

# Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) E-Tool

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Technical Guidelines for Institutions  
INITIAL PHASE



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

# CONTENT

|       |  |    |
|-------|--|----|
| 1     | INTRODUCTION.....  | 2  |
| 2     | General description of the HRS4R process.....  | 3  |
| 3     | HRS4R E-Tool: Before you get started: Administration Elements.....                                   | 5  |
| 3.1   | Your accounts on the EURAXESS portal.....  | 5  |
| 3.2   | Registration of the EURAXESS organisation account and assigning of the HRS4R Administrator role..... | 5  |
| 3.2.1 | Individual EURAXESS member account.....  | 5  |
| 3.2.2 | Organisation Profile.....  | 6  |
| 3.2.3 | HRS4R organisation administrator role.....   | 9  |
| 3.3   | Management of MY EURAXESS dashboard of HRS4R Admin.....  | 11 |
| 3.4   | Update the organisation profile on EURAXESS.....   | 13 |
| 4     | Initial Phase.....   | 14 |
| 4.1   | Creation of an application case for the institution in the HRS4R E-TOOL.....                         | 15 |
| 4.2   | Endorsement of the C&C and submission of the Commitment Letter.....                                  | 15 |
| 4.3   | The Gap Analysis.....  | 19 |
| 4.4   | The OTM-R checklist.....   | 21 |
| 4.5   | The Action Plan.....   | 23 |
| 5     | Initial Assessment.....  | 26 |
| 5.1   | Description and timeline of the assessment process.....  | 26 |
| 5.2   | General assessment.....  | 28 |
| 6     | Granting of the "HR Excellence in Research Award".....   | 30 |
| 7     | What's next? – Overview of the IMPLEMENTATION PHASE.....   | 31 |
| 8     | ANNEX.....   | 32 |
| 8.1   | Templates (Gap-Analysis, OTM-R, Action Plan).....  | 32 |
| 8.2   | Examples of best practices.....  | 32 |
| 8.2.1 | Endorsement letters.....   | 32 |
| 8.2.2 | A Step-by-Step Guide to better OTM-R practices.....  | 32 |
| 8.3   | Abbreviations.....   | 36 |

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Starting 15 May 2018, the HRS4R E-TOOL is the European Commission's official platform, facilitating the HRS4R management process. It is an instrument developed and managed by DG RTD, B2 Unit (Open Science and European Research Area Policy).

These guidelines will help institutions who are interested in the HRS4R process, and outline the practical steps that need to be implemented in order to apply for the "HR Excellence in Research Award". Additional information on implementing the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (C&C) in the policies and practices of institutions is also provided.

The templates for use at each stage of the process can be found in the ANNEX. A tailored approach will be needed to match the specific case of your institution, which may be at an earlier or a more advanced stage of the C&C implementation, or which may be more creative and/or ambitious in setting targets.

Should you consider that these guidelines do not cover your questions, please contact the Help Desk for technical issues: [support@euraxess.org](mailto:support@euraxess.org) or the RTD-CHARTER team for details about the HRS4R procedure: [RTD-CHARTER@ec.europa.eu](mailto:RTD-CHARTER@ec.europa.eu).

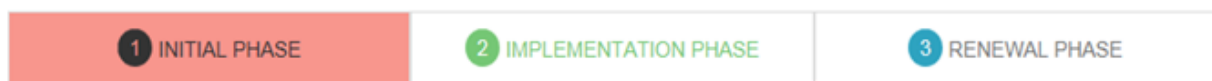
## 2 General description of the HRS4R process

Involvement in the HRS4R is a voluntary process. Institutions should be aware that the HRS4R is a long-term commitment covering several years, including joint efforts and coordination with various internal and external stakeholder groups.

Before making the decision to enrol in the application process for the "HR Excellence in Research Award", interested institutions should first analyse the 40 principles of the C&C, as published on EURAXESS: <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter>.

Based on the 40 principles of the C&C, the institution will need to further develop and implement the action plan of its customised HRS4R.

**The HRS4R consists of three phases:**



**1. Initial phase** for the application for the "HR Excellence in Research Award",

**2. Implementation phase of:**

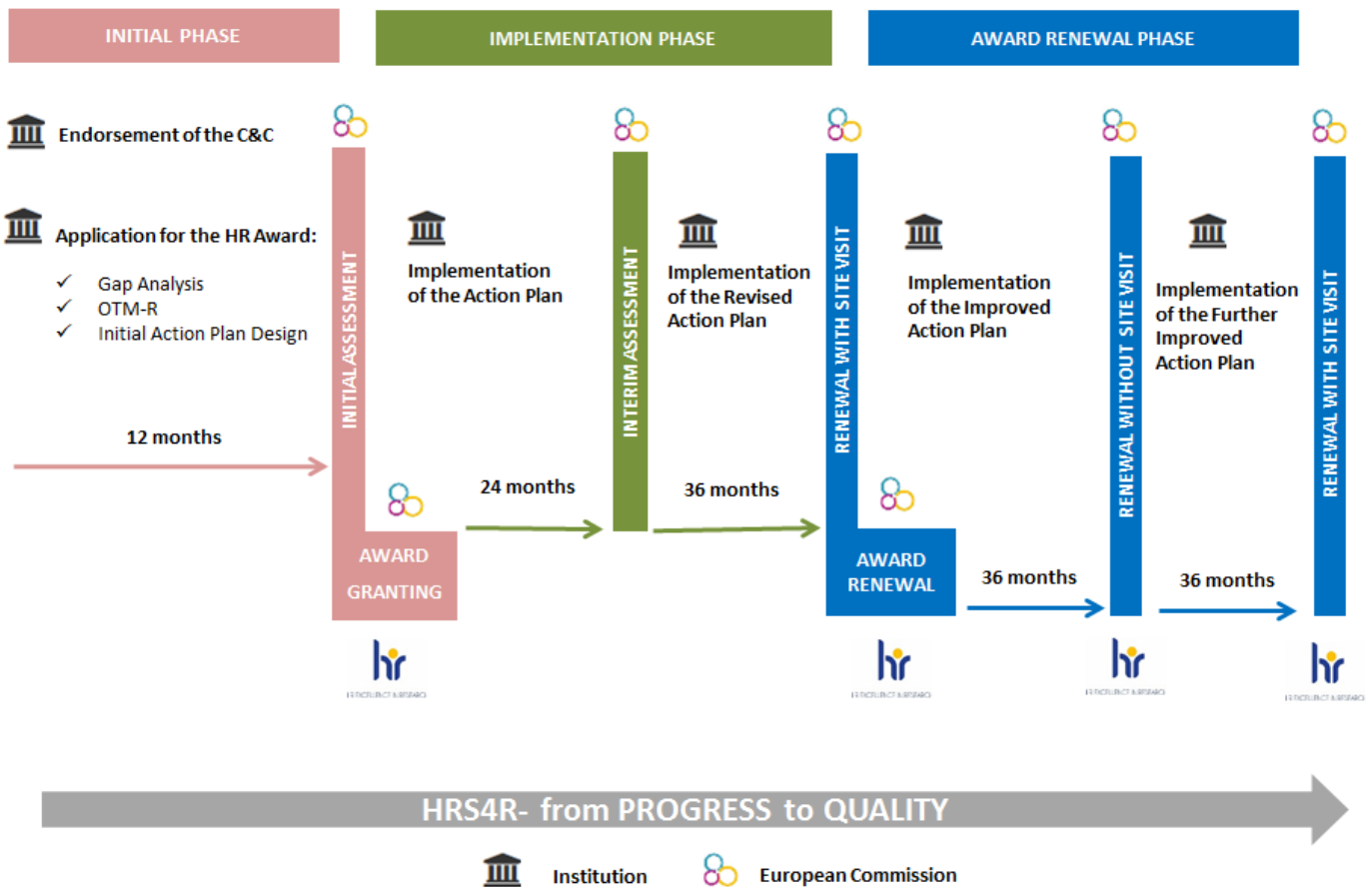
- **the Initial Action Plan** (24 months after the HR Award was granted, followed by an Interim Assessment).
- **the Revised Action Plan** (36 months after the Interim assessment).

**3. Award Renewal phase**

- Renewal with Site Visit (five years after the initial HR Award was granted).
- Renewal without Site Visit (36 months after the Renewal with Site Visit).

Please note that site-visits will be resumed gradually as of the fourth quarter of 2018. Guidelines and planning of site visits will be published on the EURAXESS website in due course.

The graphic below indicates the timeline according to which institutions are to undergo the subsequent cycles, while moving from progress to quality in Human Resources Management.



The European Commission must screen each application, irrespective of the phase, for administrative eligibility. The administrative eligibility check makes sure the application has all the required documents and elements necessary for assessment. If the administrative eligibility check is not passed, the institution may be required to make corrections and resubmit the application.

Once an application is considered eligible from an administrative point of view, the application documents are sent for assessment to three individual peer reviewers from three different countries other than the applicant country.

The assessors use standard assessment forms for each cycle to ensure equal treatment for all applicant institutions.

One of the three experts is assigned the role of lead-assessor for the preparation of the commonly agreed consensus report, which is shared with the institution as an official document containing pertinent recommendations in terms of the specific application.

The applicant institution will need to consider the recommendations provided by the experts in the consensus report and will address them with tailored actions. This will ensure the completion of a cycle and the transition to the next stage in the implementation process.

### 3 HRS4R E-Tool: Before you get started: Administration Elements

Once an institution makes a decision to endorse the C&C and apply for the "HR Excellence in Research Award", it must secure access to the HRS4R E-Tool.

#### 3.1 Your accounts on the EURAXESS portal

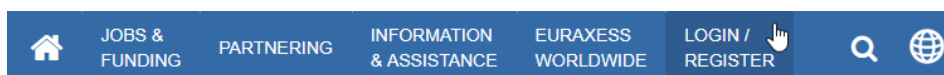
- To access the HRS4R E-Tool, you need to have an **individual EURAXESS member account**. Registration and membership are free of charge. Read below for information on how to create an account.
- Your institution must have an **organisation profile on EURAXESS**. If one does not exist already, you can create it from your individual EURAXESS member account as described below.
  - ✓ Having an organisation account on EURAXESS offers the added benefit of publishing jobs, funding or hosting opportunities for free on the [EURAXESS main portal](#), as well as the opportunity to search for talented researchers in our database, including researchers from more than 40 European countries.
- You must request the role of **HRS4R Organisation Administrator (Admin)** for your registered organisation. Only you will have access to the HRS4R E-tool to upload data and to be the interface with the European Commission, on behalf of the institution, regarding the HRS4R process.

#### 3.2 Registration of the EURAXESS organisation account and assigning of the HRS4R Administrator role

##### 3.2.1 Individual EURAXESS member account

If you do not already have an EURAXESS account, you can:

1. Navigate to <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/>
2. Click on the "LOGIN/REGISTER" menu item



### 3. Perform the steps under the “Create new account” section

#### Manage your application process.

Registration at EURAXESS is free and comes with a lot of benefits for researchers and entrepreneurs. Once you have registered you will be welcomed to your My EURAXESS private area, which is where, apart from many others, you will fill out and manage your profile, CV data, collaboration preferences.

It's quick and simple. Register now and you will have your own EURAXESS account in no time!

#### Manage your recruiting process

As a research institution, university or business, My EURAXESS area lets you manage your profile, collaboration preferences, post job, funding and hosting offers, search for the best candidates and many more!

Register an account with us and join EURAXESS' large research community today!

#### Create new account

E-mail \*

I agree with the [Privacy Statement and Specific Conditions](#). \*

I'm not a robot



CREATE NEW ACCOUNT

After performing the steps, you will receive an email with a link to the EURAXESS portal where you have to complete a form.

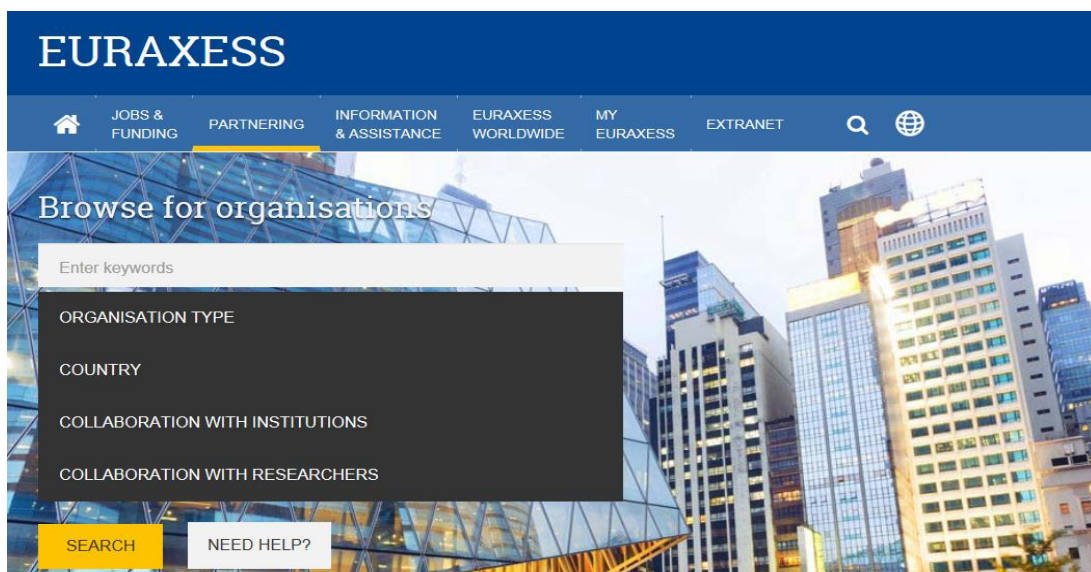
### 3.2.2 Organisation Profile

#### 3.2.2.1 Check if your organisation has a EURAXESS profile.

You can check if your organisation has a EURAXESS profile by performing an organisation search (from the menu select “Partnering” and then “Find Organisations”). Organisation search is available only for authenticated EURAXESS users



From the organisation search page, you can search via keywords and other filters for your organisation.



### 3.2.2.2 Register an organisation

If your organisation does not have a EURAXESS profile, you can create an organisation profile using the organisation registration tool available in the EURAXESS dashboard:

1. Login to the EURAXESS portal
2. Navigate to the dashboard (click MY EURAXESS item in the menu)



3. Click on the “I want to register an organisation” button



4. Provide the information required for the organisation registration in the form displayed. Do not enter a Department or Laboratory since the HR Award applies to the whole organisation and not a department or laboratory.

## Register an Organisation

Organisation Name \*

Department

Laboratory

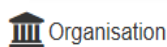
URL \*

5. Click the “Continue” button to send the organisation registration form to the Help Desk for validation. Validation is required by the Help Desk to ensure that your organisation is related to research and avoid duplicate registrations of the same organisation. Upon organisation registration approval, you will be informed by email (normally registration requests are treated within the same working day).

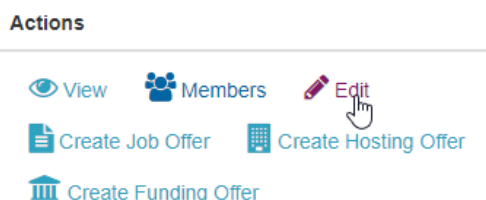


After the organisation is successfully registered with EURAXESS, the organisation profile details need to be provided.

1. From the dashboard menu (presented on the left side on the screen) click on the “Organisation” menu item. A list of your registered organisations will be displayed.



2. From the organisation actions click on “Edit”



3. Complete the form

Do not enter a Department or Laboratory since the HR Award applies to the whole organisation and not a subsidiary entity.

Organisation name \* ?

Vitae

Department ? Laboratory ?

ex. Department of Archaeology and Anthropology ex. Leverhulme Centre for Human Evolutionary Stud

ABOUT THE ORGANISATION +

ORGANISATION'S LOCATION +

OTHER INFORMATION +

SAVE

4. Click on the “Save” button to save the organisation profile

### 3.2.3 HRS4R organisation administrator role

To become an HRS4R organisation administrator:

1. Log in to the EURAXESS portal
2. From [The Human Resources Strategy for Researchers](#) page click on “Willing to apply for the HR Award?” button, then open the collapsible menus as shown below to expose the “HRS4R organisation Admin” button or click [here](#) to jump directly.
3. Click the “HRS4R organisation admin” button as shown below

#### HRS4R E-TOOL – ACCESS ELEMENTS

In order to access the HRS4R E-Tool, interested institution need an organisation account on EURAXESS. Registration and membership are free of charge.

Organisation has to assign a contact person to be granted the role of HRS4R Organisation Administrator (Admin). Only this designated person will have access to the HRS4R E-tool to upload data and to be the interface with the European Commission, on behalf of the institution, regarding the HRS4R process.

**+ How to register an organisation account on EURAXESS**

**— How to be granted the role of the HRS4R Organisation Administrator**

Request the role of HRS4R Organisation Administrator using the button below:

HRS4R ORGANISATION ADMIN

You now have to choose the organisation in which to become HRS4R organisation administrator. You will be presented only with top level organisation(s) (i.e. without department) whose URL match the domain of your email address. For example, if your email is [user@organisation.com](mailto:user@organisation.com), the URL of the registered organisation must be of xxx.organisation.com.

You can choose only one top level organisation, even if multiple organisations are displayed in the form.

If none of the displayed organisations matches your organisation, you can proceed with registering a new organisation, or contact the support team ([support@euraxess.org](mailto:support@euraxess.org)) using the email link presented below the form to request assistance.

## Granting the 'HRS4R Organisation Administrator' role to hr\_admin@umed.wroc.pl

The following rules apply for granting the role to a user for a specific organisation:

- The domain of your email (umed.wroc.pl) must be in the URL of the organisation.
- The organisation must be a top level one without department.
- Only one user per organisation can be granted the role.

Please choose the organisation for which you will be granted the HRS4R Organisation Administrator role. \*

- Uniwersytet Medyczny we Wrocławiu, Dziekanat Wydziału Lekarsko-Stomatologicznego (http://www.stomatologia.umed.wroc.pl)
- Wrocław Medical University (http://www.umed.wroc.pl/)

If none of the above suits you, please [register](#) your own top level organisation and come back to be granted the role. Alternatively, you can also contact the [support team](#) to grant you the role.

Please check the above before confirming.

**CONFIRM**

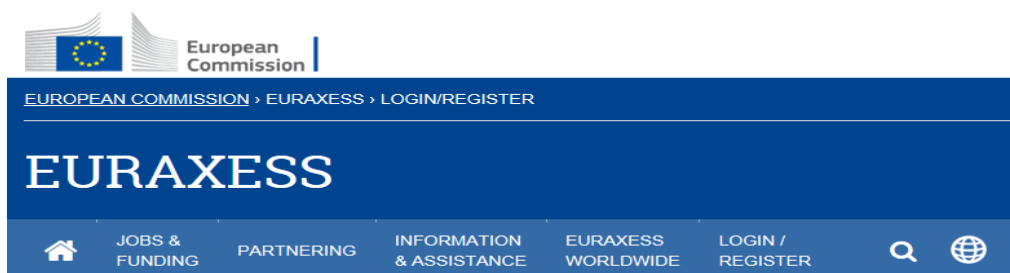
[Cancel](#)

For any assistance please contact the [support team](#)

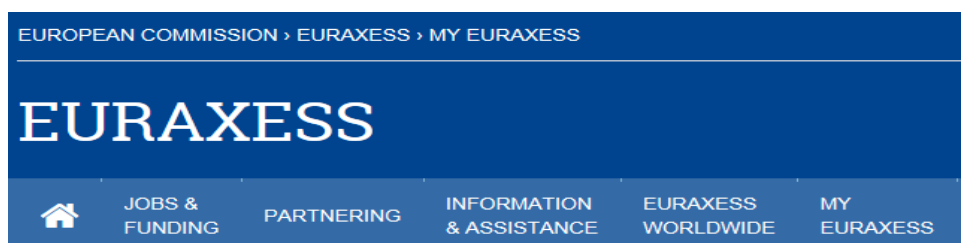
### 3.3 Management of MY EURAXESS dashboard of HRS4R Admin

Once you've been granted the HRS4R Organisation Admin role, you can log in and have access to the HRS4R dedicated section from the MY EURAXESS dashboard.

**Important:** Go to EURAXESS and log in using the credentials of your individual member account.



After log in, the main menu of the EURAXESS website will include a dedicated tab for MY EURAXESS, as shown below:





Browse the different sections of the MY EURAXESS dashboard and become familiar with the content.





 Dashboard


 Content

 User Profile


 HRS4R


 Organisation


 Job Offers

 Funding Offers


 Hosting Offers

 Favorites

 Saved searches

 Account settings

 Notifications

 Need Help?

 Logout

### **User profile:**

This section includes the general identification details of each user, such as name, living country, organisation, position, etc. Each user can choose if he wants his/her profile displayed in search results.

There are two check boxes which can be ticked if intended:

- to hide a public profile from search results,
- to hide first, last name and email from the public profile

**HRS4R:** This is the section you need to access in order to manage the HRS4R process.

**Organisation:** If you want to update the profile details of your organisation, you need to access this section. The name of the organisation can be changed only through the Help Desk.

**Job offers, funding offers, hosting offers** – These sections will be available only if you are also the EURAXESS Organisation Admin.

### **Favourites:**

In this section you can review the jobs, hosting, funding offers and events which you have "SAVE TO FAVOURITES".

### **Saved searches:**

In this section there will be the list of all saved searches such as job, funding, hosting offers, members, organisations.

### **Account settings:**

If you want to change the email or the password of your EURAXESS account, or you would like to upload a new profile picture, you can easily do it here.

### **Notifications:**

In this section you can find the list of all the content updates included in the pages to which you have subscribed on EURAXESS, and you can also set the frequency of notifications (daily, every three days, and every seven days).

### **Need help?**

In this section you will find [detailed explanations](#) on how to manage your EURAXESS profile and account.

### 3.4 Update the organisation profile on EURAXESS

From your MY EURAXESS dashboard, access the section called "Organisation" by clicking on the dedicated icon and make sure all the mandatory fields are duly filled in.

## Edit Organisation

The organisation's name, department and laboratory are read-only. Please contact the [support team](#) if you need to update them.

Organisation name \*

Department Laboratory

ABOUT THE ORGANISATION +

ORGANISATION'S LOCATION +

OTHER INFORMATION +

SAVE

The organisation's name cannot be changed by the EURAXESS Organisation Admin or the HRS4R Organisation Admin. Such requests should be addressed to the Help Desk ([support@euraxess.org](mailto:support@euraxess.org)).

If there are different persons covering the two above-mentioned roles within the institution, we recommend collaborating on this section, as there are elements which should be taken care of in terms of employer branding (i.e. essential when publishing jobs on EURAXESS).

The institution's logo can be uploaded, as well as the Horizon 2020 "Seal of Excellence" (SoE) certificates, for example.

If the SoE is uploaded, as part of the institution EURAXESS profile, the institution in question will be labelled, for increased visibility, as below:



## UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, VICERRECTORADO DE INVESTIGACION E INNOVACION

**Organisation Type:** Public Research Institution

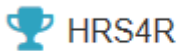
**WEBSITE** <http://www.usc.es>

**LOCATION** Spain > Santiago de Compostela

## 4 Initial Phase


Once the access details for the HRS4R E-TOOL are set, the HRS4R Organisation Admin can initiate the application process for the "HR Excellence in Research Award".

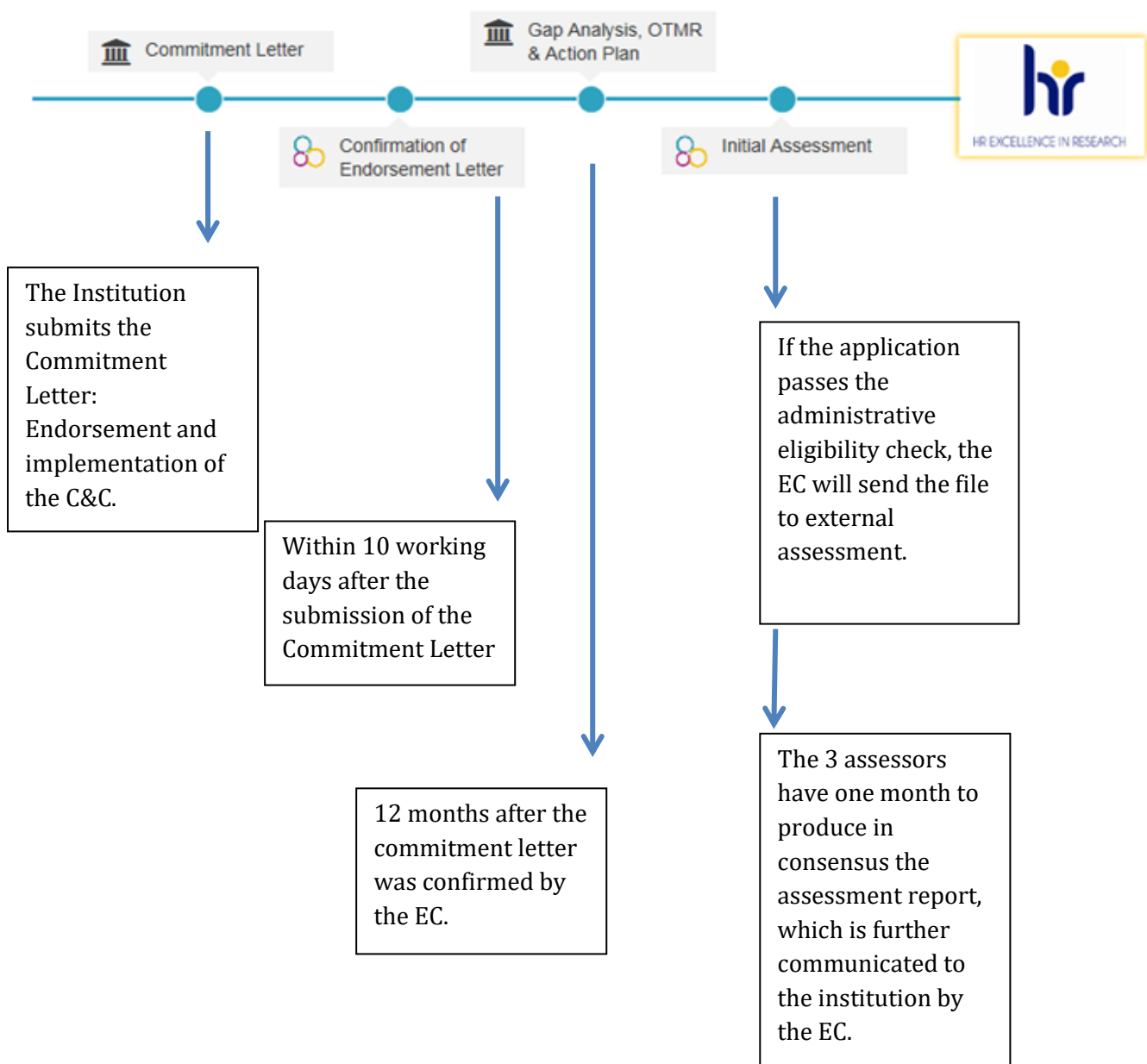
The whole process will be managed through MY EURAXESS dashboard, the section called



### General overview: tasks, responsibilities and timelines:

The graph below details the flow of the main activities performed during the Initial Phase by both

Institutions  and the European Commission (EC) , based on a best case scenario:

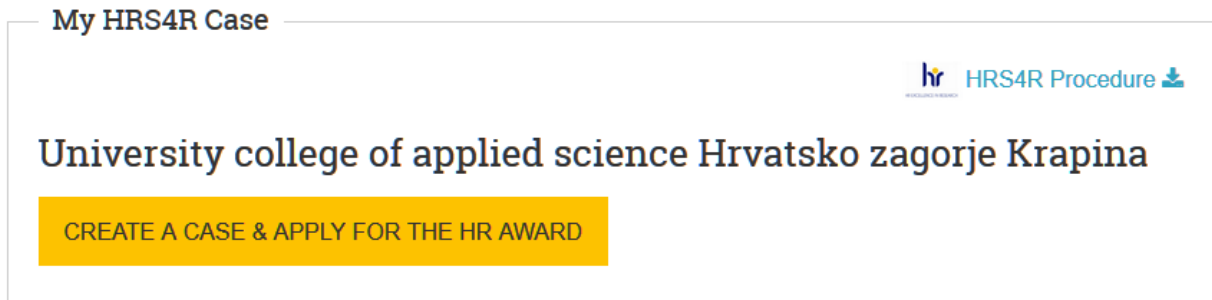


**Best case scenario: from commitment to award granting: 18 months maximum**

Starting the process: Application for the "HR Excellence in Research Award":

#### 4.1 Creation of an application for the institution in the HRS4R E-TOOL

The HRS4R designated admin for the organisation account on EURAXESS will access the MY EURAXESS dashboard, the HRS4R section, and by clicking on the yellow button "Create a case & apply for the HR Award" will be able to fill in the required tasks of this stage, as follows:



#### 4.2 Endorsement of the C&C and submission of the Commitment Letter

When the institution is ready to get involved in the process, the first step is to send a commitment letter to the EC, issued from the Rector/President or other senior level position such as the Vice-President for Research, or other person representing the legal body authorized to make a commitment on behalf of the institution.

The letter should clearly express that the institution is committed to start the procedure and will undergo all subsequent cycles of the implementation phases.

The institution can use its own text and format to draft the commitment letter, however, the elements below should be considered as mandatory requirements:

- The letter should be written in English.
- The letter should be signed by the current highest management representative within the organisation.
- The letter should be recently dated (not older than 12 months before submission).
- The letter should clearly state both the endorsement of the 40 principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, as well as the commitment to start the procedure and to undergo all subsequent cycles of the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R).

If the letter is not compliant with either one or multiple requirements as detailed above, it will be declined and the institution will have to resubmit an updated version. You can get inspiration from examples of endorsement letters published in the Annex.

The pdf version of the endorsement letter will have to be uploaded in the HRS4R E-TOOL.

Part of the initial application procedure is to also provide the contact details of the persons who will represent the interface with the EC in terms of the HRS4R process.



## Endorsement & Commitment Letter

- **Endorsement Letter:** The endorsement letter is an official document signed off by the 1st level of management in your organisation, including the signature of the person responsible and the stamp of the organisation.
  - The letter should be written in English
  - The letter should be signed by the current highest management representative within the organisation.
  - The letter should be recently dated (not older than 12 months before submission).
  - The letter should clearly state both the endorsement of the 40 principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, as well as the commitment to start the procedure and to undergo all subsequent cycles of the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R).
- **Contact Person for the HRS4R:** HR Director or any employee within the organisation, responsible for the organisation's application and implementation process of the HRS4R on EURAXESS. This person will be the HRS4R Organisation Administrator on EURAXESS.
- **Management mandated to engage the organisation:** Rector/President/General Manager, or any other 1st level management lines within your institution, who signs off the official letter for the endorsement of the 40 principles of the Charter & Code and commits on behalf of the institution to implement the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) in the next 12 months

Endorsement Letter \*

No file selected.

[More information](#)

Contact Person for the HRS4R

Name \*

Position \*

Email \*

Office Telephone \*

Management mandated to engage the organisation

Name \*

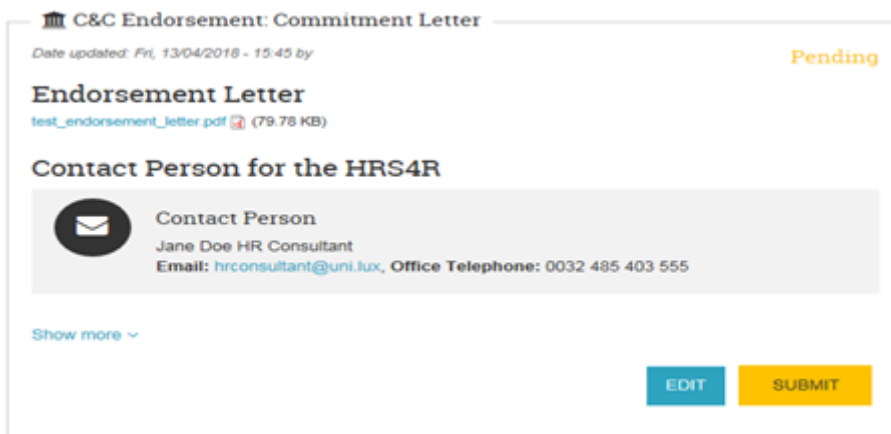
Position \*

Email \*

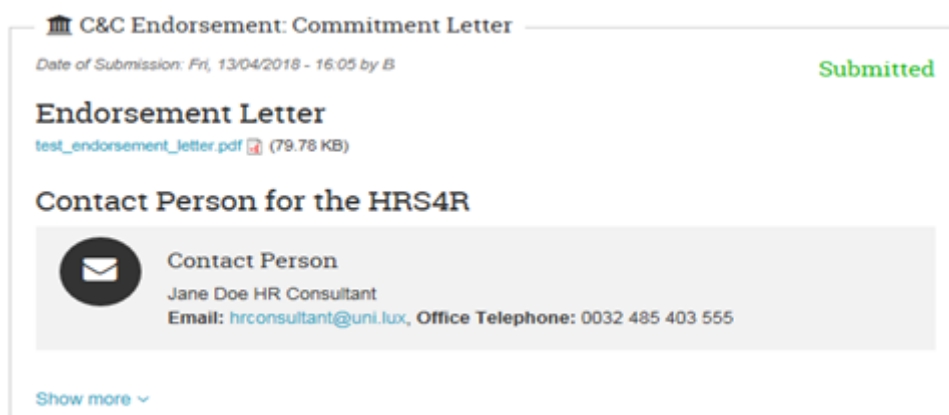
Office Telephone \*

Clicking the "Save" button saves the provided information and still allows the information to be edited before it is submitted as shown below.

The status of the application will be changed into "Pending" as shown below:

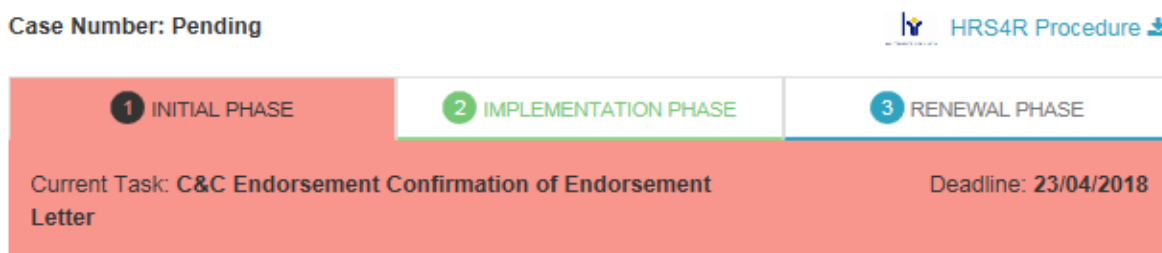


Once the "Submit" button is clicked, the application cannot be edited any longer and the action cannot be undone. The status of the application will consequently change into "Submitted".



At this point, the application reaches the EC, which will check the compliance of the commitment letter based on the previously detailed four main criteria. The institution will be informed if the application is accepted or declined within 10 working days.

The HRS4R dashboard will highlight the phase of the application, as well as the current task and the deadline. The institution will have the EC's official feedback on the application by the deadline stated.



The approval of the endorsement letter by the EC will change the status of the "C&C Endorsement: Confirmation of Endorsement Letter" task from "Pending" to "Accepted". Once this stage is completed, the institution will be able to proceed to the next task of the HRS4R process.

## C&C Endorsement: Confirmation of Endorsement Letter

Date: Tue, 08/05/2018 - 15:42 by Anka RTD

Accepted

[NOTIFICATION OF COMMITMENT](#)

The "Notification of Commitment" link opens the Endorsement of the 'Charter and Code' principles and commitment to the implementation of the HRS4R confirmation by the EC.

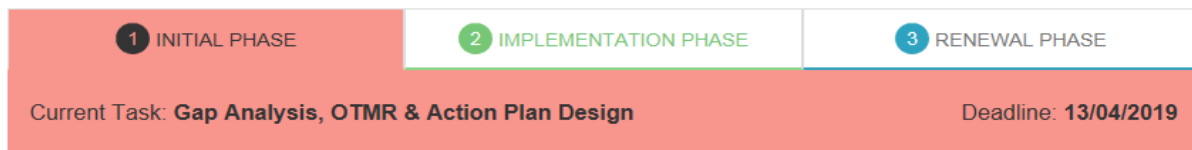
Once the Endorsement Letter is approved, the EC will allocate a case number to the application. An application that has not been confirmed or has been declined will have a "pending" status.

**Important:** The case number allocated to the institution will be an essential code in all future interactions with the EC regarding the HRS4R process.

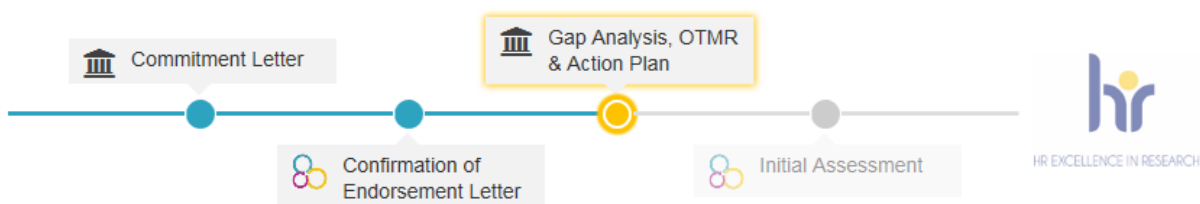
If the application is "Accepted", the HRS4R dashboard of the institution will highlight the case number allocated and the deadline of the next task: Gap Analysis, OTM-R, Action Plan Design, calculated at 12 months from the date the endorsement letter was confirmed, as shown below:

Case Number: 2018LU165813

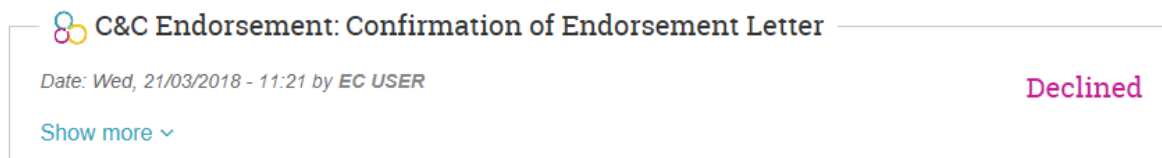
 HRS4R Procedure 



The institution can also assess its progress in terms of the completion of the tasks included in the Initial Phase, as marked in the top horizontal menu, as below:



If the endorsement letter is "Declined", a notification will appear in the institution's HRS4R dashboard.



C&C Endorsement: Confirmation of Endorsement Letter

Date: Wed, 21/03/2018 - 11:21 by EC USER

Show more ▾

Declined

The "Show more" feature will expand the reasons for refusal.



C&C Endorsement: Confirmation of Endorsement Letter

Date: Wed, 21/03/2018 - 11:21 by EC USER

Declined

**Decline reason**

- The letter should be in English.
- The letter should be signed by the current highest management representative within the organisation.
- The letter should be recently dated (not older than 12 months before submission).
- The letter should clearly state both the endorsement of the 40 principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, as well as the commitment to implement the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) in the next 12 months.

In this case the institution will have to resubmit the application based on the recommendations provided by the EC. The top horizontal menu will reflect the position of the institution at the first task of the flow – Commitment Letter. The institution will have to resubmit the application within one month.

### 4.3 The Gap Analysis

#### **What it is:**

The gap analysis seeks to answer the questions "where are we?" (current state) and "where do we want to be?" (target state), as an institution, with regard to the 40 principles of the Charter and Code.

#### **Why it is important for the application to the "HR Excellence in Research Award":**

The gap analysis will provide a clear picture of the development needs, while identifying any deficiencies or shortcomings to be overcome. Once the gaps are identified, it becomes easier to prioritize and quantify them, and establish the work effort that will be required to address them. There should be a clear connection between the gap analysis and the subsequent measures outlined in the action plan.

#### **How to handle it:**

The Gap Analysis, together with the OTM-R checklist and the Action Plan are the three mandatory documents required to be completed by institutions, within the 12 months' period after the confirmation of their endorsement letter. The three documents as standard forms/templates to be completed in the HRS4R E-tool make up together the application for the "HR Excellence in Research

Award". The submission of these documents through the HRS4R E-tool is possible only as a package.

The institution will get indications in the HRS4R dashboard about the expected deadline by which the submission should take place.

The institution can request an extension, before the deadline is due. Provided that sound justifications are offered, the EC will approve the extension and a standard period of one month will be added to the previously established deadline.

**Gap Analysis, OTMR & Action Plan: Design**

Date: Fri, 13/04/2018 - 16:28

[Request Extension](#)

**Pending**

**Deadline: 13/04/2019**

### Important:

- ✓ The template of the Gap Analysis can be found in the Annex. We recommend working on it offline together with the wide range of internal and external stakeholders whom the institution intends to consult and involve in the process, based on the specific working mechanism each institution will be willing to set. The Gap Analysis should not be the outcome of a unilateral approach, but of a participative, collaborative cumulated feedback, comprising the overall views and needs of the stakeholders involved in working groups and committees. Once the preparatory phase of the template is considered completed, the HRS4R Organisation Admin can proceed with the integration of data in the HRS4R E-tool.

### Key elements to consider:

The Gap Analysis consists of two parts:

- 1. Process** - how the institution organised itself to consult and involve the required internal and external stakeholder groups for the design of the gap analysis. They will typically include all management departments directly or indirectly responsible for researchers' HR-issues (i.e. the Vice-Rector for Research, the Head of Personnel, and other administrative staff members).

In addition, the institution must consult and involve a representative community of researchers ranging from R1 to R4, as well as appoint a Committee overseeing the process and a Working Group responsible for implementing the process.

For a detailed description of R1-R4 researcher levels, please see:

<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/europe/career-development/training-researchers/research-profiles-descriptors>

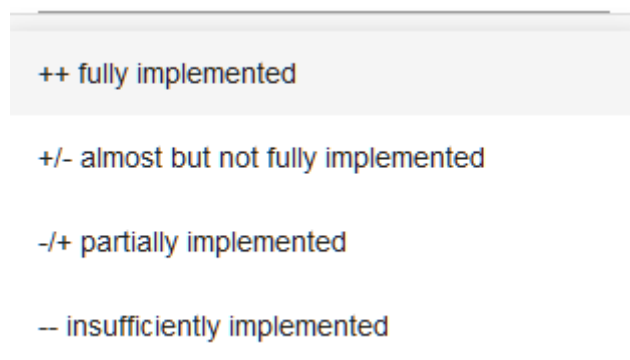
The institution can choose its own channels and tools to consult and involve stakeholders (i.e. surveys, workshops, etc.), but they should detail these in their methodology in the "Process" section of the Gap Analysis.

- 2. Overview** – how the institution rates its performance with regard to the 40 principles of the C&C, what corresponding gaps are identified, how they will be addressed and if any barriers are currently impeding implementation.

The 40 principles are listed under the four thematic headings of the C&C:

- Ethical and professional aspects
- Recruitment and selection
- Working conditions and social security
- Training and development

The potential options to rate the performance or the states of achievement in terms of the implementation of the 40 principles of the C&C are the following:



If the institution is already fulfilling some of the principles, the rating will be "fully implemented". Nevertheless, the institution is required to provide evidence of the specific case (i.e. examples of programmes, policy in practice, etc.).

If the rating is "almost but not fully implemented", "partially implemented" or "insufficiently implemented", they should be accompanied by the description of the gap, as well as by details about the measures the institution will undertake in order to fill the gap and address it.

Comments should be also added on whether aspects of the national or local legislative environment support or constrain the implementation of a principle.

After filling in the Gap Analysis template in the HRS4R E-tool, it is essential to click the "Save" button, in order to be able to review and update data, at later stages, if needed. The "Submit" button will be enabled only after the OTM-R checklist and the Action Plan sections are completed.

#### 4.4 The OTM-R checklist

##### **What it is:**

It is a specific self-assessment checklist provided to report on the status of achievement in terms of the implementation of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) policies and practices, which aims at making research careers more attractive, while facilitating mobility and equal opportunities for all candidates.

##### **Why it is important for the application to the "HR Excellence in Research Award":**

The OTM-R checklist builds on the C&C principles related to the Recruitment of Researchers. Coupled with the Gap Analysis, it will further provide to institutions a clearer picture of their development needs, which will be prioritized and addressed with concrete actions, part of the action plan to be implemented in the upcoming two years.

##### **How to handle it:**

The OTM-R template consists of a list of questions covering the various steps of the recruitment process, from job advertising through to the appointment phase.

Each specific question mentioned in the OTM-R checklist should be considered in the self-reflection exercise of the institution. The state of achievement in terms of each issue will be rated, as below, in the column dedicated to "Answer". For each situation, there should be details included on the indicators to measure performance, either those used or to be further used, at later stages, if applicable.

|   | Open | Transparent | Meritbased | Answer:               | Suggested indicators (or form of measurement) |
|---|------|-------------|------------|-----------------------|---|
| <b>OTM-R system</b>   |      |             |            |                       |   |
| Have we published a version of our OTM-R policy online (in the national language and in English)?         | x    | x           | x          | ++ Yes completely     | web link                                      |
| Do we have an internal guide setting out clear OTM-R procedures and practices for all types of positions? | x    | x           | x          | +/- Yes substantially |   |
| Is everyone involved in the process sufficiently trained in the area of OTM-R?                            | x    | x           | x          | -/+ Yes partially     |   |
| Do we make (sufficient) use of e-recruitment tools?   | x    | x           |            | -- No                 |   |

### Key elements to consider:

- ✓ The "Open", "Transparent" and "Merit-based" checkboxes are indicative of the type of policies and practices the questions refer to, as detailed in the C&C. They are pre-set in the HRS4R E-tool and cannot be changed. No action is needed from institutions in this respect.
- ✓ The difference between "+/- Yes substantially" and "-/+ Yes partially" ratings is that in the first case the volume of the remaining work to be done until completion is little as compared to the effort that has been put so far in that direction, whereas for "-/+ Yes partially", the remaining work is either the same in volume or more than what has been achieved.
- ✓ For the "Suggested indicators" column, whenever the user hovers the mouse in the row dedicated to each question, a small text box will pop up, indicating options of potential indicators to use. However, each institution should identify own measurements of the effectiveness of its OTM-R policy which should be further reviewed and adapted.

### Important:

- ✓ The OTM-R checklist is available as a template in the Annex. As in the case of the Gap Analysis, it is highly recommended to be handled first offline, in order to collect the information needed based on a collaborative approach, with the consultation and involvement of the stakeholder working groups. Once the final version is internally validated, the information can be uploaded in the HRS4R E-tool.
- ✓ If the institution has a recruitment strategy which implements the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment, it is mandatory to publish it on the

institution's website in a visible place. The web link will be provided as part of the action plan template.

- ✓ A step-by-step guide to better OTM-R practices, as well as examples of good practice can be found in the Annex.

After filling in the OTM-R template in the HRS4R E-tool, it is essential to click the "Save" button, in order to be able to review and update data, at later stages, if needed. The "Submit" button will be enabled only after the Gap Analysis and the Action Plan sections will be completed.

## 4.5 The Action Plan

### **What it is:**

The action plan is a sequence of activities that must be carried out in order to help the institution pass from the current state to the target state, with regard to the implementation of the 40 principles of the C&C. They will address the improvement needs identified in the Gap Analysis and the OTM-R checklist.

### **Why it is important for the application to the "HR Excellence in Research Award":**

The action plan establishes the foundation of an HRS4R management by objectives process inside the institution. It stems directly from the Gap Analysis and the OTM-R checklist and it presents the institution's strategic vision in terms of the priority areas and implementation steps to be undertaken in the next two years.

### **How to handle it:**

The action plan template to be used for reporting in the HRS4R E-tool comprises four separate parts:

1. **Organisational information**
2. **Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice**
3. **Actions**
4. **Implementation/Embedding the HRS4R process.**

### **Key elements to consider:**

#### **1. Organisational information:**

- ✓ This section is intended to illustrate the larger context in which the institution performs, its structure, its impact upon the communities it serves, as well as the resources leveraged. There are two categories of data required:

- Staff indicators to be presented as full-time positions (FTEs), and
- Budget and funding, if applicable, to be expressed as amounts in euro.

#### **2. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice**

- ✓ In this section, the institution must provide an overview of its current state and practice under the four thematic headings of the C&C (Ethical and Professional aspects, Recruitment and Selection, Working Conditions and Social Security, Training and Development). Information on current practices related to OTM-R should be also included here.



- ✓ We strongly recommend elaborating on both strengths and weaknesses (although there is only one text block provided for both headings), as they will highlight the institution's rationale for setting actions as priorities in the action plan.

### 3. Actions

- ✓ In order to help connect actions to improvement needs, all principles with their implementation ratings will be retrieved automatically from the Gap Analysis to the action plan.
- ✓ The proposed actions can address either individual or multiple Principles.
- ✓ A list of Gap principles not selected in any action, is provided.
- ✓ Our proposed approach is based on SMART action planning, which incorporates five characteristics of a goal: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-based.

More specifically, the Action Plan should:

- specifically include tasks that overcome existing/emerging gaps, as identified in the Gap Analysis.
- indicate ownership and responsibility of these (i.e. assigned to a specific department, specific person/role within the institution),
- have a clear timeframe for implementation (at least two years up to the first internal review),
- state how the state of achievement will be measured by means of key performance indicators (KPIs).

| No | Proposed ACTIONS | GAP Principle(s) | Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester) | Responsible Unit | Indicator(s) / Target(s) |
|----|------------------|------------------|--|------------------|--------------------------|
| 1  |                  | Select principle |  |                  |                          |

- ✓ The timeline should cover at least two years up to the first internal review. Timing should be indicated by quarters of a year.
- ✓ The actions should reflect a balance between short-term interventions (i.e. such as organising a workshop) and long-term systemic actions that bring about culture change.
- ✓ The institution can customize planning based on its own priorities and creativity. There is the possibility to add as many new fields as needed in order to include the desired volume of actions.

[Add another row +](#)

The Action Plan also includes a dedicated section to OTM-R policy and practices. **The establishment of an Open Recruitment Policy is a key element in the HRS4R strategy.** The applicant institution must also indicate how the organisation will use the Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment Toolkit and how it intends to implement/is implementing the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment.

Although there may be some overlap with a range of the actions already planned as emerged from the Gap Analysis, the institution must provide a short commentary demonstrating this implementation. The institution will have to make the link between the OTM-R checklist and the overall action plan in a free text section.

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

#### 4. Implementation/Embedding the HRS4R process:

- ✓ This section must include information on how the HRS4R will be coordinated and embedded inside the institution through working groups, alignment with HR policies/internal mechanisms, etc.
- ✓ Besides describing actions in a free text field, there is also a mandatory checklist with questions to answer, as below. The answer to each question should be detailed in maximum 500 words.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| How will the implementation committee and/or steering group regularly oversee progress?*  | ▼ |
| How do you intend to involve the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?*  | ▼ |
| 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. * | ▼ |
| How will you ensure that the proposed actions are implemented?*   | ▼ |
| How will you monitor progress (timeline)?*  | ▼ |
| How will you measure progress (indicators) in view of the next assessment?*   | ▼ |

- ✓ Should the same answer be applicable to more than one question, please state clearly if this is the case instead of duplicating replies.

#### Important:

The Action Plan and HRS4R strategy must be published in an easily accessible location of the organisation's website. The URL to the corresponding webpage must be included in the template on the HRS4R E-Tool.

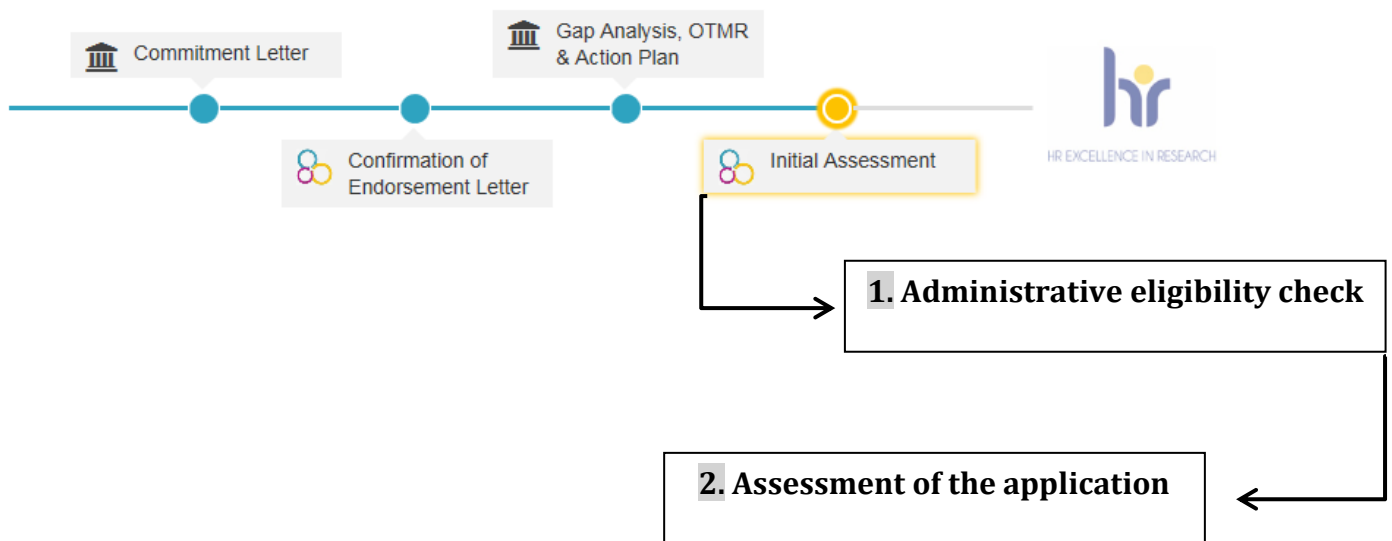
The application for the "HR Excellence in Research Award" can be submitted to the EC only if the three mandatory documents (Gap Analysis, OTM-R checklist and Action Plan) are duly completed and saved in the HRS4R E-tool. Once the "Submit" button is clicked, the institution will no longer be able to update the files and the action cannot be undone.

## 5 Initial Assessment

### 5.1 Description and timeline of the assessment process

After the successful submission of the "HR Excellence in Research" award application, the institution proceeds to the next level of the process, which consists of two separate steps:

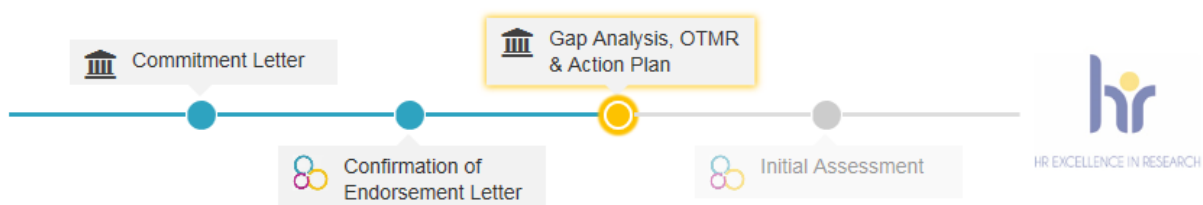
- 1. The administrative eligibility check of the application** – performed by the EC, and
- 2. The assessment of the application** – performed by a group of external experts/individual peer reviewers.



**1. The administrative eligibility check** is intended to validate an application in terms of its compliance with the application procedure (i.e. all formal requirements are met; i.e. templates are completed in the HRS4R E-tool: Endorsement Letter, the Gap Analysis, the OTM-R Checklist, the Action Plan; i.e. templates contain sufficient information for the application to be further assessed, etc.). The check has nothing to do with the quality of the data provided, but with the quality of the application as a whole, as suitable or not for assessment.

The institution will be informed if the application is compliant and has passed the administrative eligibility check within four weeks after submission.

If the application is considered non-compliant, the institution will be required to update it based on the feedback provided by the EC. In this case, the institution's task is moved backwards on the process flow and the templates of the initial application can be further edited.



If required to make changes in the application templates, the institution will have to resubmit the updated version of the application within two months, after it receives the outcome of the administrative eligibility check.

**2. The assessment of the application** is the second step of the Initial Assessment phase and can only be initiated if an application has passed the administrative eligibility check.

#### **How the experts are selected:**

The experts are selected by the EC in a transparent process on the basis of the following criteria:

- Personal competence and experience in the HRS4R field or any similar HR strategy development/implementation;
- Geographical distribution among EU-28;
- Institutional spread (i.e. research institutions, universities, research funders etc.)

Prior to the involvement of the experts in the assessment, they receive appropriate training on all issues and requirements. Also, prior to any assessment, the experts sign a declaration of confidentiality covering issues such as performance, obligation of impartiality and of confidentiality. These confidentiality obligations are binding on the expert unless the confidential information becomes public through disclosure of the confidential information by the institution or the Commission services.

#### **How the assessment process is organised:**

Each application will be assessed by three experts/individual peer reviewers who are from a different country than the applicant institution.

The experts use standard templates and criteria for all applications in order to ensure fair treatment for all institutions.

The experts will specifically be interested to find:

- ✓ Clear information on the contextual overview in which the HR Strategy is designed (assets and barriers).
- ✓ Coherence between the Gap Analysis and the Action Plan.
- ✓ Concrete actions for the implementation of the principles of the C&C, with clear indicators and timelines.
- ✓ Examples of how the institution consulted and involved the required internal and external stakeholder groups in their HRS4R process.
- ✓ The HRS4R strategy published on the institution's website in English, in a visible place.

One of the three individual peer reviewers will be assigned the role of lead-assessor and will prepare the commonly agreed consensus report integrating the input provided in the individual assessments.

The consensus report is the official feedback that the institution will receive in terms of their application to the "HR Excellence in Research Award". It is also based on a standard template, but it includes besides the result of the general assessment (whether the institution should receive the award), customised recommendations in terms of their ambition and planning of the HRS4R.

The institution will have access to the consensus report **within three months** after the confirmation of the administrative eligibility check.

### Important:

The template used by the individual assessors and the one used by the lead-assessor can be found in the Annex. It is strongly recommended to look into them carefully before submitting the application for the "HR Excellence in Research Award", in order to make sure every specific requirement has been considered.

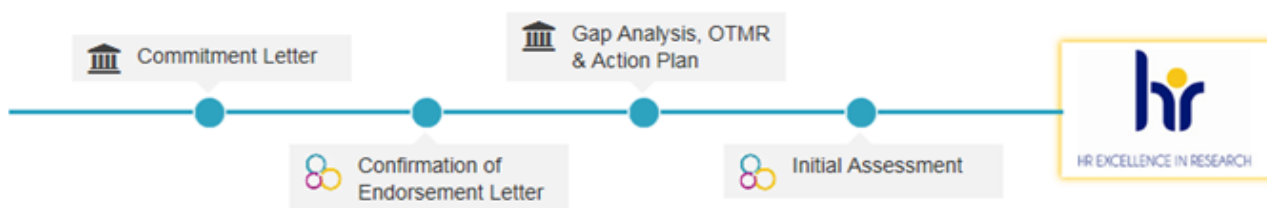
## 5.2 General assessment

The general assessment, provided as part of the consensus report, simply indicates whether the institution is granted the 'HR award' according to the options below:

- **Accepted**

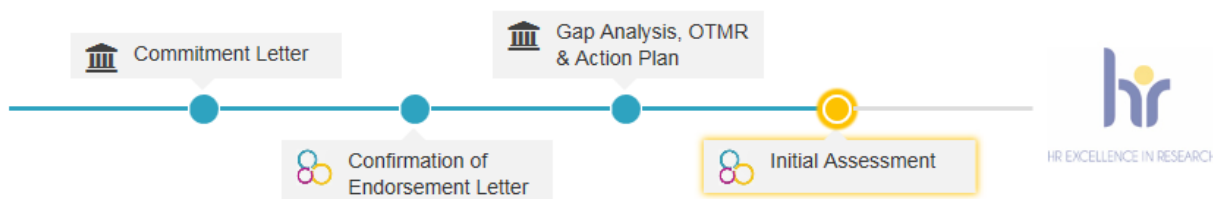
The application meets the criteria and the HR award is granted by the EC.

The experts may comment on the submission asking for future focus on a particular aspect/criterion, if appropriate. For example, they may say that they would like to see something addressed in the longer term, but acknowledge that the submission meets the criteria for the Award.



- **Accepted pending minor modifications**

The institution broadly meets the criteria but the external assessors have some concerns/questions about specific areas, in which case the institution is moved backwards on the HRS4R process flow in order to reflect on the feedback and act upon it.



The institution should consider for immediate action the recommendations mentioned as mandatory in order to obtain the award. The other recommendations can be addressed during the second phase of the HRS4R process: the implementation phase.

The institution is required to update the documentation in the HRS4R E-tool and resubmit the application for review **within two months**.

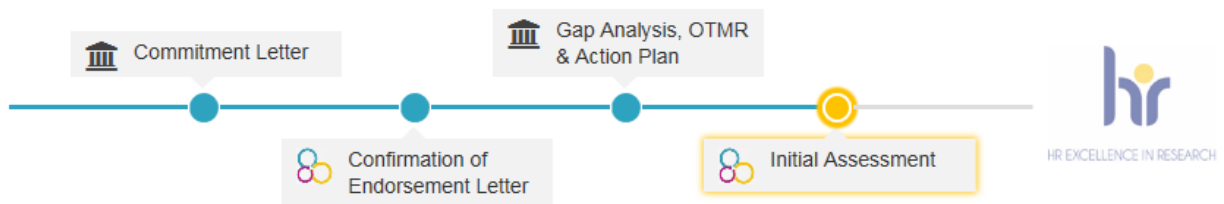
The assessors will review only how the institution has followed up on their feedback, which is why it is strongly recommended to act upon the specific recommendations and clearly detail the actions in the revised application.

**Important:** Special attention is needed when resubmitting the revised application as only one resubmission is allowed at this stage.

Should the institution face difficulties in complying with the deadline, there is always the possibility to ask for a deadline extension provided that the deadline is not overdue. The extension is offered only once and it is standard for all institutions (one month from the previously set deadline).

- **Declined (major revisions)**

The institution does not meet the criteria to get the HR award and is required to make the appropriate changes taking into account the recommendations of the assessors. In this case the institution is moved backwards on the HRS4R process flow in order to implement what is requested in the feedback.



The institution is required to update the documentation in the HRS4R E-tool and resubmit the revised application for review **within 12 months**.

The assessors will review only how the institution has followed up on their feedback, which is why it is strongly recommended to act upon the specific recommendations and clearly detail the actions in the revised application.

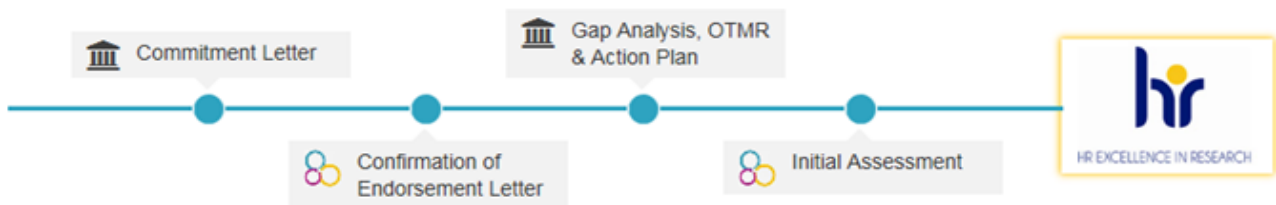
**Important:** Special attention is needed when resubmitting the revised application as only two resubmissions are allowed at this stage.

Should the institution face difficulties in complying with the deadline, there is always the possibility to ask for a deadline extension, provided that the deadline is not overdue. The extension is offered only once and it is standard for all institutions (one month from the previously set deadline).

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

The outcome of the assessment is officially announced via email (the email address provided as contact when completing the first step of the application process).

The position of the institution on the HRS4R process flow will be reflected accordingly, as below.



From this moment on, the institution can use the "HR Excellence in Research" emblem associated to its name on the institution's website, on social media, on marketing materials and collaterals, etc. in order to promote its stimulating and favourable work environment for researchers. The HR award icon will be provided in different formats together with graphic guidelines.

As a EURAXESS member institution, the award emblem will be activated on the EURAXESS portal as well, and will increase your employer's visibility. Every time your institution publishes a vacancy on EURAXESS, the "HR Excellence in Research" icon will appear next to your institution's name.

The institution will also be listed on the EURAXESS portal under the header of "HR Acknowledged Institutions" (<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/hrs4r>) together with a link to your HR Strategy published on the institution's website.

## 7 What's next? – Overview of the IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

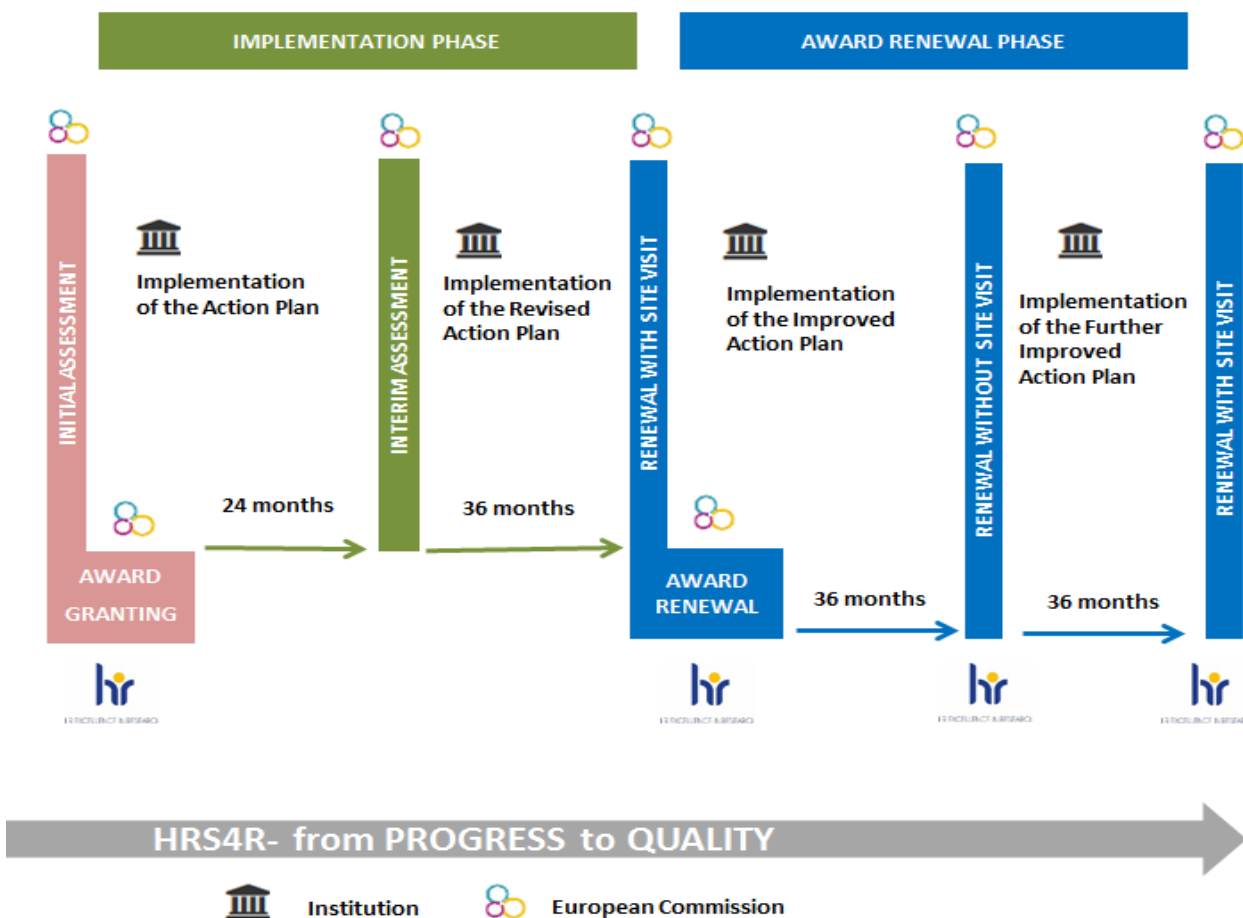
The granting of the "HR Excellence in Research Award" represents the end of the Initial Phase and the start of the Implementation Phase.



The HR Award acknowledged institutions have **24 months** to implement the actions outlined in the Action Plan and report on their progress with a view to the Interim Assessment.

At this stage, the experts will assess **progress and quality** of the actions and accompanying measures (such as embedding the HRS4R process). The institution is not in jeopardy of losing the "HR Award" but receives important recommendations on how to continue the implementation of the revised action plan for the **next 36 months**. At this point, the institution's internal review will be followed by the Assessment for the Award Renewal, including a Site Visit performed by experts.

As the graph below illustrates, the HRS4R process will continue in a cyclical way, with an assessment for award renewal every 36 months (alternating the organisation of site visits).





## 8 ANNEX

### 8.1 Templates (Gap-Analysis, OTM-R, Action Plan)

The following templates can be found in the Policy Library under “Research Careers > Strengthened HRS4R process”: <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/useful-information/policy-library#document-collapsible-research-careers-strengthened-hrs4r-process> :

- HRS4R Process Description
- HRS4R Gap Analysis
- HRS4R OTM-R
- HRS4R Action Plan

### 8.2 Examples of best practices

#### 8.2.1 Endorsement letters

Examples of Endorsement Letters can be found in the Policy Library under “Research Careers > Strengthened HRS4R process” at: <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/useful-information/policy-library#document-collapsible-research-careers-strengthened-hrs4r-process> in document: “HRS4R Examples of Endorsement Letters best practices”.

#### 8.2.2 A Step-by-Step Guide to better OTM-R practices

This guide sets out, in chronological order, the various steps of the recruitment process, from the job advertising/application phase through to the appointment phase. It aims to build on the principles of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, providing more detailed information, practical solutions and includes examples of good practice.

Three phases have been identified:

- **Advertising and application phase**
- **Evaluation and selection phase**
- **Appointment phase**

#### **Advertising and application phase:**

##### **a) Advertising the post:**

In line with the principles "Recruitment" and "Transparency" of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, it is recommended to keep the job advertisement and description of requirements as concise as possible and include links to more detailed information online. Applicants should be able to find information on:

- organisation and recruiting unit
- job title, specifications and starting date
- researcher career profiles (R1-R4) with the respective 'required' and 'desirable' competencies
- selection criteria (and possibly their respective 'weight'), including knowledge and professional experience (distinguishing the 'required' and 'desirable')
- number of available positions
- working conditions, workplace, entitlements (salary, other benefits, etc.), type of contract

- professional development opportunities
- career development prospects

It should also include:

- the application procedure and deadline, which should, as a general rule, be at least two months from the publication date and take account of holiday periods
- a reference to the institution's OTM-R policy
- a reference to the institution's equal opportunities policy (e.g., positive discrimination, dual careers, etc.)
- contact details

All vacancies should be published on EURAXESS. This implies that the advert should be published at least in the national language and in English.

Although possible, any exception to the above should be duly justified in the recruitment procedure.

#### **b) Keeping the administrative burden to a minimum:**

The request for supporting documents should be strictly limited to those which are really needed in order to make a fair, transparent and merit-based selection of the applicants. Moreover, in cases where certain documents are legally required, applicants should be allowed to make a declaration in which they engage to provide the proof after the selection process is concluded. For example, applicants should not have to provide original or translated certificates related to qualifications with their initial application.

It is strongly recommended to allow the transmission of supporting documents by electronic means and possibly to develop an e-recruitment tool.

#### **c) Acknowledging receipt and providing additional information:**

All applicants should receive an (automated) e-mail acknowledging that their application has been received and providing them with further information on the recruitment process, indicating the next steps and including an indicative timetable (shortlisting or not, interview period, appointment date). Care should be taken to allow sufficient time before the interview for external candidates to make the necessary travel arrangements and prepare properly for the interview. If there are subsequently significant changes or delays to this process, all applicants should be duly and timely informed by (a standard) e-mail.

### **Evaluation and selection phase:**

#### **a) Setting up selection committees:**

In line with the principle "Selection" of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, selection committees should be established for all profiles (R1-R4), though the size and composition of the committees may differ according to the profile and type of contract. The process to nominate and appoint the selection committee should be transparent and made public.

The selection committees should be independent, members should not have any conflict of interest and the decisions must be objective and evidence-based rather than based on personal preference. The committee should make best use of the expertise of external members. The composition of the committee should be appropriately diverse. In order to achieve this, the following elements should be considered:

- a minimum of 3 members;
- gender balance, e.g., not less than one third of one gender in the committee;

- inclusion of external expert(s) in all committees (external meaning outside the institution);
- inclusion of (or contribution from) international experts, who should be proficient in the language(s) in which the process will be conducted;
- inclusion of experts from different sectors (public, private, academic, non-academic), where appropriate and feasible;
- -the committee as a whole should have all the relevant experience, qualifications and competencies to assess the candidate.

Any derogation for certain positions, types of contract or indeed for specific disciplines should be clearly set out.

### **b) Screening and interviewing:**

All applications should be screened. Depending largely on the number of applicants as well as the internal human resources available, the process may involve one or more steps, e.g., pre-screening to check eligibility, shortlisting of candidates for interviews, remote interviews by telephone or skype, face-to-face interviews. While remote interviews may often be appropriate, in particular at the first interview stage, they should not altogether replace face-to-face interviews in cases where these are being conducted for internal candidates. All candidates should be treated equally and in the same way.

It is recommended that the same selection committee is involved in all steps, although it is recognised that this may not always be feasible and that, for example, one committee may do the initial screening and another may conduct the interviews. Accordingly, it is strongly recommended that the process itself is transparent and made known to the applicants, including the various steps.

In case of face-to-face interviews, the institution should cover the (international) travel and accommodation expenses of the interviewees.

### **c) Assessing merit and future potential:**

The criteria for selecting researchers should focus on both the candidates' past performance and their future potential. The emphasis is likely to change according to the profile of the post, e.g., when recruiting an R1 researcher, future potential is likely to outweigh past performance.

In line with the principles "Judging merit", "Variations in the order of CVs", "Recognition of mobility" and "Seniority" of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, the evaluation criteria should be consistent with the requirements of the position as regards research, supervision or, for example, teaching competencies.

Merit should be judged qualitatively as well as quantitatively, focusing on results within a diversified career path, taking into account career breaks, lifelong professional development and the added value of non-research experience.

A wide range of evaluation criteria should be used and balanced, according to the position being advertised. Depending on the specific profile of the post, this may include (in alphabetical and not hierarchical order):

- acquisition of funding;
- generation of societal impact;
- international portfolio (including mobility);
- knowledge transfer and exchange;

- management of research and innovation;
- organizational skills/experience;
- outreach/public awareness activities;
- research performance;
- supervision and mentoring;
- teaching;
- teamwork

**It is strongly recommended to make use of the European Framework for Research Careers, which identifies both necessary and desirable competences for each of the four broad profiles for researchers (R1 to R4).**

### **Appointment phase:**

#### **a) Feedback:**

In line with the principle "Transparency" of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, all applicants should receive written or electronic notice at the end of the selection process, indicatively within one month and without any unnecessary delays. It is strongly recommended to inform all applicants who were admitted to the interview about the strengths and weaknesses of their application. Other applicants, who did not make it to the final stages, should receive a standard mail informing them of the outcome. All applicants must be entitled to further feedback upon request.

#### **b) Complaints mechanism:**

The institution should establish a procedure to deal with complaints made by applicants who believe that they have been treated negligently, unfairly or incorrectly. This procedure should be transparent and made public. It should include an indication of the timeframe within which a complainant will receive a response, which should in principle be no longer than one month.

### 8.3 Abbreviations

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>The Charter and Code (C&amp;C)</b> | The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers – 2 documents adopted by the European Commission in 2005 containing 40 principles that applicant institutions to the "HR Excellence in Research Award" must endorse and commit to implement: <a href="https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter">https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter</a> |
| <b>EURAXESS Organization Admin</b>    | Staff representative who registered a EURAXESS organization account in order to publish offers on behalf of the institution on EURAXESS.   |
| <b>EC</b>                             | European Commission  |
| <b>FTEs</b>                           | Full-time employees  |
| <b>HRS4R</b>                          | Human Resources Strategy for Researchers<br><a href="https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/hrs4r">https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/hrs4r</a>  |
| <b>HR Award</b>                       | The European Commission's "HR Excellence in Research Award" giving public recognition to research institutions that have made progress in aligning their human resource policies with the principles set out in the "Charter & Code"   |
| <b>HRS4R E-tool</b>                   | The official platform of the European Commission to apply for the "HR Excellence in Research Award" and manage the institution's HRS4R process. It can be accessed from the EURAXESS website by users with the appropriate permissions: <a href="https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/my/hrs4r">https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/my/hrs4r</a>  |
| <b>HRS4R Organisation Admin</b>       | Staff representative assigned by the management of the applicant institution to fill in the application for the HR Award and manage the institution's HRS4R process in the HRS4R E-tool.   |
| <b>OTM-R</b>                          | Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment of Researchers<br><a href="https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/useful-information/policy-library#document-collapsible-research-careers-strengthened-hrs4r-process">https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/useful-information/policy-library#document-collapsible-research-careers-strengthened-hrs4r-process</a>  |
| <b>R1-R4</b>                          | The European Framework for Research Careers profiles:<br><a href="https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/europe/career-development/training-researchers/research-profiles-descriptors">https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/europe/career-development/training-researchers/research-profiles-descriptors</a>   |