 30. Access to career advice	
	(-/+) 33. Teaching	
	(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development	
	(++) 39. Access to research training and continuous development	
	(+/-) 40. Supervision	

Proposed ACTIONS

Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
Medical Director, Research and Development Coordinator, Steering Committee, Genomics and Genetics Center Coordinator	Documents and website: Announcements on programs for experienced, senior researchers and/or PI's (R3 and R4) through continuing education courses offered in collaboration with other prestigious universities/hospitals. Training of young researchers in the research projects. Indicators: • number of researchers participating in research projects in cooperation with other institutions/universities/hospitals.

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 8

	GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
Targeting external and internal funding sources—including government grants, private and industry partnerships, and internal university funds—to support researchers in maintaining continuity between external grants and to ensure equal access to research infrastructure for all researchers. (T4 Training and Development)	(++) 1. Research freedom (++) 3. Professional responsibility (++) 4. Professional attitude (++) 5. Contractual and legal obligations (++) 6. Accountability (++) 7. Good practice in research (+/-) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results (++) 13. Recruitment (Code) (++) 14. Selection (Code) (++) 15. Transparency (Code) (++) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code) (+/-) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code) (++) 24. Working conditions (++) 27. Gender balance (++) 28. Career development (++) 29. Value of mobility	Regular evaluation (biannually and annual)

Proposed ACTIONS

	GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
	(+/-) 40. Supervision	

Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
Medical Director, Research and Development Coordinator, Steering Committee	Actions: - updating the services offered by the research centers on the hospital pages - update the infrastructure available for research at the university on Engage in the Romanian Research Infrastructure System (EERTIS) platform. Indicators: • number of researchers from the research department and also clinical department: Grant/trial success rate of national and international grants: at least 1% Interdisciplinary Research Projects: 4-6 projects trials annually

Proposed ACTIONS

Action 9

		Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
HRS4R process evaluation in IOCN Synthesis of the implementation process of the Action Plan in its initial phase (2026-2028) Consultation campaign with the hospital community on the implementation process of the Action Plan in the initial phase (2026-2028) to analyze gaps (T4 Training and development)	**GAP Principle(s)**	2028 Final Evaluation
	(++) 3. Professional responsibility	
	(++) 4. Professional attitude	
	(++) 6. Accountability	
	(++) 7. Good practice in research	
	(+/-) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results	
	(+/-) 9. Public engagement	
	(+/-) 10. Non discrimination	
	(+/-) 11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems	
	(+/-) 12. Recruitment	
	(++) 22. Recognition of the profession	
	(++) 23. Research environment	
	(++) 24. Working conditions	
	(++) 25. Stability and permanence of employment	
	(++) 26. Funding and salaries	
	(++) 27. Gender balance	
	(++) 28. Career development	

Proposed ACTIONS

	GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)
	(+/-) 30. Access to career advice	
	(+/-) 31. Intellectual Property Rights	
	(+/-) 32. Co-authorship	
	(+/-) 34. Complains/ appeals	
	(+/-) 35. Participation in decision-making bodies	
	(++) 36. Relation with supervisors	
	(+/-) 37. Supervision and managerial duties	
	(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development	
	(++) 39. Access to research training and continuous development	
	(+/-) 40. Supervision	

Proposed ACTIONS

Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
Medical Director, Research and Development Coordinator, Steering Committee	Documents and website: Summary report on the implementation process of the Action Plan in the IOCN in the period 2026-2028 with: - the key indicators followed and their assessment during this period Report on the hospital community consultation campaign and perception regarding the implementation of HRS4R in IOCN GAP Analysis OTM-R Checklist Action Plan for future development - significant research results of the hospital Indicators: • number of researchers which benefits from these programs

Unselected principles:

The establishment of an Open Recruitment Policy is a key element in the HR Excellence in Research strategy. Please also indicate how your organisation will use the Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment Toolkit and how you intend to implement/are implementing the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment. Although there may be some overlap with a range of actions listed above, please provide a short commentary demonstrating this implementation. If the case, please make the link between the OTM-R checklist and the overall action plan. (max. 1000 words) *

An important and current priority for IOCN is to ensure that the recruitment process is firmly grounded in the principles of openness, transparency, and meritocracy, thereby guaranteeing that the most qualified candidates are selected for available positions. Upholding these principles not only fosters fairness but also promotes the international mobility of researchers, facilitates knowledge exchange, and ultimately enhances the overall quality of research conducted at the institution.

IOCN is committed to fully respecting and implementing all the principles outlined in the European Charter for Researchers and the EU Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. Accordingly, the recruitment and selection procedures applied at IOCN are governed by fundamental principles that ensure equal access to employment opportunities for all individuals. These principles align with constitutional provisions on equality, merit, and ability while adhering to both national and international legal frameworks.

Importantly, the Charter & Code principles apply universally across IOCN, covering the recruitment of all staff members regardless of their professional category. To date, all staff appointments have been conducted through a competitive selection process that emphasizes fairness and merit. Strengthening adherence to open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment practices will further enhance the transparency of the hiring process, broaden opportunities to attract high-performing personnel with outstanding qualifications, and thereby reinforce IOCN's institutional human resource capacity.

To formalize these commitments, IOCN will develop and publish its Open, Transparent, and Merit-based Recruitment (OTM-R) policy, available in both Romanian and English. This policy will clearly articulate the hospital's dedication to these principles and outline concrete measures for their implementation. In addition, IOCN will create an internal recruitment guide that specifies OTM-R-aligned procedures and best practices, including standardized guidelines and templates for advertising vacancies.

Furthermore, recognizing the importance of consistent application of these principles, IOCN plans to provide targeted training sessions for all staff involved in recruitment activities. These training programs will cover the OTM-R principles, the new policy, and the associated guidelines to ensure that recruitment processes are conducted fairly, transparently, and effectively, in line with the highest European standards.

If your organisation already has a recruitment strategy which implements the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment, please provide the web link where this strategy can be found on your organisation's website. Multiple links must be comma separated:

URL:

4. Implementation

General overview of the expected overall implementation process of the action plan: (max. 1000 words)

The proposed Human Resources (HR) strategy of IOCN embodies a strong commitment to ethical principles, transparent processes—including recruitment and selection—enhancing working conditions, and facilitating continuous training and development for all researchers. This strategy upholds the values of autonomy, research freedom, equitable access to organizational activities and resources, and public accountability, all essential for the smooth and effective functioning of the institute.

Recognizing that the research ecosystem is undergoing significant transformations at both national and international levels, the IOCN HR strategy addresses the evolving environment where human resources play a pivotal role. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of current needs and challenges, an internal review was conducted in 2025, involving active participation from the entire research community.

Since the submission of the letter of commitment in 2024, the Steering Committee (SC) and the Working Group (WG) have been actively engaged in guiding the process. The SC is chaired by the Director of IOCN, while the WG is coordinated by an experienced researcher at the R3 level. Both groups convene regularly and are prepared to expand membership if necessary to bolster the implementation of the strategy effectively.

The HR strategy aligns fully with IOCN's 2022-2026 organizational Strategic Plan, integrating key frameworks such as the European Charter for Researchers, the Code of Conduct, and the Open, Transparent, and Merit-based Recruitment (OTM-R) principles as foundational guidelines. Through this strategic plan, IOCN aims to maintain and strengthen its reputation as a leading institution in research quality and innovation.

The research community will be consistently informed about the principles of the Charter & Code and OTM-R, ensuring transparency and engagement. Researchers themselves will play an active role during the implementation phase, as their feedback will be crucial to identifying any shortcomings in adherence to the principles, enabling timely analysis and corrective action.

The SC will maintain continuous oversight of the implementation process, monitoring progress, reporting any deviations from the planned timeline, and proposing corrective measures as needed. Any required actions will be subject to approval by the Scientific Council, ensuring governance and accountability.

To support effective oversight, IOCN will develop a monitoring system dedicated to tracking compliance with the Charter & Code and OTM-R principles. This system will provide a clear, comprehensive view of the implementation status and help pinpoint areas requiring improvement.

While awaiting the outcome of the external review, IOCN will persist with the execution of the action plan and remain proactive in submitting all necessary documentation to the European Commission. This transparency will offer a clearer picture of the current implementation status and demonstrate IOCN's commitment to continuous progress.

Make sure you also cover all the aspects highlighted in the checklist below, which you will need to describe in detail:

Note: Click on each question of the checklist to open the editor.

How will the implementation committee and/or steering group regularly oversee progress?*   ⌄

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

For each action outlined in the Action Plan, a responsible coordinator from the involved unit(s) has been designated to ensure that the respective indicators are met within the expected timeframe. The Steering Committee (SC) regularly monitors the progress of these actions and reports any deviations from the established schedule.

Periodic meetings between the SC and the Working Group (WG) will be held to review the implementation progress. Detailed reports on the development of the Action Plan will be prepared and shared accordingly.

Any actions that require further steps or adjustments will be proposed by the WG and submitted to the Scientific Council of IOCN for approval, ensuring proper governance and oversight.

To facilitate an effective internal analysis, the WG and SC developed a comprehensive questionnaire based on the 40 principles and general conditions of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct. This questionnaire is organized into four key dimensions: (1) Ethical and professional aspects; (2) Recruitment; (3) Working conditions and social security; and (4) Training. Each principle has been transformed into clear, assessable statements.

At regular intervals, representatives from key stakeholder groups—including researchers at various career stages (R1 to R4), PhD students, and postdoctoral fellows—are invited to complete the questionnaire. The responses are then analyzed and discussed to assess the progress in implementing the HRS4R strategy, as well as to identify areas needing improvement.

To address any identified challenges, several dedicated meetings of the HRS4R Working Group and Steering Committee will be convened with the goal of devising and implementing new solutions. This iterative process ensures continuous improvement and alignment with best practices.

How do you intend to involve the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?*   ⌄

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

The successful implementation of the HRS4R (Human Resources Strategy for Researchers) at IOCN relies heavily on the active involvement and engagement of the entire research community and key stakeholders. Recognizing that effective change can only be achieved through inclusive participation, the institute has prioritized transparent communication and collaborative decision-making throughout the process.

To this end, several meetings of the HRS4R Working Group (WG) were organized, bringing together representatives from all relevant stakeholder groups, including researchers at all career stages (R1 to R4), PhD students, and postdoctoral fellows. These meetings provided a crucial platform for open dialogue and exchange of ideas, ensuring that the perspectives and concerns of diverse groups were fully represented.

One of the key steps undertaken by the WG was the development of comprehensive questionnaires based on the 40 principles outlined in the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct. The questionnaires were carefully tailored to reflect the specific realities and challenges faced by different categories of researchers within the institute. Once drafted, these questionnaires were distributed to the respective stakeholder groups for completion.

Importantly, the process did not end with the mere distribution of the questionnaires. The WG facilitated dedicated sessions where the results were collectively reviewed and discussed. During these discussions, participants were encouraged to share their experiences, highlight any obstacles encountered in the implementation of the principles, and propose practical solutions. This interactive approach ensured that the feedback collected was not only quantitative but also rich in qualitative insights.

The incorporation of stakeholder feedback into the ongoing refinement of the HRS4R action plan underscores IOCN's commitment to a participatory and responsive implementation process. By actively listening to researchers' voices, the institute ensures that the measures adopted are relevant, effective, and aligned with the actual needs of its scientific community.

Moreover, this inclusive approach fosters a sense of ownership among researchers and staff, motivating them to actively contribute to and support the implementation of the HRS4R strategy. It also enhances transparency and trust, critical factors in maintaining morale and encouraging sustained engagement.

In summary, the involvement of the research community and stakeholders in drafting, discussing, and refining the HRS4R questionnaires, as well as in shaping the solutions, is a testament to IOCN's dedication to embedding the Charter and Code principles into its institutional culture. This collaborative process not only strengthens the strategy's relevance and impact but also promotes a positive and inclusive research environment conducive to excellence and innovation.

How do you proceed with the alignment of organisational policies with the HRS4R? Make sure the HRS4R is recognized in the organisation's research strategy, as the overarching HR policy.   *

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

All the methodologies, strategies, and procedures outlined in the proposed IOCN HRS4R Action Plan are fully aligned with the institution's broader organizational policies. This alignment ensures coherence across all operational levels and fosters a unified approach to research, human resources, and institutional development. By integrating the HRS4R framework into existing policies, IOCN reinforces its commitment to creating a supportive and ethical research environment that promotes excellence, transparency, and fairness.

The HRS4R principles are explicitly acknowledged and embedded within IOCN's overarching research strategy, highlighting the strategic importance of human resources development in achieving the institute's research goals. Furthermore, the HRS4R framework will be formally incorporated into the Human Resources (HR) policy, guaranteeing that recruitment, retention, professional development, and working conditions for researchers are managed consistently and in accordance with the Charter and Code principles.

This deliberate integration facilitates policy coherence, ensuring that the HRS4R is not treated as a standalone initiative but rather as a fundamental component of IOCN's organizational culture and governance. It aligns research ambitions with ethical standards, recruitment transparency, training opportunities, and equitable working conditions, all of which contribute to strengthening the institute's research capacity and reputation.

Additionally, the ICMPP HRS4R represents a dedicated and specialized chapter within IOCN's research strategy. This inclusion signifies the institute's recognition of the unique challenges and needs of the research community and underscores its commitment to fostering an environment conducive to scientific innovation and researcher development. The special status of this chapter ensures that HRS4R-related actions and policies receive ongoing attention and resources, further embedding these principles into the fabric of IOCN's research operations.

Through this integrated and strategic approach, IOCN positions itself as a forward-looking research institution that values the development and well-being of its researchers as central to its mission, thereby enhancing both its national and international standing in the scientific community.

How will you ensure that the proposed actions are implemented?*   ⌄

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

The implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) at IOCN has been designed as an inclusive and participatory process, actively involving the research community and key stakeholders at every stage. This approach ensures that the strategy reflects the real needs and perspectives of those directly engaged in research activities.

To facilitate this, several meetings of the HRS4R Working Group (WG) were convened. These meetings brought together a diverse group of representatives from the main stakeholder categories, including researchers across all career stages (R1 through R4), PhD students, and postdoctoral researchers. The diversity of participants was essential to capturing a comprehensive understanding of the institutional environment, as well as the challenges and opportunities faced by researchers at different points in their careers.

During these sessions, the WG collaboratively drafted detailed questionnaires based on the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct. The questionnaires were designed to assess the current state of research practices, working conditions, recruitment, training, and professional development within the institute. Once finalized, the questionnaires were distributed among the stakeholder groups to collect broad and representative feedback.

Following the collection phase, the WG organized focused discussion sessions with each stakeholder group to review the questionnaire responses. These discussions were crucial for identifying the practical issues researchers encounter in their daily work and the barriers to fully implementing the Charter and Code principles. Participants were encouraged to openly share their experiences, concerns, and suggestions for improvement.

The feedback received was carefully analyzed and integrated into the ongoing refinement of the HRS4R implementation plan. This iterative process ensured that the strategy remains relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of the research community. Moreover, by incorporating the voices of researchers and other stakeholders, IOCN fosters a culture of transparency, mutual respect, and shared responsibility.

This active engagement has not only improved the quality and applicability of the HRS4R action plan but has also strengthened the commitment of researchers and staff to the values of openness, fairness, and excellence that underpin the Charter and Code. Overall, the inclusive process has laid a solid foundation for sustainable improvements in the research environment at IOCN, supporting its goal to become a center of excellence recognized nationally and internationally.

How will you monitor progress (timeline)?*

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Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

Each proposed action outlined in the IOCN HRS4R Action Plan is assigned a specific deadline to ensure timely and efficient implementation. These deadlines are carefully established to provide clear milestones and to facilitate progress tracking across all planned initiatives. By setting these target dates, the Action Plan fosters accountability and helps maintain momentum throughout the implementation process.

To oversee the progress and adherence to these timelines, the HRS4R Working Group (WG) and the Steering Committee (SC) will convene regularly. During their meetings, they will systematically review the implementation status of each action, identifying whether activities are proceeding according to schedule or if adjustments are needed to stay on track. This continuous monitoring enables proactive management of any emerging challenges or delays, ensuring that corrective measures can be taken promptly.

In addition to these regular check-ins, the Steering Committee will conduct a comprehensive evaluation every six months. During this biannual review, the SC will assess the overall state of the action plan, carefully comparing the projected outcomes with the actual results achieved. This gap analysis will highlight areas where objectives have not yet been fully met, enabling the committee to identify underlying causes and obstacles.

Based on these insights, the Steering Committee will develop recommendations for future actions aimed at addressing gaps and strengthening implementation efforts. These proposed measures will then be formally submitted to the IOCN Scientific Council for thorough review. The Scientific Council holds the authority to analyze the suggested actions, provide feedback, make necessary improvements, and ultimately approve the updated action plan.

This structured, multi-level oversight process ensures that the implementation of the HRS4R strategy remains dynamic, responsive, and aligned with institutional goals. It promotes transparency and collaborative decision-making, while maintaining a clear focus on continuous improvement. Through these mechanisms, IOCN is committed to fostering a research environment characterized by excellence, integrity, and sustainable development.

How will you measure progress (indicators) in view of the next assessment?*   ⌄

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

In preparation for the upcoming assessment, IOCN will systematically measure progress by conducting new rounds of evaluations using targeted questionnaires and organizing follow-up meetings with the Working Group and representatives from key stakeholder groups. These groups include researchers across all career stages (R1-R4), PhD students, and postdoctoral fellows, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive feedback process.

The newly collected data will be carefully compared against previous evaluation scores for each of the 40 principles outlined in the HRS4R framework. This comparative analysis will focus particularly on the principles that previously identified areas requiring action or improvement, allowing IOCN to assess the effectiveness of the implemented measures and to gauge tangible progress in those specific domains.

The results of this assessment will undergo a thorough review by the Steering Committee in collaboration with the Working Group. This joint analysis will provide a detailed understanding of the current status of the HRS4R implementation and highlight any persistent challenges or emerging issues.

Based on these insights, and in line with IOCN's commitment to continuous improvement, the Action Plan may be revised and updated to better address identified gaps or to capitalize on new opportunities for enhancement. This adaptive approach ensures that the strategy remains relevant, effective, and aligned with both institutional goals and the evolving needs of the research community.

By maintaining this rigorous cycle of evaluation, feedback, and adjustment, IOCN demonstrates a strong dedication to fostering a supportive, transparent, and merit-based research environment, ultimately contributing to the institution's long-term success and international competitiveness.

Additional remarks/comments about the proposed implementation process: (max. 1000 words)