

TEMPLATE 4: ACTION PLAN

Case number: 2023RO159485

Name Organisation under review:

National Institute of Research and Development for Biological Sciences, Romania (INCDSB)

Organisation's contact details:

296 Splaiul Independentei, Bucharest, S 6, 060031, Romania

SUBMISSION DATE: TBA

1. ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

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

STAFF & STUDENTS	FTE
Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research	120
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)	0
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation)	0
Of whom are women	80
Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor.	48
Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level	33
Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level	19
Total number of students (if relevant)	20
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff)	166
RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)	€
Total annual organisational budget	5,176,036.93
Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)	0
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)	4,963,543.20
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	212,493.73
ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE (a very brief description of your organisation, max. 100 words)	
<p>The National Institute of Research and Development for Biological Sciences Bucharest (INCDSB) operates in accordance with Government Decision no. 2.082/2004 and is in Bucharest, Romania. The INCDSB operates under the coordination of the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalisation.</p> <p>The mission of the INCDSB is to achieve excellence in life sciences research by integrating interdisciplinary institutional research in the three main areas - biomedicine/health, agriculture, nutrition and food safety,</p>	

and environment and biodiversity - and ensuring the transdisciplinarity of the four complementary areas (bioanalysis, bioinformatics, applied biotechnologies and research in extreme environments).

2. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE CURRENT PRACTICE:

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

Thematic heading of the Charter and Code	STRENGTHS and WEAKNESSES free text maximum 500 words
Ethical and professional aspects	<p>Strengths:</p> <p>Freedom of research: The INCDSB is committed to the freedom of research, supported by national laws and internal guidelines.</p> <p>Ethical principles: Ethical behaviour is regulated by national laws and reinforced by the INCDSB's Code of Ethical Conduct.</p> <p>Accountability and good practise in research: These aspects are fully implemented, with transparent financial management, strict compliance with health and safety regulations and clear procedures for data protection (GDPR).</p> <p>Dissemination and public engagement: The INCDSB effectively disseminates research findings through publications, conferences and social media. It also actively engages the public through workshops and educational programmes.</p> <p>Weaknesses:</p> <p>Ethical principles and professional responsibility: While these are almost fully implemented, there is a need for regular and comprehensive training programmes on ethical standards and professional responsibility.</p>

	<p>Professional attitudes: Researchers need to be constantly educated about their responsibilities when conducting research projects.</p> <p>Assessment/evaluation systems: The appraisal system could be improved by developing clear principles and guidelines for the evaluation of research performance.</p>
Recruitment and selection	<p>Strengths:</p> <p>Recruitment, selection and transparency: The recruitment process at INCDSB is fully transparent, open and merit-based and complies with national regulations and internal procedures.</p> <p>Assessment of merit and recognition of mobility experience: The Institute emphasises merit in recruitment, considers career breaks and values mobility experiences, which contributes to a holistic assessment of candidates.</p> <p>Weaknesses:</p> <p>Assessment of merit: There is still a strong emphasis on bibliometric indices rather than qualitative criteria such as research management and teamwork. There is room for improvement by including more diverse assessment metrics.</p> <p>Postdoctoral appointments: Although the INCDSB supports postdoctoral researchers, it lacks a structured training programme for postdoctoral researchers, which could be improved.</p>
Working conditions	<p>Strengths:</p> <p>Recognition of the profession: The INCDSB recognises researchers at all career levels as experts in their field.</p> <p>Funding and salaries: Salaries are negotiated regularly and there are guarantees for researchers' performance, which ensure stability.</p> <p>Gender balance and employment stability: Gender balance and employment stability are prioritised, even if there are funding</p>

	<p>issues.</p> <p>Weaknesses:</p> <p>Research environment: There is a need for continuous investment in R&D infrastructure and the development of a sustainability roadmap for research organisations.</p> <p>Working conditions: The Institute faces challenges in providing suitable working conditions for staff with disabilities and needs to improve accessibility and working conditions at remote sites.</p> <p>Career development: There is no formal regulatory framework for career development. Mentoring of young researchers could be better structured and supported by a specific strategy.</p>
Training and development	<p>Strengths:</p> <p>Supervision and management tasks: Senior researchers are effective mentors for younger researchers, and the Institute supports ongoing professional development.</p> <p>Access to training and continuous development: The INCDSB encourages and supports participation in various national and international training programmes.</p> <p>Weaknesses:</p> <p>Career counselling and intellectual property rights: There is a need for more structured career counselling and training on intellectual property rights. A documented intellectual property policy could further support researchers.</p>

3. ACTIONS

The Action Plan and HRS4R strategy must be published on an easily accessible location of the organisation's website.

Please provide the web link to the organisation's HR Strategy dedicated webpage(s):

*URL: www.incdsb.ro/HRS4R

Please fill in a sum up list of all individual actions to be undertaken in your organisation's HRS4R to address the weaknesses or strengths identified in the Gap-Analysis:

Proposed ACTIONS	GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
<i>1. Conduct regular surveys and feedback sessions with researchers to identify challenges and opportunities for improvement.</i>	<i>P1 Research Freedom</i>	<i>Continuous, at least S1, S3</i>	<i>HR Department, Ethics Committee</i>	<i>At least 2 feedback sessions per year; Improved researcher satisfaction (measured by surveys)</i>
<i>2. Conduct regular and comprehensive training programmes on ethical standards and regulations for all employees.</i>	<i>P2 Ethical Principles</i>	<i>S1, S2, S3, S4</i>	<i>Ethics Committee, HR Department</i>	<i>At least 2 training sessions per year; Improved understanding of ethical standards (measured by pre and post-training assessments)</i>
<i>3. Keep up to date with advancements in the institute's area of activities, changes in ethical, legal, and social norms.</i>	<i>P3 Professional Responsibility</i>	<i>Continuous, at least S1, S3</i>	<i>Research Department, Legal Department</i>	<i>Regular updates to the internal regulations and guidelines; At least 1 annual review meeting</i>
<i>4. Create a website page dedicated to the research funding process.</i>	<i>P4 Professional Attitude</i>	<i>S2</i>	<i>IT Department, Research Management Office</i>	<i>Website page live by S2; Increased researcher engagement with funding opportunities (measured by website traffic)</i>
<i>5. Develop clear principles and guidelines that outline the assessment process and</i>	<i>P11 Evaluation/</i>	<i>S2</i>	<i>HR Department</i>	<i>New guidelines published by S2; Increased transparency in evaluation process</i>

<i>criteria for researcher evaluation.</i>	<i>Appraisal Systems</i>			<i>(measured by researcher feedback)</i>
<i>6. Develop an internal regulation on remote working for research activities.</i>	<i>P24 Working Conditions</i>	<i>S2</i>	<i>HR Department, IT Department</i>	<i>Regulation in place by S2; Increased flexibility and satisfaction among researchers (measured by surveys)</i>
<i>7. Improve access and working conditions for disabled researchers, including exploring options for infrastructure improvements</i>	<i>P24 Working Conditions</i>	<i>S3</i>	<i>Administration Department</i>	<i>Accessibility improvements initiated by S3; Positive feedback from staff on accessibility (measured by surveys)</i>
<i>8. Engage in advocacy efforts to improve national research funding policies and increase budget allocations for research activities.</i>	<i>P25 Stability and Permanence of Employment</i>	<i>Continuous, at least S1, S3</i>	<i>Executive Board</i>	<i>Increased engagement with policymakers; Successful increase in funding allocations</i>
<i>9. Promote the recruitment of experienced researchers from top Romanian and international institutions.</i>	<i>P29 Value of Mobility</i>	<i>Continuous, at least S2, S4</i>	<i>HR Department</i>	<i>At least 2 high-profile recruitments per year; Enhanced institutional research output (measured by publications and projects)</i>
<i>10. Organise training courses on research methods, planning of research projects, and ethical aspects of research projects.</i>	<i>P30 Access to Career Advice</i>	<i>S3, S4</i>	<i>HR Department, Ethics Committee</i>	<i>At least 2 training sessions by S4; Improved researcher competence in project planning (measured by training feedback)</i>
<i>11. Develop a documented INCDSB policy on intellectual property rights and the exploitation of research results.</i>	<i>P31 Intellectual Property Rights</i>	<i>S2</i>	<i>Technology Transfer Centre, Legal Department</i>	<i>Policy document published by S2; Increased awareness and use of IP protections (measured by number of patents filed)</i>
<i>12. Develop an internal INCDSB procedure for co-authorship to ensure fair recognition and consistency.</i>	<i>P32 Co-authorship</i>	<i>S3</i>	<i>Research Department</i>	<i>Procedure published by S3; Increased satisfaction with co-authorship practices (measured by researcher feedback)</i>
<i>13. Develop a procedure related to the activity of mentors and create structured training programs for mentors.</i>	<i>P33 Teaching</i>	<i>S3, S4</i>	<i>HR Department</i>	<i>Procedure in place by S3; At least 1 training program launched by S4; Positive mentor-mentee relationships (measured by feedback)</i>

14. Promote gender equality issues more prominently in training, internships, and events.	P27 Gender Balance	Continuous, at least S2, S4	HR Department, Gender Equality Committee	At least 2 gender-focused events/training per year; Improved gender balance in participation (measured by event attendance)
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The establishment of an Open Recruitment Policy is a key element in the HRS4R strategy. Please also indicate how your organisation will use the Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment Toolkit and how you intend to implement/are implementing the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment. Although there may be some overlap with a range of actions listed above, please provide a short commentary demonstrating this implementation. If the case, please make the link between the OTM-R checklist and the overall action plan.

The introduction of an open recruitment policy is a key element of the INCDSB's HRS4R strategy. The OTM-R framework aims to ensure that recruitment procedures at INCDSB are open, transparent and meritocratic, which is essential for attracting highly qualified researchers and maintaining the Institute's competitiveness at a global level.

Using the OTM-R Toolkit

The INCDSB will use the OTM-R Toolkit to standardise and improve its recruitment processes. This will include several key actions:

1. Policy development and publication

- *Action:* Development of a comprehensive OTM-R policy to be published online in Romanian and English. This policy will outline the principles and procedures for the recruitment of staff at INCDSB.
- *Status:* The current plan is to publish the approved version of the OTM-R policy by the end of the first 18 months of the implementation phase. This is in line with the confirmation of the checklist that the policy is under development.

2. Internal guidance and training

- *Action:* Create an internal guide that clearly outlines OTM-R procedures and practises for all types of positions. This includes regular training for all staff involved in the recruitment process to ensure they are familiar with the OTM-R principles.
- *Status:* The INCDSB has a methodology for the selection process that complies with national regulations and those involved in the recruitment process are already trained, although not explicitly labelled OTM-R.

3. E-recruiting tools

- *Action:* Increase the use of e-recruiting tools to streamline the recruitment process and increase the reach of job adverts. This includes maximising the use of platforms such as Euraxess, LinkedIn and dedicated national platforms.
- *Status:* The INCDSB already utilises these tools to a significant extent. Further improvement will focus on integrating these platforms into a

coherent e-recruitment strategy.

4. Quality control and monitoring

- *Action:* Establish a quality control system specifically for OTM-R to ensure that recruitment processes meet the desired standards of openness, transparency and performance. This system will include regular assessments to check that OTM-R is achieving its objectives.
- *Status:* Whilst a general institutional quality control system is in place, specific quality assurance procedures for OTM-R will be developed following policy approval.

Implementation of the OTM-R principles

The INCDSB's approach to implementing the OTM-R principles comprises several strategic steps:

1. Promotion and application phase

- *Clear guidelines and templates:* The INCDSB has clear guidelines and templates for job advertisements that are used to ensure consistency and compliance with the OTM-R standards. The job adverts include references and links to all necessary elements as recommended in the OTM-R Toolkit.
- *Reduction of administrative burden:* Efforts are made to minimise the administrative burden for applicants, even if there are legal requirements for certain documents to be submitted in paper form.

2. Selection and evaluation phase

- *Selection committees:* Clear rules govern the appointment and composition of selection committees and ensure that they are merit-based and balanced. The INCDSB has established guidelines that help the selection committees to comprehensively assess merit, taking into account various qualitative and quantitative factors.
- *Feedback and grievance redressal mechanism:* All candidates are informed of the selection results and feedback is provided to the respondents. There is a robust grievance mechanism in place to ensure transparency and fairness in the recruitment process.

3. Appointment phase

- *Information to applicants:* The INCDSB ensures that all applicants are notified at the end of the selection process and that those who participated in the interviews receive appropriate feedback. This practise emphasises the transparency and fairness of the recruitment process.

Link between OTM-R checklist and action plan

The actions outlined in the OTM-R checklist are directly linked to the broader HRS4R Action Plan for INCDSB:

- *Training and development*: actions such as the delivery of regular training on ethical standards (P2 Ethical Principles) and professional responsibility (P3 Professional Responsibility) support the principles of meritocratic recruitment by ensuring that all staff involved in recruitment are well prepared.
- *Quality Assurance*: The development of appraisal guidelines (P11 Evaluation/Appraisal Systems) and the establishment of a quality control system for OTM-R ensure that the recruitment processes in INCDSB are consistently evaluated and improved.
- *E-recruitment and accessibility*: The improvement of e-recruitment tools (P12 Recruitment) and the translation of internal regulations into English (P5 Contractual and Legal Obligations) will improve the accessibility and openness of the recruitment process and attract a wider and more diverse pool of applicants.

The INCDSB is committed to fully implementing the principles of open, transparent and merit-based recruitment. By utilising the OTM-R toolkit and linking it to the overall HRS4R action plan, the Institute aims to improve its recruitment processes and make them more inclusive, transparent and aligned with international standards. This will ultimately help to attract and retain top talent and foster an environment of excellence in research.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

General overview of the expected implementation process:

The National Institute of Research and Development for Biological Sciences(INCDSB) is committed to aligning its activities with the principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. This alignment is pursued through the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) initiative, which aims to foster an environment that supports research excellence by ensuring open, transparent and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R), ethical research practises, professional responsibility and optimal working conditions.

1. Ethical and professional aspects

One of the core components of the HRS4R implementation at the INCDSB is the improvement of the ethical and professional framework within which research activities are conducted. Currently, the INCDSB has several national and internal regulations, including a robust ethical code of conduct and an ethics committee that oversees ethical standards in research. However, in order to fully align with the HRS4R principles, the INCDSB will take the following steps:

- **Regular training programmes**: Conduct regular and comprehensive training programmes on ethical standards, professional responsibility and other key areas to ensure that all researchers are up to date with the latest developments and expectations in their field.

- **Feedback mechanisms:** Establish regular surveys and feedback sessions with researchers to identify challenges and areas for improvement in ethical and professional practises.
- **Ethical review and advice:** The Ethics Committee will continue to play a central role, but its activities will be expanded to include proactive advice and oversight to ensure ongoing compliance with ethical standards.

2. Recruitment and selection

As part of its HRS4R strategy, the INCDSB has committed to introducing an open, transparent and merit-based recruitment process (OTM-R). This includes several initiatives aimed at making the recruitment process fairer and more inclusive:

- **Development of OTM-R guidelines:** The development of a formal OTM-R policy, which will be published online in both Romanian and English, is an important milestone in the first 18 months of the HRS4R implementation phase. This policy will outline the principles and practises for all types of research positions.
- **E-Recruiting Tools:** The INCDSB will continue to make extensive use of e-recruiting tools such as national job platforms, Euraxess and LinkedIn to ensure that vacancies reach a wide and diverse audience. The use of these tools will be integrated into a coherent e-recruitment strategy to streamline the application process and reduce the administrative burden for applicant.
- **Selection committee guidelines:** Clear guidelines are established for the composition and operation of selection committees to ensure that they are meritocratic, balanced and meet the highest standards of fairness
- **Feedback and complaints mechanisms:** At the end of each recruitment process, all applicants receive detailed feedback and a robust grievance mechanism is put in place to address any issues that arise and ensure transparency and fairness throughout the process.

3. Working conditions and social security

Creating an optimal working environment for researchers is an essential prerequisite for maintaining a high level of research output. The INCDSB will focus on several key areas to improve working conditions and social security for its staff:

- **Infrastructure development:** there is a recognised need for ongoing investment in research and development infrastructure to support ongoing activities and ensure sustainability. The INCDSB plans to develop an internal roadmap for medium and long-term infrastructure development, including the creation of clear access mechanisms for internal and external users.
- **Guidelines for remote working:** In response to the changing work environment, the INCDSB will develop and implement internal regulations for remote working. These policies will ensure that researchers can work flexibly while maintaining their productivity and commitment.
- **Accessibility improvements:** Efforts will be made to improve access and working conditions for researchers with disabilities. This includes infrastructure adjustments and policy changes to create a more inclusive work environment.

4. Education and development

Professional development and continuous training are cornerstones of INCDSB's strategy to support researchers at all stages of their careers. Key initiatives in this area include:

- **Structured career development strategy:** while informal mentoring and training have proved successful, the INCDSB recognises the need for a more structured career development strategy. This strategy includes the development of formal training programmes, mentoring opportunities and clear career pathways for researchers at all levels.
- **Mobility and career guidance:** The INCDSB strongly supports the mobility of researchers and participation in international training programmes. The Institute will encourage the recruitment of experienced researchers from renowned institutions and support their relocation to the INCDSB. In addition, more structured career counselling will be provided, including training on research methods and project planning.
- **Intellectual property and co-authorship policies:** To support researchers in protecting and exploiting their research results, the INCDSB will develop a documented policy on intellectual property rights. In addition, a formal procedure for co-authorship will be introduced to ensure fair recognition and consistent practises across the Institute.

5. Evaluation and assessment systems

Transparent and fair assessment systems are crucial for the recognition and development of researchers. The gap analysis has shown that although the INCDSB has clear assessment criteria, the assessment processes could be improved.

To improve these systems, the INCDSB:

- **Develop clear assessment guidelines:** These will provide guidelines for the evaluation process and criteria to ensure that evaluations are fair, transparent and aligned with institutional goals.
- **Include qualitative criteria in evaluations:** In addition to bibliometric indices, evaluations will take into account factors such as teamwork, research management and contributions to knowledge transfer. This holistic approach will better reflect the different contributions of researchers.

The implementation of the HRS4R principles at the INCDSB represents a comprehensive effort to harmonise with European standards for cutting-edge research. Through targeted measures in the areas of ethical behaviour, recruitment, working conditions, training and evaluation, the INCDSB aims to create an environment that fosters the professional development of researchers and improves the quality and impact of its research. The successful implementation of these initiatives will benefit not only INCDSB researchers, but also the wider scientific community and society.

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

Checklist	*Detailed description and duly justification
<p>How will the implementation committee and/or steering group regularly oversee progress?</p>	<p>The implementation of the HRS4R at INCDSB is overseen by a dedicated steering committee made up of key stakeholders, including senior managers, department heads, HR representatives and researchers from different career stages. This committee will meet quarterly to review progress, address challenges and ensure that the actions outlined in the HRS4R action plan are being effectively implemented.</p> <p>Regular monitoring will be achieved through a combination of progress reports, feedback sessions and internal audits. Each department involved in the implementation will provide monthly updates to the Steering Committee detailing the status of their assigned actions, any obstacles encountered and proposed solutions. These updates will be summarised in a comprehensive progress report, which will be presented at each quarterly meeting.</p> <p>To maintain transparency and encourage broad engagement, the Steering Committee will also organise bi-annual "Town Hall" meetings where the entire research community can review progress and provide input. In addition, the Steering Committee will utilise digital tools such as project management software to track the implementation of actions in real time so that timely intervention can be made if any part of the plan falls behind schedule. This approach will ensure that the committee can regularly monitor progress and make data-driven decisions to keep implementation on track.</p>
<p>How do you intend to involve the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?</p>	<p>The involvement of the INCDSB research community in the implementation of the HRS4R is crucial to its success. The research community will be involved through various channels to ensure that their insights, concerns and suggestions are incorporated into the process.</p> <p>Firstly, representatives from different research groups, including early career researchers, will be included in the steering committee. This ensures that the voices of the research community are heard at the highest level of decision-making.</p>

	<p>Second, regular workshops and focus groups will be organised to gather input on specific aspects of HRS4R implementation. These sessions will allow researchers to contribute their expertise and experience to the development and refinement of policies and procedures. Feedback gathered in these sessions will be analysed and incorporated into ongoing implementation efforts.</p> <p>In addition, an open communication channel will be established via the intranet and email newsletters for researchers to share their thoughts and receive updates on the progress of HRS4R implementation. Surveys will also be conducted at regular intervals to assess the satisfaction and engagement of the research community with the HRS4R initiatives.</p> <p>Finally, success stories and best practises that have resulted from implementation will be disseminated throughout the institute to create a sense of ownership and encourage continued participation from the research community. By fostering a collaborative environment, the INCDSB ensures that the implementation process benefits from the active participation of its key stakeholders.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>The alignment of organisational policy with the HRS4R in the INCDSB will be a deliberate and systematic process. The first step involves a thorough review of existing policies to identify gaps or inconsistencies with the principles of the HRS4R. This review will be conducted by a working group composed of members of the HR department, legal advisors and representatives from the research community.</p> <p>Once the review is complete, the working group will prepare draft revisions to existing policies or, if necessary, develop new policies. These drafts will be submitted to the Steering Committee for approval to ensure that they reflect HRS4R principles. Key policies to be aligned include those relating to recruitment, career development, intellectual property rights and research ethics.</p> <p>To ensure that the HRS4R is recognised as an overarching HR policy, it will be explicitly referenced in the organisation’s research strategy. The Research Strategy will be updated to reflect the commitment to the HRS4R principles and emphasise how these principles will guide all HR-related decisions and practises.</p> <p>In addition, the HRS4R principles will be integrated into the performance evaluation criteria for both researchers and management to ensure that adherence to these principles is rewarded and encouraged</p>

	<p>throughout the organisation. Regular training is provided to educate staff on the importance of the HRS4Rs and their role in shaping the organisation’s research environment.</p>
<p>How will you ensure that the proposed actions are implemented?</p>	<p>To ensure the successful implementation of the measures proposed in the HRS4R Action Plan, a robust management framework is required. This framework will be anchored by clear roles and responsibilities assigned to specific departments and individuals. For each action point in the plan, a responsible person will be appointed who will be in charge of implementation and report directly to the steering committee.</p> <p>To maintain momentum, the implementation process will be guided by a detailed timeline with specific milestones and deadlines for each action. Progress is tracked through regular updates from those responsible for the actions, which are reviewed during the quarterly Steering Committee meetings.</p> <p>In addition to these structural elements, incentives are created to encourage timely and effective implementation. For example, the successful completion of key actions can be linked to performance evaluations or professional recognition within the institute.</p> <p>Contingency planning is in place to respond immediately to challenges or delays in the implementation process. The Steering Committee is authorised to reallocate resources or adjust the timeline as necessary to ensure that the overall objectives of the HRS4R are met.</p> <p>Finally, communication will play a critical role in implementation. The entire organisation will be regularly informed about the progress and importance of the HRS4R initiatives. This transparency will help to maintain a high level of commitment and engagement across the organisation.</p>
<p>How will you monitor progress (timeline)?</p>	<p>Monitoring the progress of the HRS4R implementation at INCDSB will be a continuous process based on both qualitative and quantitative methods. A detailed timetable with clear deadlines for each action point will be drawn up at the beginning. This timetable will be reviewed regularly and adjusted as necessary to take account of unforeseen challenges or changes in priorities.</p> <p>Progress is monitored through a combination of formal reporting and informal discussions. Action leaders will submit monthly progress reports to the Steering Committee that include updates on key milestones,</p>

	<p>challenges encountered and any adjustments to the original plan. These reports are discussed in quarterly meetings, in which the steering committee assesses the overall progress and decides on any necessary measures.</p> <p>In addition to these reports, the steering committee will also conduct regular site visits and interviews with those responsible for the measures and other stakeholders involved in the implementation process. These interactions will provide a deeper understanding of progress and enable the committee to offer targeted support where necessary.</p> <p>A project management tool will be used to visualise the timeline and track progress in real time. This tool will be accessible to all stakeholders, provide transparency and enable timely intervention. By closely monitoring the schedule, the INCDSB will ensure that the implementation is on track and that any delays are resolved immediately.</p>
<p>How will you measure progress (indicators) in view of the next assessment?</p>	<p>Progress in the successful implementation of the HRS4R in the INCDSB is measured using a series of predefined indicators that are based on the objectives of the action plan. These indicators will be both quantitative and qualitative and will provide a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness of implementation.</p> <p>Quantitative indicators include measures such as the number of training sessions conducted, the percentage of actions completed on time and participation in surveys and feedback sessions. For example, an indicator could measure the percentage of researchers who have completed training on ethical standards, with a target completion rate.</p> <p>Qualitative indicators focus on the results and impact of the measures implemented. These include measures such as researcher satisfaction, which is determined through regular surveys, and the effectiveness of the new measures, which is determined based on feedback from the research community. Another qualitative indicator could be the extent to which the HRS4R principles have been integrated into daily practise, which is assessed through interviews and focus groups.</p> <p>In preparation for the next evaluation, the INCDSB will compile these indicators in an annual report</p>

	<p>summarising progress in implementing the HRS4R objectives. This report will be reviewed by the Steering Committee and shared with the wider research community to ensure transparency and accountability.</p> <p>Continuous monitoring and measurement of these indicators will enable the INCDSB to make data-driven decisions to ensure that HRS4R implementation not only stays on track, but also delivers the desired improvements in the research environment.</p>
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Additional remarks/comments about the proposed implementation process:

<p>The proposed process for implementing the HRS4R (Human Resources Strategy for Researchers) at the National Institute of Research and Development for Biological Sciences (INCDSB) demonstrates a clear and well-structured commitment to aligning institutional policies and practises with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. This process is both comprehensive and adaptable, ensuring that the Institute not only fulfils the HRS4R requirements but also improves its research environment and practises.</p> <p>1. Strengths and commitment to implementation</p> <p>The INCDSB's approach is characterised by its strong commitment to ethical and professional standards, which is reflected in the alignment of its policies with national regulations and the European framework. The gap analysis shows that many aspects of the Charter and Code are already fully or almost fully implemented, particularly in areas such as transparency in recruitment, recognition of the profession and support for continuous professional development.</p> <p>The Institute's proactive steps in developing and publicising an Open, Transparent, and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) policy reflect a commitment to international best practise, despite some areas requiring further refinement. The checklist provided indicates significant progress, with key elements such as electronic recruitment tools and guidelines for merit-based selection already in place.</p> <p>2. Areas for improvement</p> <p>Although the commitment is evident, the analysis and checklist highlight several areas where INCDSB can improve to fully comply with the HRS4R standards. For example, while the ethical principles are largely implemented, there is still room for more regular and comprehensive training programmes on ethical standards. In addition, the focus on bibliometric indices in the assessment of merit points to the need to include more qualitative</p>

assessment criteria such as teamwork and knowledge transfer.

The institute's infrastructure and working conditions also pose a challenge, particularly in terms of accessibility for researchers with disabilities and the modernisation of research facilities. Addressing these gaps will be critical to creating an inclusive and supportive research environment.

3. Strategy for implementation

The INCDSB's implementation strategy is sound. It includes the formation of dedicated committees to monitor progress, the continuous involvement of stakeholders and the alignment of organisational policy with the HRS4R principles. The strategic use of progress indicators and regular reporting cycles ensures that implementation remains on track and can respond to new challenges.

The inclusion of a digital monitoring platform to track progress in real time is a commendable initiative as it allows for greater transparency and efficiency in managing the implementation process. In addition, the emphasis on risk management and adaptive planning will help mitigate potential disruptions and ensure that the institution can maintain the momentum of its HRS4R journey.

4. Engagement with the research community

The success of the HRS4R implementation at the INCDSB will largely depend on the active involvement of the research community. The proposed measures to involve researchers at all levels in the decision-making processes, combined with regular workshops, focus groups and feedback sessions, are critical to fostering a sense of ownership and collaboration among staff. This participatory approach is not only in line with the HRS4R principles, but also increases the relevance and effectiveness of the initiatives implemented.

5. Challenges and considerations

One of the key challenges highlighted is the need for continuous professional development in the context of ethical standards and evolving research norms. The Institute also needs to address infrastructural constraints that hinder accessibility and the provision of modern research facilities. These challenges, if not adequately addressed, could undermine the overall effectiveness of HRS4R implementation.

Whilst the OTM-R checklist shows clear progress, the implementation of a comprehensive quality control system specifically for OTM-R remains a crucial step. Ensuring that these systems are fully functional will be critical to maintaining high standards of recruitment and selection.

To summarise, the HRS4R implementation process at INCDSB is well thought out and provides a clear roadmap for aligning institutional practises with European standards. The Institute's strong foundation in terms of ethical practises, transparent recruitment and professional development provides a solid base on which to build. However, it will be crucial for the successful realisation of the HRS4R objectives to close the identified gaps, particularly in the areas of infrastructure, accessibility and qualitative assessment criteria.

The continued commitment of the research community, combined with a flexible and responsive implementation strategy, will ensure that the INCDSB not only meets but exceeds the expectations of the European Charter and Code and ultimately contributes to a more dynamic and inclusive research environment.