

Internal Review for Interim Assessment Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

Case number: 2018PT317265

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Organizational Information

STAFF & STUDENTS	FTE
Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research	839
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)	79
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organization is host organization)	519
Of whom are women	562
Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor.	249
Of whom are stage R2 = in most organizations corresponding with postdoctoral level	156
Of whom are stage R1 = in most organizations corresponding with doctoral level	305
Total number of students (if relevant)	492
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff)	264

RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)	Euros
Total annual organizational budget	6 761 237,00
Annual organizational direct government funding (designated for research)	00,00
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organizations – including EU funding)	3 234 780,00
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	148 490,00

Organizational profile

INEB – Instituto Nacional Engenharia Biomédica, a non-profit private association, is part of the research unit i3S, headed by the University of Porto (UP). i3S results from the long-term collaboration between IBMC, INEB and Ipatimup, and focuses on three integrative research programs: Cancer; Infection, Immunity and Regeneration; Neurobiology and Neurologic Disorders. The transdisciplinary character of i3S is achieved by promoting projects addressing questions that require participation of basic and applied sciences. It gathers over 1400 workers and has a strong social implantation, evident in the training of young scientists, clinical services, and public engagement with science. With this, i3S became the major research institute in Portugal in health sciences, gaining critical mass and multidisciplinary research that facilitates the development of integrated studies and solutions in the fields of Biomedicine and Health.

i3S is an institute that merges three independent institutions - IBMC, INEB, and Ipatimup - working together towards a single entity. Therefore, the four HR departments follow convergent strategies with shared goals and common work, equally involved in the implementation of the action plan. The objectives and the actions planned, whose implementation this group is coordinating, are exactly the same and so are the working groups for each institution under the i3S affiliation. Considering the ongoing merging process, we have chosen to consider, at the table Staff & Students, the total numbers of the four institutes.

1. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice

Ethical and professional aspects

Strengths

Within our institution, the pursuit of excellence is a paramount objective. In accordance with the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, published and revised by the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities (ALLEA), the essence of sound scientific practice rests upon the liberty to formulate research inquiries, construct theories, amass empirical evidence, and employ suitable methodologies. Consequently, at i3S, our community of researchers operates with autonomy, shielded from external influences such as commissioning interests, ideological pressures, economic considerations, or political interests.

Our strengths emanate from the following pillars operating at i3S:

1. Committee for Ethical and Responsible Conduct of Research (CECRI-i3S):
This expert body provides discerning insights into the adherence to ethical mandates and the cultivation of responsible research. Its discernment is invoked when research projects or protocols involving the gathering and utilization of human materials or data are presented for approval.
2. Unit for Responsible Conduct in Research:
This unit is entrusted with the stewardship of ethics and integrity matters. It not only fosters training in these domains but also drafts policy documents in responsible research, supports researchers identifying the ethical and integrity issues in their projects and acts as the initial point of contact for reporting misconduct. Its close collaboration with CECRI-i3S further bolsters its efficacy in nurturing an ethical climate at i3S.
3. Postgraduate Student Ombudsperson:
This role provides a platform for addressing concerns from our postgraduate students, ensuring fairness and equitable treatment.
4. Comprehensive Ethical Guidelines:
Our institution has articulated clear directives for responsible research, encompassing diverse dimensions. These include guidelines on affiliations in publications, i3S authorship standards, procedures to address allegations of research misconduct; conflicts of interest policy; data management and data sharing guidelines; data protection safeguards; and comprehensive guidance on animal experiments. Furthermore, we adhere to the Ethical Code for Academic Conduct of the University of Porto and have implemented measures, such as the i3S Code of Practice to Counteract Workplace Harassment, i3S Code of Conduct, the Whistleblower Channel and the CECRI Regulation.
5. Ongoing Responsible Research Training:

We continuously impart training sessions on responsible research practices, ensuring our researchers are equipped with relevant and updated ethical insights.

6. Supervision and Managerial Guidelines: i3S created a clear and comprehensive guideline for supervisory and managerial duties, strengthening our support structures for researchers.

Weaknesses

Acknowledging our commitment to improvement, we identify the following areas targeted by our action plan that need to improve:

1. Public Engagement Enhancement: While our strengths in research are pronounced, there exists a need to intensify our efforts in engaging with the public and making our work accessible and relevant to wider audiences.
2. Evaluation and Appraisal System for all researchers: i3S developed an appraisal system for researchers however, it has not been made mandatory by the Board of Directors, which has hindered its adoption by researchers. Widespread adoption of this system will ensure a transparent evaluation of the researchers.
3. Ethical Code: While i3S currently maintains a Code of Conduct for researchers and staff, continuous refinement is essential to ensure the highest standards of ethics and integrity.

Remarks

During the implementation phase, we have tried to convert our identified weaknesses into strengths through strategic actions.

Guidelines on supervision have been created and published, under action 13, for the supervisor-researcher relationship. These specific guidelines were included in: 1) i3S Guidelines for Postdoctoral Appointees and their Research Advisors, 2) i3S Guidelines for Graduate Students and their Supervisors, and 3) i3S Guidelines for Research Group Leaders.

Regarding the improvement of public engagement, as part of action 20, we facilitated information dissemination through stakeholders, demonstrated by some examples:

- under the Bioengineering Hub, we invited the coordinator of the Portuguese Brain Bank and a representative of the Parkinson Young Patients Association to join a panel of i3S neuroscientists to discuss the main challenges while investigating and managing neurodegenerative disorders;
- through the NCBio project, it was organized the “Neural Cell Biology Stakeholder Hub - Kick-off Meeting (ERA CHAIR NCBio)”, a forum where members of the NCBio research group presented and discussed their research strategies and achievements with representatives of patient organizations, hospitals, pharma industry and policy-makers;
- through the MOBILiSE project, it was organized the “MOBILiSE Launch Event” in which the transfer of knowledge and technology into the clinic and industry was discussed with different stakeholders;
- the Centre for Predictive and Preventive Genetics (CGPP) and the PhasAGE project organized an exhibition called “A Rare Look”, that aimed to combine fundamental science and art, through the everyday experiences of people with neurodegenerative and neuromuscular diseases. This exhibition was opened almost a month to the public in the main

atrium of i3S, with the objective of increasing health literacy about these rare diseases and raise awareness of the psychosocial realities of those affected and their families;

- the cycle of 6 seminars named “Tratar o cancro por tu” provided information about the latest cancer-fighting therapies, simplifying concepts, raising awareness about early diagnosis, and placing patients at the heart of the discussion. The meeting occurred in 6 different cities in Portugal, with each of the six sessions resulting in a podcast produced by a major national radio station, Antena1, which is also available on the “RTP PLAY” app as well as various streaming platforms.

- the “Health Literacy Hub” was created, i3S will have a central role in the work of training, research and collaboration with Patients’ Associations.

About enhanced evaluation and appraisal system, it was planned under the action 12 to implement a universal appraisal evaluation system regarding all R2 and R3 researchers without permanent appointments, the Board of Directors approved the appraisal system rules in January 2021. A committee of R4 researchers developed the rules, which were then reviewed by the IBMC’s director and IBMC's head of HR. The primary goal was to increase the number of researchers who were assessed. However, because it has not been made mandatory by the Board of Directors, it has not been widely used by researchers.

Recruitment and selection

The recruitment and selection process at i3S is marked by several strengths that underline our commitment to excellence. Notably, all our vacancies are advertised on the institute's official website and on the Euraxess portal. Our advertisements provide comprehensive information about the vacancies and encompass pertinent legislative details, thereby offering clarity and guidance to prospective applicants. There are clear rules for nomination of selection committees, and when possible, they are naturally gender balanced.

We highlight the following as our strengths:

1. OTM Recruitment Principles: Our adherence to Open, Transparent, and Merit-based (OTM) recruitment principles ensures fairness and equal opportunities throughout the process, while also enabling accountability.
2. No limits on the disclosure: Facilitating transparency and informed decision-making for potential candidates.
3. Expertise- Selection Committees: The selection committees benefit from a wide array of expertise, ensuring a robust evaluation of candidates' suitability.
4. Good Practice Advertisements: Our position advertisements are designed as exemplars of good practice, offering detailed insights into the positions and associated matters. We have shorter versions that are particularly effective in attracting candidates through social media.
5. User-Friendly Application Platform: We employ an e-tool application platform that is user-friendly, streamlining the application process for candidates.
6. Minimized Administrative Burden: We take care to keep the administrative demands on candidates applying for positions as low as possible.
7. Data protection: The sensitive personal data, such as personal information supplied upon seminar registration or upon a job application, are securely stored on this

centralized system with restricted access only to authorized personnel and in compliance with the European Union's GDPR.

Weaknesses:

However, we acknowledge certain areas for improvement that are addressed in our action plan:

1. **Lack of Specific Training:** Targeted training to researchers who serve on recruitment and selection committees has still to be implemented at i3S.
2. **Monitoring OTM-R Principles:** A lack of a robust monitoring system for ensuring the implementation of OTM-R principles poses a challenge that needs to be addressed for greater transparency.
3. **Dependence on Funders' Rules:** Despite adhering to OTMR good practices, our dependence on specific recruitment rules set by funders, whether public or private, can at times hinder flexibility in our selection processes, namely in what concerns advertisement format and deadlines.
4. **Enhancing Foreign Researchers Attraction:** Efforts are needed to improve the conditions and incentives that can attract foreign researchers to join our institution.
5. **Formal Alumni Network:** Establishing and maintaining a formal Alumni network would facilitate effective dissemination of employment opportunities and strengthen our community.
6. **Better Onboarding for International Newcomers:** An International Hosting officer has been formally established within the i3S Human Resource department. However, enhancing the onboarding process for international newcomers is essential to ensure their smooth integration into the country, the city, and our research community.

As we progress, these identified weaknesses serve as focal points for our concerted efforts to further refine and enhance our recruitment and selection processes, ultimately contributing to the continued advancement of i3S' mission and impact.

Remarks

Over the past two years, relevant changes have been introduced.

Recently, the Human Resources department prepared an online workshop regarding OTM-R practices to PI and Group leaders, under action 9.

In order to increase and support the international community, under action 22, since November 2021, an International Hosting officer has been formally established within the i3S Human Resource department, and staff have been assigned to this office. This office assists newcomer researchers and their families with formal and informal reallocation requirements and social inclusion issues such as legal affairs, school enrollment, and housing search.

Additionally, under action 16, in 2021, the Communication Unit, assisted by the Information Technology Unit, implemented a new tool for advertising open positions, consolidating all job offers in one place. Moreover, a weekly internal job newsletter, that compiles the new open, ongoing, and closing positions, started to be disseminated in November 2021.

Working conditions and social security

The core foundation of i3S strategy is deeply embedded in the commitment to social responsibility, focusing on fostering training, mobility, and sustainable scientific careers within a dynamic and forward-thinking setting. This environment is designed to facilitate the

advancement and rejuvenation of its workforce. A primary objective of the institute revolves around enhancing its ability to attract, maintain, particularly among doctoral candidates and postdoctoral scholars.

i3S provides a comprehensively equipped research atmosphere caterings to not only cutting-edge research standards but also addresses the social requirements of its staff.

1. **Well-Equipped Research Hub:** Situated conveniently near a subway station and public transportation and offering amenities like car and bicycle parking, library, canteen, and common areas. Recently, an urban park, the "Parque Central da Asprela", was inaugurated next to i3S.
2. **Supporting Infrastructure:** The establishment of transversal units for financial management, project support, dissemination, and public engagement, reinforces effective research operations.
3. **Human Resources Support:** The Human Resources department provides personalized assistance for researchers, encompassing institutional matters, conflict resolution, project management, and well-being.
4. **The Unit for Responsible Conduct in Research:** i3S is the only Portuguese research performing organization that provides researchers from all career levels with the support of an Ethics and Integrity Officer.
5. **Career Development Emphasis:** Researchers benefit from dedicated support for their career growth and professional development, indicating the institute's commitment to their long-term success.
6. **Health and Safety Priority:** Well-structured health and safety procedures, including occupational medicine, a Health & Safety Unit, underscore the institute's concern for employee welfare.
7. **Inclusive Decision-Making:** The involvement of employees through associations and committees in decision-making fosters open communication and collaboration between researchers and leadership. There is a PostDoc association Committee and a PhD association Committee, composed of motivated PostDocs and PhD students, responsible for organizing activities and engaging their community in the overall institute activities.
8. **Environmental concern:** The establishment of the "GreenLab Initiative" in 2020 with the goal of reducing the institute's carbon footprint and the application by some laboratories to LEAF - New Approach to Achieving Laboratory Sustainability demonstrates a forward-looking commitment to environmental sustainability.
9. **Gender Equality Plan:** In 2022 the institute introduced a gender equality plan aimed at promoting gender equality and diversity within the organization.
10. **Mental Health Prioritization:** i3S hired a work psychologist, and organizes seminars and workshops on "Wellbeing and Mental Health at Work". Additionally, the institute periodically develops surveys on the theme.

Weaknesses:

1. **Career Progression Challenges:** Limitations on permanent appointments and career advancement plans may hinder the potential for sustained growth among researchers.
2. **Formalizing Flexible Work Conditions:** While flexibility is available, the lack of formalized internal regulations might lead to inconsistencies in how flexible work arrangements are implemented.

3. Untapped Alumni Network: A missing strategy for alumni engagement prevents the institute from benefiting from past employees' knowledge and networks, which could contribute to ongoing success.
4. Mental Health Prioritization: Despite the presence of a work psychologist, more comprehensive efforts are needed to address mental health challenges, particularly among postdoctoral and graduate trainees. We need to keep our work under issue.
5. Limited International Representation: The relatively small international community could potentially limit the diversity of perspectives and ideas within the institute. Nonetheless, during the last two years the international community relatively increased, fueled by the start of three strategic projects.
6. Absence of Researcher Mobility Data: The lack of a mechanism to collect data on researcher mobility hampers the institute's ability to effectively track and optimize this aspect.
7. Dedicated website for Human Resources: Currently, the institute lacks a dedicated HR website, which results in challenges for both current employees and potential recruits. An HR website could serve as a central hub for information about contacts, policies, benefits, and more.

Remarks:

Some improvements have been done, during the last 2 years, with regard to constraints on permanent appointments. Under action 17, i3S planned to increase the number of open-ended contracts by defining the rules for permanent appointments for researchers. i3S' Scientific Council together with the three founder institutes (IBMC, INEB and Ipatimup) defined at the end of 2022 a guide with rules that would allow Group Leaders (R4) that currently have a fixed-term contract to submit an application for an open-ended contract at i3S. This action is currently underway, and 7 of our researchers have been granted open-ended contracts. Additionally, i3S is committed to apply for the new tenure national program for researcher positions (FCT-Tenure) which will support the development of R&D activities, enshrining and stimulating the open-end recruitment of doctoral graduates for careers in scientific research and teaching careers.

Regarding mental health wellness in research, under action 11, a cycle of 7 seminars and 7 workshops entitled "Wellbeing and Mental Health at Work" took place in 2021. The events occurred monthly, either online or in person at i3S. The series included seminars open to the entire community and workshops restricted to registered participants. The main goal was to promote wellbeing and mental health in the workplace while also drawing attention to the importance of this topic in our institution's life. During this seminar series, several aspects of this subject were approached, seeking to develop opportunities for self-knowledge and the acquisition of tools essential to resilience, well-being, work-life balance and mental health. The topics addressed were: Molecular Biology of Stress, Neuroenhancement, Addiction Biology, Cognitive Decline, Depression and Resilience, Biology of Emotions, Conflict Management, and Decision Making.

Since May 2021, an organizational psychologist has been hired as part of the Health and Safety Unit. Recently, the organizational psychologist prepared a report on the psychosocial risks reporting to the period between 2021 to 2023, particularly focusing on PostDocs and

PhD students. Additionally, i3S facilitates Clinical Psychology appointments through a protocol established with professionals of the area.

In addition to the existing counseling service, mental health surveys were conducted within the institute.

Moreover, in order to improve the workplace wellbeing, i3S promotes different social activities, such as i3S Sounds (a choir composed by i3S members), i3S Yoga, Chill Outs and get-togethers, among others occurring either weekly or monthly.

Training and development

i3S is dedicated to upholding the highest standards of scientific, ethical, and professional training. It aims to equip researchers with the essential skills required for successful careers in academia and beyond. The institution's vision is to become a center of excellence in postgraduate education and training for young researchers, thereby nurturing a highly qualified workforce for academia, the health sector, and industry. i3S recognizes that scientific excellence, a supportive work environment, and the development of transferable skills are pivotal in enhancing mobility, employability, and informed career decision-making for its students and postdoctoral researchers.

We highlight the following as our strengths:

1. **Advanced Training Unit:** i3S has established an Advanced Training Unit that orchestrates more than 20 training courses annually. The institution's reputation for excellence in scientific training and international recognition in Health and Life Sciences is a testament to its commitment. The unit collaborates closely with i3S's scientific personnel to design advanced, high-quality training programs tailored to academic and industry researchers, PhD students, technicians, and other members of the scientific community. It provides an annual training calendar, allowing individuals to plan their educational development in advance.
2. **Career Development Unit (CDU):** In a pioneering move within the Portuguese research landscape, i3S introduced the Career Development Unit in October 2019, complete with a full-time officer. CDU's vision is to foster a culture that acknowledges career development as an integral part of the i3S experience. Its mission is to ensure that students and researchers have a successful training journey by offering a supportive work environment and resources for making informed career choices, developing lifelong career management skills, and achieving professional aspirations. CDU provides one-on-one sessions with its officer for discussions on various career-related topics, including CVs, job searches, academic applications, transitioning out of academia, laboratory/team-related concerns, available development opportunities, networking opportunities, and any other career or professional development matters.
3. **Unit for Responsible Conduct in Research (URCR):** Established in September 2019, URCR's primary aim is to promote specialized training in research ethics and integrity, ultimately contributing to the advancement of ethics and integrity in research and fostering a responsible organizational culture and climate. URCR facilitates open discussions among researchers on matters of integrity, helping to bridge knowledge gaps and mediate conflicts that could impede career advancement.

4. **Engagement and Responsibility:** i3S strongly encourages researchers to actively participate in institutional activities and training programs, as well as take responsibility for their projects and continuous development. The institution regularly organizes mandatory welcome sessions that cover institute structure and dynamics, as well as specific topics like Health and Safety, Research Ethics, Responsible Conduct, and Career Development.
5. **Multidisciplinary Environment:** i3S offers its new generations of PhD students a highly dynamic, stimulating, and collaborative multidisciplinary environment. This environment prepares students to tackle complex questions in Health and Life Sciences, whether they are of a fundamental or translational nature. The institution's strong multidisciplinary ethos is reflected in the fact that PhD students work under the mentorship of supervisors from various programs or even from outside the institute, engaging in projects that span multiple research domains. Additionally, PhD students benefit from substantial international mobility opportunities through programs like MSCA-ITN/DN and other international networks. They come from diverse scientific backgrounds, originating from six different PhD programs at the University of Porto, spanning from fundamental Biology to Applied Clinical Research. i3S places a strong emphasis on developing human resources for successful careers and values mobility between sectors, including public and private, industry, academia, and hospitals, both nationally and internationally.

Weaknesses

1. **Lack of formal training for senior researchers on supervision:** Relationship with supervisor. A positive relationship between the predoctoral student and the research advisor is a vital component of the student's preparation for future careers and mentoring roles. Specific guidelines on Mentor-PhD students and postdocs rights and duties should be provided. Such guidelines are being discussed and will be published at the institute's portal. We will include formal training for senior researchers on supervision and managerial duties in our annual training program.
2. **Mentoring program:** i3S is aware that the benefits of an established mentoring culture are numerous. A mentoring relationship can offer the mentee psycho-social benefits including development of self-confidence, as well as defining and pursuing goals, expanding perspectives, strengthening self-development plans and supporting career advancement. A mentoring relationship can also support motivation and work satisfaction for both mentees and mentors. The Alumni network (internal and external collaborators) will be used to improve this guiding practice. It has been developed a framework within MOBILisE and CDU to implement a pilot mentoring program at i3S.
3. **Dependence on non-regular external funding,** not providing stable financial means to assure a clear career development strategy for researchers.

Remarks

i3s implemented under action 19 diverse soft skills training programs, in particular to fill the lack of formal training for senior researchers on supervision, the Career development Unit organized "Building and Leading Research Teams" Course focused on Researchers responsible for leading and managing people in the development of scientific research projects and preferably with at least one supervising experience. The main goal of the course is to equip research leaders with the knowledge base to effectively build, manage and inspire

a research group in the academic enterprise. So far, two editions 2021 (May 2) and 2023 (September) have been promoted.

Additionally, under action 1, the Career Development Office disclosed by email and published on i3S portal, the IDP (individual development plan) and promoted regular meetings and seminars introducing and encouraging the implementation of IDP tools in all research groups. So far, the Career Development Office held 22 meetings in different research groups with some follow-up. The unit gives support to interested groups with hands-on sessions to implement the IDPs in their groups. The goal is to support the development of positive mentoring relationships between pre-doctoral students and their research advisors.

i3S is a member of Coara - Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment – (<https://coara.eu/>)- This agreement establishes a common path for transforming the evaluation procedures in research, encompassing research endeavors, scholars, and research-performing institutions. The ultimate objective is to optimize the quality and influence of research outcomes

Have any of the priorities for the short and medium term changed?

During the implementation phase of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers, our institute faced the challenges posed by the situation stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. This period required an adaptation to new modes of operation and organizational paradigms. In response to these demands, our institute swiftly embraced the digital realm, effecting changes such as the introduction of online training, a heightened preference for virtual mobility, and the digitalization and streamlining of procedural workflows.

Remarkably, our implementation phase coincided with a relatively milder stage of the pandemic's impact. Nonetheless, we successfully accomplished the majority of the proposed actions. Certain initiatives were strategically reimaged for online execution, substituting traditional face-to-face interactions, while a subset of endeavors was delayed.

A pivotal focus throughout 2022 was to initiate the preparation for the consolidation of the three founding institutes – IBMC, INEB, and Ipatimup – into the entity known as i3S, as initially envisaged during the application phase. The onset of 2023 saw a significant milestone as most of the permanent work contracts were transferred to i3S. This endeavor necessitated a concerted and intensified effort from the Board of Directors, the respective HR departments, and various departments across IBMC, INEB, Ipatimup, and i3S.

In tandem with these transformative processes, we formulated an action plan aligned with the strategic delineated for the institute until 2026. This strategic alignment reverberates across our engagement in noteworthy European projects currently underway at IBMC (such as NCBIO and IMMUNOHUB) and INEB (MOBILIsE). By weaving these strands of vision and action together, we are poised to realize our collective goals, drive innovation, and contribute substantively to the advancement of research and knowledge.

Have any of the circumstances in which your organization operates, changed and as such have had an impact on your HR strategy?

Indeed, there were some delays encountered during the implementation of action plan. These delays were influenced by the unforeseen challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the merger into i3S.

While our dedication to the successful execution of our HR strategy remained steadfast, it is important to acknowledge that the unprecedented circumstances introduced by the pandemic necessitated some shift in priorities.

Simultaneously, the initial merging process into i3S introduced a unique set of logistical and operational intricacies that contributed to certain delays. The careful orchestration of this transition, while ensuring minimal disruption to ongoing research and organizational activities, required meticulous planning and execution.

Our commitment to achieving the goals set forth in our HR strategy remains. The delays encountered have spurred us to embrace a flexible and responsive approach, fostering an environment where innovative problem-solving and collaboration thrive, even in the face of obstacles.

Are any strategic decisions under way that may influence the action plan?

The action plan will not be influenced by any strategic decisions under way. As we already mentioned the action plan defined under the HR4SR is aligned with the strategy defined for the institute, as outlined in the mission, vision, and principles. By aligning HR initiatives with these strategic priorities, i3S can create a cohesive and comprehensive approach that empowers researchers, fosters collaboration, drives innovation, and ensures a diverse and inclusive research community.

Despite the ongoing process of merging the 3 institutes (IBMC, INEB and Ipatimup) into i3S, the actions set out in the plan will not be affected.

2. Revised action plan

IBMC, INEB and Ipatimup attainment of the HRS4R Award in 2021 marked a significant milestone, officially propelling us into the implementation phase of our Action Plan. This phase has been defined through dedicated efforts to enhance our human resources practices in alignment with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

In collaboration IBMC, INEB, Ipatimup and i3S made a strategic decision to collectively defer the Interim Assessment originally scheduled for different dates in 2023. This deferral will allow us to consolidate our progress and align our assessment with a unified timeline, which we have set for October 2023. Recently, i3S adopted the HRS4R Award of Ipatimup.

Our comprehensive 2021-2023 Action Plan encompasses a total of 23 distinct actions, strategically distributed across four main clusters that encapsulate the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. These clusters are as follows:

I. Training and Development: We are committed to fostering the growth and advancement of our researchers. Our Action Plan includes initiatives that prioritize training and professional development, ensuring that our researchers and students have the resources and support needed to excel in their roles.

II. Ethical and Professional Aspects: Upholding the highest ethical standards is paramount. Our Action Plan features measures to reinforce ethical conduct, integrity, and responsible research practices, ensuring that our researchers contribute to the advancement of knowledge with integrity and accountability.

III. Recruitment and Selection: Our commitment to fair and transparent recruitment processes is embedded in our Action Plan. We have emphasized the equal opportunities, unbiased selection, and streamlined procedures, facilitating the recruitment of diverse and qualified researchers.

IV. Working Conditions and Social Security: At the core of our commitment to enhancing human resources practices is the well-being and work environment of our researchers. We recognize that the working conditions and social security of our researchers are pivotal for their professional growth, motivation, and overall satisfaction.

In the table 1 below we present a summary of each task as initially planned and introduce the proposed new action.

Training and development					
Action	Resp. Unit	Indicator/Target	Gap principle	Current status	Remarks
<i>1.Establishment of an (IDP) individual development plan toolkit</i>	<i>CDU</i>	<i>IDP toolkit published at portal with CDU promoting regular meetings and seminars to introduce it and encourage the implementation of IDP tools in all research groups.</i>	<i>3. Professional responsibility 28. Career development 30. Access to career advice 37. Supervision and managerial duties 38. Continuing Professional Development 40. Supervision</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>IDP forms for PhD candidates and PhD holders are available on the i3S portal. The forms are promoted on the research groups and on the three annual CDU welcome sessions The CDU pivoted the implementation of the form on some research groups</i>
<i>8: Actions to increase or support researchers' mobility</i>	<i>Advanced Training Unit, CDU, Research Funding Unit</i>	<i>To enlarge the number of Researchers in mobility programs, incoming and outgoing</i>	<i>29. Value of mobility</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>1 - The institute has received foreign researchers through different programs (EraChair, Marie Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship and ITN/DN, Erasmus, Twining, Cost actions)). 2-A series of monthly career seminars were run to increase the awareness of careers beyond academic research and increase the intersectoral mobility (Once a Scientist....Uncovering Career journeys). The program is planned to continue.</i>
<i>13: Establish guidelines for the supervisor-researcher relationship to</i>	<i>Advanced Training Unit, CDU</i>	<i>Guidelines published on the institution portal. Number of attendees to training sessions. To achieve the goal</i>	<i>4. Professional attitude 7. Good practice in research 12. Recruitment</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>The Career Development Office created guidelines for the supervisor-researcher relationship, which are known as the i3S Guidelines for Postdoctoral Appointees and Their Research Advisors, the i3S</i>

<p><i>provide strong support to researchers at early career stage</i></p>		<p><i>of having all Group and PI Leaders trained in leading research teams and project management, these training courses should tend to be free and mandatory</i></p>	<p>13. Recruitment (Code) 14. Selection (Code) 37. Supervision and managerial duties 39. Access to research training and continuous development 40. Supervision</p>		<p><i>Guidelines for Graduate Students and Their Supervisors, and the i3S Guidelines for Research Group Leaders.</i></p>
<p>19. Skills training program</p>	<p>CDU Advanced Training Unit</p>	<p><i>Number of participants and survey on self-evaluation of the participants on the date of attending the courses and 3 months after attending the courses</i></p>	<p>28. Career development 30. Access to career advice 38. Continuing Professional Development 39. Access to research training and continuous development</p>	<p><i>In progress</i></p>	<p>1- The Career Development Unit held workshops on soft skills, namely on the themes "time management" and "transferable skills communication", "project management", "intellectual propriety" among others;</p> <p>2- This Unit, in collaboration with different Researcher groups, also organized targeted workshops on career development.</p> <p>3- i3S career development Officer is part of the UP Career Design working group at the University of Porto. The university will provide a platform for career planning and development focused on university of Porto PhD students. (Most of i3S PhD students are enrolled on University of Porto PhD programs having access to the platform planned to be released on last quarter 2023).</p>

Ethical and professional aspects					
Action	Resp. Unit	Indicator/Target	Gap principle	Current status	Remarks
<i>2: Engage researchers in responsible conduct</i>	<i>URCR</i>	<i>The results of an initial survey on ethical environment will be compared to a follow up one to check the impact of a bottom-up approach to responsible conduct.</i>	<i>2. Ethical principles 3. Professional responsibility 4. Professional attitude 7. Good practice in research</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>The Unit for Responsible Conduct in Research held training sessions with different research groups on different subjects: ✓ Misconduct, ✓ Unacceptable practices, ✓ Authorship and Publication Ethics, ✓ Data management and Manipulation, ✓ Open Science, ✓ Supervision and Mentoring, ✓ Privacy and Confidentiality, ✓ Ethical issues in human experiments and Ethical self-assessment in European projects.</i>
<i>3. Prepare and publish Guidelines for Professional Conduct for Researchers and a Checklist for Research Integrity</i>	<i>URCR CECRI-i3S HR</i>	<i>The two documents will be issued and made public among all i3S researchers, and there will be group discussions on their impact after the first year of their implementation.</i>	<i>2. Ethical principles 3. Professional responsibility 4. Professional attitude 7. Good practice in research</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>The Unit for Responsible Conduct created and published on i3S portal several documents: ✓ Research Integrity Checklist ✓ Data Management Checklist ✓ Tips for good Data Management Plans ✓ Authorship Guidelines ✓ Guidance on Authorship Planning ✓ Procedures for Reporting Research Misconduct Unacceptable Practices – Currently articulated with the Reporting Channels ✓ Guidelines to handle conflicts of interest in Research and in Relation to Recruitment & Promotions ✓ General Ethics & integrity policy ✓ Guidelines on Incidental Findings Policy</i>

<p>4. Consolidate the procedures for reporting misconduct, safeguarding confidentiality and protecting the whistleblowers</p>	<p>URCR CECRI-i3S</p>	<p>Annual report of the number and type of misconduct issues that have been handled at i3S. Assessment of the stage when it was possible to end the misconduct issue, satisfaction of those involved in the process, and self-assessment of the impact of the resolution obtained</p>	<p>2. Ethical principles 3. Professional responsibility 4. Professional attitude 7. Good practice in research 32. Co-authorship</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p>A Report Channel and a Whistleblowing Policy were implemented, among other documents and actions to prevent corruption and promote ethical behavior at work. Training and Informative Sessions on the Report Chanel will take place from October 2023 to June 2024. For more detailed information: https://www.i3s.up.pt/rgpc.php</p>
<p>5. Collaboration of the Coordinator of the Responsible Conduct for Research Unit with national and international institutions of excellence in the field of Ethics and Responsible Conduct in research</p>	<p>URCR CECRI-i3S</p>	<p>Webinars and online seminars with members from the network of responsible conduct organizations will be held (once a year)</p>	<p>3. Professional responsibility 7. Good practice in research</p>	<p>In progress</p>	<p>1- The coordinator of the Unit for Responsible Conduct in Research is part of some national and international Research Integrity Networks (Portuguese Network for Reproducibility in Research; Redética; Embassy for Good Science; NERQ; IRAFPA) 2- The coordinator of the Unit for Responsible Conduct in Research participated in other training and knowledge dissemination sessions on Ethics and Integrity in Research.</p>
<p>6: Training in Research Ethics and research integrity on a regular basis</p>	<p>URCR</p>	<p>Regular training in research Ethics and integrity for i3S researchers at all career stages, being compulsory for all new PhD students (twice a year: one for PhD students and another for all the research community)</p>	<p>2. Ethical principles 3. Professional responsibility 4. Professional attitude 7. Good practice in research 9. Public engagement 32. Co- authorship 36. Relation with supervisors</p>	<p>In progress</p>	<p>The Training Course in Research Ethics & Integrity began in 2020-2021, with researchers from all career levels as target audience; followed by a second edition from October 2021 to July 2022, and a third edition from December 2022 to June 2023. The course has included not only i3S members but also external members from the University of Porto and other institutions, allowing discussions of ethical and integrity issues among researchers from various backgrounds. Furthermore, this Unit, in collaboration with the Unit for Career Development, has led Welcome Sessions on Ethics and Integrity in research for all new members.</p>

<p>14. Introduction to the Charter and Code for researchers at the Welcome Session at the institute that all new members must attend.</p>	<p>Health & Safety Unit, Communication Unit</p>	<p>All researchers will be introduced to the Code of Conduct. Number of sessions.</p>		<p>In progress</p>	<p>In the Welcome Sessions on Ethics and Integrity in research for all new members the code of conduct is introduced.</p> <p>All new members in the admission process are introduced to the Charter and Code for Researchers. It is mandatory to read and deliver a signed document at the moment of collecting the i3S access card confirming the understanding of the Code</p>
<p>20: To implement a health communication collaborative platform to address complex interactions among recipients of care, caregivers and other relevant stakeholders, aiming to identify shared problems and to develop and implement innovative well-being interventions</p>	<p>Communication Unit URCR</p>	<p>Dissemination of information to stakeholders: Number of participants in dissemination activities; Number of conferences, lectures and debates on topics of relevance organized; Number of participants in conferences, lectures and debates; Number of launched Patient Associations Training Programs; People attending Patient Associations Training Programs.</p>	<p>7. Good practice in research 9. Public engagement</p>	<p>In progress</p>	<p>Dissemination of information to stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BioEngHub - the coordinator of the Portuguese Brain Bank and a representative of the Parkinson Young Patients Association were invited to join a panel of i3S neuroscientists to discuss the main challenges while investigating and managing neurodegenerative disorders. - Stakeholder Hub - Kick-off Meeting (ERA CHAIR NC BIO) forum for discussion and presentation of results and which includes patient Association, hospitals, the pharmaceutical industry and decision-makers (https://ncbio.i3s.up.pt/ncbio-stakeholder-hub-kick-off-meeting/). - MOBILISE Launch Event – the transfer of knowledge and technology into the clinic and industry was discussed with different stakeholders (https://mobilise.i3s.up.pt/news-events/events/molecular-bioengineering-challenges-in-industrial-and-clinical-translation/).

					<p>- The Centre for Predictive and Preventive Genetics (CGPP) and the PhasAGE project had an exhibition called "A Rare Look" that aims to combine fundamental science and art, through the everyday experiences of people with neurodegenerative and neuromuscular diseases (https://phasage.eu/a-rare-look/).</p> <p>- "Tratar o cancro por tu" provides information about the latest cancer-fighting therapies, simplifying concepts, raising awareness about early diagnosis, and placing patients at the heart of the discussion (https://antena1.rtp.pt/podcast/tratar-o-cancro-por-tu/).</p> <p>- The "Health Literacy Hub" was created, the Institute will have a central role in the work of training, research and collaboration with Patients' Associations.</p>
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Recruitment and selection					
Action	Resp. Unit	Indicator/Target	Gap principle	Current status	Remarks
9. Workshops to PI and Group leaders regarding OTM-R practices	Advanced Training Unit HR	The target is to have all Group leaders and PI aware of the best practices to recruit the best candidate respecting all OTR-principles	12. Recruitment 13. Recruitment (Code) 14. Selection (Code) 15. Transparency (Code) 17. Variations in the chronological order of CVs (Code) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code) 27. Gender balance 29. Value of mobility	In progress	Online workshop on OTM-R dedicated to PI and group leaders is under preparation.
15. Implementation of a quality control system for OTM-R.	HR	Analysis of applicant survey feedback	12. Recruitment 13. Recruitment (Code) 14. Selection (Code) 15. Transparency (Code)	Extended	
16. New tool for Advertising Job Openings	HR Communication Unit ISTU	Creation of the Advertising tool. Creation of the weekly Job newsletter Characterization of applicants	Recruitment 13. Recruitment (Code) 15. Transparency (Code)	Completed	- The Communication Unit, with IT's help, implemented a new tool for advertising open positions to consolidate all job offers in one place (https://www.i3s.up.pt/job-opportunities.php). - Additionally, a weekly internal job newsletter, that compiles the new, ongoing, and closing open positions, started to be disseminated. This summary is also posted on i3S' social media platforms.
21. Guidelines to define flexible	HR	Guidelines on work/life balance at i3S portal		In progress	We are preparing guidelines for work/life balance

<i>working conditions, increasing the balance between work and personal life</i>					
<i>23. Building an area for FAQs at the Open Position area in order to clarify doubts regarding the submission of applications</i>	<i>HR ISTU</i>	<i>Decrease of contacts intended to clarify doubts regarding the applications posted on Open Positions</i>	<i>12. Recruitment 13. Recruitment (Code)</i>	<i>Completed</i>	<i>- FAQs are published under the open position at i3S portal (https://www.i3s.up.pt/job-opportunities.php).</i>

Working conditions and Social Security					
Action	Resp. Unit	Indicator/Target	Gap principle	Current status	Remarks
<i>7. Increase in the number of open-ended contracts by defining the rules for permanent appointments for researchers</i>	<i>Board of Directors (i3S) HR</i>	<i>The target is to have 12 new permanent appointments in the next 5 years. This target is more easily achieved with regular sustainable funds so the Board of Directors is committed to applying for structural funds that aim for permanent appointments</i>	<i>22. Recognition of the profession 25. Stability and permanence of employment 26. Funding and salaries 38. Continuing Professional Development</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>-At the end of 2022, i3S Scientific Council defined rules that would allow Group Leaders that currently have a fixed-term contract to submit an application for an open-ended contract at i3S. Until the moment 7 researchers (R4) have been awarded with an open-ended contract. i3S is committed to applying to FCT -Tenure, a program that support the development of R&D activities, enshrining and stimulating the open-end recruitment of doctoral graduates for careers in scientific research and teaching careers</i>
<i>10. Kindergarten</i>	<i>Board of Direction (i3S) University of Porto City Hall</i>	<i>First stone and creation of a management structure. The main target is to have Kindergarten services provided to all staff.</i>	<i>24. Working conditions 27. Gender balance 29. Value of mobility</i>	<i>In progress</i>	<i>The Parish Council of Paranhos is rehabilitating a space near i3S for the establishment of a kindergarten that will receive children of i3S community. It is expected to open in 2024.</i>

<p>11. Wellbeing and Mental Health at Work</p>	<p>URCR CECRI-i3S HR Safety & Health Unit Occupational Medicine</p>	<p>Number of attendees at each session and assessment of each attendee. The goal is to have a positive impact on the day-to-day work of employees by improving their well-being in the workplace and to be able to offer this training on a free, universal basis. Hiring of an Organizational Psychologist.</p>	<p>24. Working conditions</p>	<p>In progress</p>	<p>1. The series of seminars and workshops "Wellbeing and Mental Health at Work" took place during 2021. 2. An organizational psychologist has been hired as part of the Health and Safety Unit. Additionally, i3S facilitates Clinical Psychology appointments through a protocol with professionals in the area. 3. In addition to the counseling service, was developed a mental health surveys. 4- Career Development office participated on the REmo Cost action training school being a Remo mental health in research Ambassador and participating in the drafting of a policy paper on mental health in research in Portugal 5. Promotion of different social activities (i3Sounds, i3S yoga, Chill Outs, etc)</p>
<p>12. Implementation of a universal appraisal evaluation system regarding all R2 and R3 researchers without permanent appointments</p>	<p>Board of Directors (i3S) HR</p>	<p>Increase the number of researchers evaluated. Assessment of the impact in research with the implementation of the universal appraisal system.</p>	<p>11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems 36. Relation with supervisors 38. Continuing Professional Development 39. Access to research training and continuous development</p>	<p>In progress</p>	<p>The Board of Directors approved the appraisal system rules in January 2021. A committee of R4 researchers developed the rules, which were then reviewed by IBMC's Director and IBMC's head of HR. However, because it has not been made mandatory by the Board of Directors, it has not been widely used by researchers. This evaluation system is available on the i3S portal.</p>

17: Re-write and re-negotiate the teaching Protocols that exist between i3S and several Faculties of the University of Porto	HR Board of Directors (i3S)	To have all Researchers teaching through a common Protocol	33. Teaching	Completed	There is a common process for all researchers at the institute to request teaching activities. All requests are evaluated with equal criteria. Since the conditions are set by the University of Porto or other academic institutions there is no need for a specific protocol.
22: Creation of a dedicated structure to internally support the incoming researchers and their families	HR	Staff allocated to this assignment	29. Value of mobility	Completed	An International Hosting office has been formally established within the i3S Human Resources department, and staff has been assigned to this office. The office must assist newcomer researchers and their families with formal and informal reallocation requirements, as well as social inclusion issues such as legal affairs, school enrollment, and housing search.
18: Create an Alumni network and mentoring program	CDU HR Communication Unit	Creation of an alumni database Network expansion (number of alumni members). Publication of alumni story on website Launch mentoring program; number of mentors and mentees participating	28. Career development 29. Value of mobility 30. Access to career advice	Extended	Some work has been done to engage i3S alumni network with the creation of a LinkedIn alumni group but engagement is low. Mentoring program with an intersectoral nature is being designed to be launched in 2024. Some work has been done regarding mentoring (Postdoc mentoring Session organized by ImmunoHUB project, etc).

Description of NEW actions (2024-2026)

Training and development					
Action	Resp. Unit	Indicator/Target	GAP Principle	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Remarks
<p>24. Following the ResearchComp that is the first competence framework for researchers at EU level, we want to introduce some initiatives using the expected ERA Talent Platform.</p> <p>At i3S, we can develop or adapt our training offer to improve the transversal competences of our researchers.</p> <p>7 competence areas: Managing research, Managing research tools, Making an impact Working with others Self-management Cognitive abilities Doing research</p>	<p>CDU ATU</p>	<p>Introduce a set of transversal skills among researchers to promote the inter-disciplinary careers and for entrepreneurship and innovation.</p>	<p>(+/-) 28. Career development (+/-) 38. Continuing Professional Development (+/-) 39. Access to research training and continuous development (+/-) 29. Value of mobility (-/+) 4. Professional attitude (+/-) 24. Working conditions</p>	<p>Benchmarking and Framework design 2024 Q1 Framework implementation 2024-2026</p>	<p>Prepare an i3S research competence framework in line with the new ResearchComp.</p>
<p>25. Training researchers on the fundamentals of supervision, leadership, and people management - mandatory for new supervisors</p>	<p>CDU RH</p>	<p>Availability of the guidelines for all supervisors Number of new supervisors</p>	<p>(++) 23. Research environment (+/-) 36. Relation with supervisors (-/+) 37. Supervision and managerial duties (-/+) 40. Supervision</p>	<p>2024-2026</p>	<p>To improve mentoring of researchers</p>

<p>26. Prepare a plan for contributions reforming research assessment system. i3S is a signatory of the CoaRa Colalition for a reform on the research assessment</p>	<p>CDU URCR RH Board Direction</p>	<p>Number of trainings and guidelines implemented</p>	<p>(-/+) 4. Professional attitude (-/+) 7. Good practice in research (+/-) 22. Recognition of the profession (+/-) 28. Career development</p>	<p>2024-2026</p>	<p>Participate in the reform on research assessment</p>
<p>27. Standardized survey regarding the working conditions/satisfaction and career opportunities of academic staff, which is carried out every two years in order to capture perspectives as follow of 2021 survey.</p>	<p>CDU RH</p>	<p>The perspectives of the scientific staff on core topics that are also relevant for HRS4R are to be recorded. From this, new items can be obtained for the HRS4R project, which may also lead to new measure. If necessary, take measures.</p>	<p>(+/-) 22. Recognition of the profession (+/-) 28. Career development</p>	<p>Survey design Q1 2024 Data Collection Q2/2024, Final report expected in Q4/2024</p>	<p>Improve institutional culture through work satisfaction and conditions, wellbeing and career perspectives</p>
<p>28. Career seminars and mentoring programme</p>	<p>CDU</p>	<p>Number of Career seminars and mentoring program and number of attendances</p>	<p>(+/-) 30. Access to career advice (+/-) 39. Access to research training and continuous development</p>	<p>Q2/2024</p>	<p>Provide diversify career perspectives</p>

Ethical and professional aspects					
Action	Resp. Unit	Indicator/Target	GAP Principle	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Remarks
<i>29. Prepare and publish the i3S ethical code. The document will be organized by the Unit for Responsible Conduct in Research together with the HR department. The i3S ethical code will have an attractive format.</i>	<i>URCR CECRI-i3S HR</i>	<i>Issue an i3S Code of Ethics, drafted with the support of all the members of the Institute</i>	<i>(+/-) 2. Ethical principles (++) 3. Professional responsibility (-/+) 4. Professional attitude</i>	<i>Q2/2024</i>	<i>Prepare and publish the i3S ethical code</i>

Recruitment and selection

Action	Resp. Unit	Indicator/Target	GAP Principle	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Remarks
30. Analyze the feedback of the candidates regarding OTMR and submission platform	RH	In the email with the final results include a link for a survey related to submission of applications and OTMR.	(+/-) 12. Recruitment (+/-) 13. Recruitment (Code) (+/-) 14. Selection (Code)	Q1/2025	Survey about our application submission platform

Working conditions and Social Security

Action	Resp. Unit	Indicator/Target	GAP Principle	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Remarks
31. To improve the collection of data in general, in particular to have reliable data on mobility	RH, Information Systems and Technology Unit	Possibility to have reliable data on Human resources to measure the mobility.	(++) 23. Research environment (+/-) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code) (+/-) 29. Value of mobility (++) 6. Accountability	Q2/2024	Improving the IT systems for Human Resources
32. 1.Create at i3S portal a place with all concentrated information: Team Onboarding International Hosting Officer Policies FAQ's 2.Develop a stronger communication for newcomer's (creation of new booklet)	RH, Information Systems and Technology Unit	Creation of website and booklet Dedicated page to International Hosting Officer	(+/-) 24. Working conditions (-/+) 4. Professional attitude	Q2/2024	Create at i3S' website page dedicated to Human Resources
33.Training on the integration of the gender dimension into research/ Multidimensional equity, diversity and inclusion	RH	Revision of the gender equality plan	(+/-) 27. Gender balance	Q3/2024	To promote gender equality in research and at the workplace

<i>Revise the gender equality plan, implemented in 2022</i>					
<i>34. Create a rigorously bilingual environment (emails, newsletter, i3S website, social media etc)</i>	<i>RH, Communication Unit</i>	<i>Number of updates to promote a bilingual environment</i>	<i>(+/-) 24. Working conditions (++) 10. Non discrimination (+/-) 15. Transparency (Code)</i>	<i>2024-2026</i>	<i>To promote a bilingual environment</i>
<i>35. i3S has started to introduce small changes at the institute, for instance, automatic doors to improve the working conditions for personnel with motor disabilities</i> <i>Identification of important changes needed to be done and prepare a plan for its implementation</i>	<i>RH, Board of Direction, Health, Safety and Quality Unit</i>	<i>Number of changes to improve working conditions for personnel with disabilities/ special needs</i>	<i>(+/-) 24. Working conditions (++) 10. Non discrimination (++) 3. Professional responsibility</i>	<i>2024-2026</i>	<i>To improve working conditions for personnel with disabilities/ special needs</i>
<i>36. Building upon the findings from the Psychosocial Risk Assessment Report within the PostDoc Group and students, we aim to introduce novel initiatives focusing on stress reduction and overall well-being, with a specific emphasis on PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers, Creation of guides to help in the definition on priorities, time management and individual boundaries</i>	<i>RH, CDU</i>	<i>Number of attendances at initiatives</i>	<i>(++) 3. Professional responsibility (-/+) 4. Professional attitude (+/-) 24. Working conditions</i>	<i>2024-2026</i>	<i>Introduce new initiatives regarding stress & Wellbeing in particular for PhD and PostDocs</i>

Comments on the implementation of the OTM-R (Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment) principles

The recruitment and selection process at IBMC, INEB and Ipatimup (collectively referred as i3S) is one of our strengths. All open positions are advertised on the i3S website (<https://www.i3s.up.pt/job-opportunities.php>), following uniform application procedures. This practice ensures that candidates have equitable access to our opportunities. Additionally, we have expanded our reach by advertising these vacancies on the EURAXESS platform. This strategic move has enabled us to tap into a wider pool of researchers interested in our open positions. Furthermore, in specific cases, we further amplify our reach by placing advertisements in national or international news outlets, including wide-distribution scientific journals.

To enhance our attractiveness as an employer, we leverage our active presence on social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter (X), and Facebook. Through these channels, we showcase all our open positions, generating a steady flow of information for potential candidates. We consolidate these updates into a weekly summary, disseminated across our social media accounts and channeled through our dedicated mailing list focused on i3S job openings.

Crucially, we adhere to a clear and consistent set of principles aligned with the Open, Transparent, and Merit-based Recruitment (OTMR) approach. This ensures that our recruitment procedures are characterized by transparency and fairness, with an unwavering commitment to providing equal opportunities to all candidates.

i3S has built a recruitment framework that is both comprehensive and inclusive. By harnessing digital platforms, implementing OTMR principles, and ensuring transparent practices, we have cultivated an environment where talent can readily connect with our open positions, fostering a culture of openness and equal opportunity.

3. Implementation

General overview of the implementation process

IBMC, INEB, Ipatimup and i3S have established together a Working Group and a Steering Committee to oversee its initiatives. The Working Group, along with its dedicated members, is responsible for managing various aspects, including the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers Award endeavors and the project implementation.

IBMC, INEB, Ipatimup and i3S have been actively implementing its Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) since receiving the HRS4R Award in 2021. The institution's focus on the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers has led to a comprehensive action plan spanning various clusters. The implementation involves a wide array of departments, including Human Resources, Health & Safety, Occupational Health, Responsible Conduct in Research, Communication, Career Development, and Advanced Training Units.

The working group convened at approximately six-month intervals to review progress and facilitate the execution of the designated actions.

The implementation process has been marked by a seamless flow, with each team member fulfilling their responsibilities. The individual milestones outlined in the action plan have been met on schedule, with a few exceptions. The working team members maintain active communication with the all members of the team, ensuring that each step is well-informed and garners support from the management body.

How have you prepared the internal review?

We leveraged the data and insights acquired during the implementation of the action plan. Initially, we conducted an evaluation of the ongoing progress of the action plan's implementation and collected valuable inputs to shape a new action plan. Throughout the implementation phase, we generated reports, as the implementation of HR4RS constitutes a dedicated work package within some of the European projects.

The Human Resources Department took the lead in crafting the initial version of the internal review, which was then reviewed and refined in collaboration with the working group. Subsequently, the final version underwent thorough assessment and feedback from both the Steering Committee and the Board of Direction.

Furthermore, we engaged in productive discussions with a colleague closely involved in implementing the HRS4R strategy at another institute, allowing us to exchange valuable insights and best practices.

How have you involved the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?

As part of our strategic until 2026, we are intensifying our efforts to improve the research community engagement. We are exploring the possibility of establishing dedicated online platforms where researchers can contribute with ideas, collaborate on initiatives, and access relevant information. Additionally, we are evaluating the potential for recognition and awards that acknowledge the contributions of researchers towards the successful implementation of *our initiatives*.

Do you have an implementation committee and/or steering group regularly overseeing progress?

The Steering Committee meet once a year to deliberate on the outcomes arising from the Working Group's meetings.

Is there any alignment of organizational policies with the HRS4R? For example, is the HRS4R recognized in the organization's research strategy, overarching HR policy?

There is alignment of organizational policies with the HRS4R. The HRS4R principles are recognized and integrated into the organization's research strategy and overarching HR policy.

The 'HR Strategy for Researchers' serves as a framework that aids research institutions, like ours, and funding organizations in implementing the principles outlined in the Charter & Code across their policies and operational procedures.

i3S has established a dedicated website (<https://www.i3s.up.pt/hr-excellence>) aimed at the HRS4R (Human Resources Strategy for Researchers) strategy. This website acts as a comprehensive information hub, offering detailed insights into the institution's endeavors to align its human resources practices with the guiding principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

How has your organization ensured that the proposed actions would be implemented?

The HR Manager is tasked with overseeing the progress of the action plan and its changes to ensure the HR4RS is maintained. They will also provide updates to both the Working Group and Steering Committee as needed.

As we already mentioned, the action plan defined under the HR4SR, is in alignment with the institute's strategic objectives. Furthermore, IBMC has been honored with two ERACChair projects, each featuring dedicated Work Packages aimed at implementing HRS4R. These are strategic projects, with the sponsorship and under direct coordination of the Board of Directors, which underscores the strong dedication of Senior Researchers and the Board of Directors to this initiative.

In the upcoming triennium, i3S is committed to advancing the execution of the updated action plan. This strategic endeavor will be underscored by a concentrated drive to enhance the dissemination of HR Excellence principles throughout the institute.

How are you monitoring progress (timeline)?

The HR Manager, responsible for strategy implementation, is actively overseeing the development of the action plan. The Working group will be briefed biannually on the plan's progress.

Once a year, a Steering Committee meeting will assess the current status.

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

We will evaluate progress taking in consideration the deadline and the indicator target defined in each action. Their fulfillment will be analyzed by the working group and the Steering Committee in the regular meetings.

How do you expect to prepare for the external review?

The HR Manager has been at the forefront of this effort, shouldering the responsibility of monitoring the entire implementation process. This has been achieved through a collaboration with both the working group and the Steering Committee, involving regular meetings to deliberate on progress, challenges, and strategic adjustments. Should the opportunity arise, i3S is open to sharing its experience with other research centers willing to attain the HRS4R certification.

Preparing for the external review is a crucial step in demonstrating the effectiveness of the implementation of HRS4R at our institute. The external review will be prepared by the working group, which will begin preparing it 6 months in advance, using the guidelines for institutions provided by HRS4R for the site visit.

Additional remarks/comments about the proposed implementation process

Our goal is to create an environment favorable for innovative research, translation of discoveries into the clinic and to become a major international player in health sciences and technologies. Our mission positions the i3S at the forefront of research in the health sciences to support the implementation of key public policies, including the development, mobility and employability of human capital by promoting a stimulating training environment for our graduate students and researchers allowing them to be competitive in academia, the health sector and industry.

Our strategy to contribute to public policies responding to scientific, health, social and economic challenges relate intimately with our commitment and capacity to develop sustainable careers for highly differentiated doctorate researchers and technicians. We are truly committed with the HRS4R, a recognition that we believe is an important key for achieving our goals and attracting excellent researchers. The working group will be responsible for providing the researchers with access to the information they need to evaluate the progress of the Action Plan, including monitoring reports, updated indicator values, and interviews with researchers and technicians.