

# HR Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)

Action Plan 2021-2024

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# 1. FOREWORD

**Vall d’Hebron Institute of Research** (*hereinafter* VHIR) is a public-sector institution that promotes, develops and transfers research of the *Vall d’Hebron University Hospital* (*hereinafter* HUVH). Through international leadership and excellence in our research, we improve people’s health and quality of life.

Vision in **VHIR’s Strategic Plan 2021-2025** is described as follows:

*We want the research of Vall d’Hebron to transform: creating an impact on both health and quality of life of patients and society, generating social and economic wealth in a responsible and sustainable way, and becoming a global benchmark for new health ecosystems.*

The most differential point regarding VHIR is its proximity to the clinical activity at HUVH. All biomedical research performed at VHIR is focused on improving the quality of life of those patients seen at the hospital, who can benefit from new therapies and diagnostic techniques developed at the Institute. In this way, scientific progress has a clear and direct contribution to society, therefore returning to it the resources and expectations placed on us. Moreover, VHIR is a research institute linked to the UAB (*Barcelona Autonomous University*) and this offers also a great opportunity to promote biomedical teaching through our Institution and area of influence.

The **strategic themes of VHIR** are defined within the Strategic Plan. They are classified according to four perspectives (Results, Clients, Processes and Organisation) that determine how research is performed at VHIR.

2021-2025	
1 <b>Ethics and responsibility</b>	Ethics, integrity, commitment and transparency are the basis of our actions, with the aim that our research and its results have a relevant impact both at social and economic and environmental levels.
2. <b>Leadership and ambition</b>	We have a vocation for leadership and the ambition to be agents of transformation of the environment both at local and global levels. At the same time, we have a collaborative and integrative spirit.
3. <b>Inclusion</b>	We are an inclusive institution. Alliances, patients and society are our preferred areas of action.
4. <b>Efficiency</b>	We rise to the challenges of our day-to-day jobs with rigor, flexibility and effectiveness.

VHIR Strategic Plan Values 2021-2025

Work developed at VHIR focuses around its motto and values, which are the basis for daily research activity. Whereas 2016-2020 motto was centred on the translational approach of VHIR’s research: *“The research of today, the medicine of tomorrow”*, the current motto (Strategic Plan 2021-2025) is more focused on the whole concept of health: **“Today’s research, tomorrow’s health”** and the objective of VHIR to become a global reference in research and to inspire the rest of the research community. For this reason, in this new Strategic Plan, there is the sentence *“Inspiring by doing”* next to the motto.

As shown, our final aim is to be an institution that contributes to improve a better health in society but we also want to be inspiring as we implement our strategy.

The Strategic Plan 2021-2025 includes the following 12 strategic themes that covered different areas from innovation, internationalisation, clinical research or relations with the different actors of the *Vall d'Hebron Campus*, among others.



In 2024, VHIR is expected to move to a **new building**, currently under construction. The new facilities will mean a major change in the way we work and interact. Moving from different locations to one large space will enable the sharing of knowledge and experience, promote synergies among different groups, increase cross-cutting collaborations and provide more service to society. With this new headquarters, VHIR will be able to retain its talent while attracting new talent, both national and international, and promote business collaboration. The new multifunctional building with multi-purpose spaces will foster outreach, teaching and public participation. The move to an improved space, more adapted and favourable to our activity, will allow us to make progress in some of the planned actions and, therefore, to continue guaranteeing the application of the [C&C](#) principles.

**Regarding the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers**, VHIR endorsed the principles of the [European Charter and Code for Researchers \(C&C\)](#) in 2014. In 2015 VHIR received the HR Excellence in Research logo from the European Commission and in 2021, after the Virtual Visit from the European Commission auditors, the HR Excellence seal was renewed.

The HR Excellence seal means a recognition of the institute commitment to have been working, since 2014, on aligning its policies, procedures and good practices to the forty principles of the [C&C](#), in order to foster mainly **good working conditions, career development, talent circulation, gender equality & inclusiveness, knowledge transfer** and **society engagement** in line with the **European Research Area (ERA) Policy agenda**.

Since VHIR's endorsed to the [C&C](#), three Action Plans have been designed. Nowadays, the Institute is deploying the third Action Plan.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Steering Committee constitution

At the beginning of 2021, the HRS4R Steering Committee was formed by staff from all the representative's groups. Voluntary and open invitations were sent to research staff in the last 3 years (from 2020). As a result, overtime, more members from multiple units and functional areas have been added to the Committee. This was essential to ensure that an inclusive and relevant approach was given to the actions.

The main agreed responsibilities of the Committee are the following:

- Provide advice and direction.
- Propose initiatives to enrich the plan and to improve workflows.
- Oversee the advancement of the Action Plan.

The Committee members are:

- Olalla Bagüés (Human Resources Director)
- Anna Santamaría (Scientific Strategy Director)
- Federica Righi (Competitive Projects Director)
- Monica Anglada (Quality, Documentation & Processes Coordinator)
- Immaculada Hernández (Head of Communications)
- Macarena Herranz (Project Manager – Strategy Area)
- Dr. José Raúl Herance (Senior Researcher /R4 – Molecular Medical Imaging)
- Dr. Javier Santos (Senior Researcher /R4 – Physiology and Digestive Physiopathology)
- Dr. Joaquin Seras Franzoso (R2 – Drug Delivery and Targeting)
- Dr. Sunny Malhotra Sareen (R2 – Clinical Neuro-immunology / Neuroscience)

In addition, the Committee has the direct collaboration and support of the Professional Development Unit including Miriam Álvarez (Head of Unit) and Anastasia Mendoza (HR Officer).

### 2.2. Action Plan design

The design of the Action Plan followed different phases:

#### Gap Analysis

1. Review of the previous Action Plan progress and the degree of completion
2. Prepare the new Action Plan for the period (2021-2024) considering:
  - a. Last action Plan status
  - b. C&C analysis against the VHIR policies and practices
  - c. Current Institutional Strategic Action Plan
  - d. Feedback from all professional groups (focus groups, survey, etc.)

The data was gathered from:

- Focus groups carried out on December 16th and 17th, 2020
- A survey in which 101 professionals participated voluntarily
- The Workforce Representatives' input

The analysis of this data was carried out by HR and further reviewed among the Steering Committee members.

### **Narrative Process**

3. Write (narrative) the final Action Plan collaboratively

### **Approval Process**

4. Approval process
  - a. Workforce Representatives'
  - b. Internal Scientific Committee
  - c. General Management
  - d. Board of Trustees

### **Dissemination**

5. Internal dissemination of the approved Action Plan
6. Make available the new Action Plan in a public platform (institutional website)

## **2.3. Follow-up methodology**

The follow-up methodology is based on a four-measure system:

- Excel monitoring tool  
It includes action, area, principles of the [C&C](#), owner, status, progress, deadline, deviation (if any), report file status, last meeting date, among other fields.  
The tool allows to track the progress of each action and provides an overview regarding the percentage completed of the whole plan.
- Follow-up-Assessing meetings with owners  
The assessing meetings are aimed at providing advice and support regarding the implementation of activities. Additionally, and in case of any deviation, corrective actions are discussed and agreed, as well as, new resources if needed.
- Steering Committee sessions  
Quarterly sessions are organised among the members of the committee in order to evaluate the progress of the plan, propose new initiatives and present results of actions, among others.
- Reporting  
Using the tracking tool and files/material provided from each actions' owner, an annual internal report is developed to summarise the Action Plan's progress.

## **2.4. Mid-term evaluation**

During the last term of 2022 took place the **mid-term evaluation** of the Action Plan, aimed at assessing the relevance of an intervention and the progress made towards achieving the planned objectives.

The evaluation provided an opportunity to make modifications to ensure the achievement of these objectives within the lifetime of the Action Plan and to incorporate the recommendations provided by the European Commission (EC) Auditors during the Virtual Visit in October 2021.

The methodology of the mid-term evaluation consisted of three lines of interventions:

**1. Validate the exact progress of planned activities:**

- Executive meetings between Human Resources and the owners of the actions in order to verify the accurate status of activities, evaluate if new resources are needed to complete them, identify deviations, include modifications (if needed) that can enrich the plan.

**2. Enrich the Plan including and contextualising new actions:**

- Include and contextualise the actions recommended by the European Commission (EC) Auditors during the Virtual Visit in order to provide better practices and policies to our staff.

**3. Group specific actions into core actions:**

- In order to offer a more focused and targeted plan, the activities were re-organised. The Plan was structured into core actions which provide a more strategic vision and clearer lines of work.
- Considering the feedback received on each action's progress, it was necessary to approach the Action Plan from a wider point of view. This allowed to:
  - Redirect and bring closer each action to be in line with the institutional strategy
  - Include each actions' subsequent tasks
  - Ensure a smoother and friendlier monitoring
  - Guarantee better reporting, focused on quantitative and qualitative indicators

## 3. ACTION PLAN

As a result of the Gap Analysis carried out following several techniques, the recommendations provided by the European Commission auditors and the outcome of the mid-term evaluation, the **third action plan** was refined and enriched and includes the following main strategic lines of action and the subsequent 34 actions, divided into four areas: Ethical & Professional Aspects / Recruitment / Working Conditions & Social Security / Training.

1. Foster the **Open Science Policy** in order to improve quality, efficiency and responsiveness of research, in line with the aims of Horizon Europe.
2. Promote **gender equality**, foster **inclusiveness** and raise awareness regarding **the role of women scientist**.
3. Strengthen the **Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment Policy** by enriching procedures and policies, disseminating them and, in so doing, building-up a new mindset among the research community.
4. Promote an **attractive Research Professional Career** and provide tools for talent circulation and wider employability.
5. **Improve working conditions** regarding stabilisation, **work-life balance** and **benefits/advantages**.
6. **Further training initiatives** to deepen knowledge on ethical aspects.



ETHICAL & PROFESSIONAL ASPECTS					
Action #	Action Title	C&C Principle	Units in charge	Timeframe	Indicator
1	Provide regular information and/or training courses about Good Clinical Practices in Research (GCP)	2, 5	Support Clinic Research Unit	Q4-2021 to Q4-2022	- Activities organised - # of participants
2	Reinforce the training provided regarding data protection regulations	2, 5, 7	Legal	Q4-2021 to Q4-2022	- # activities
3	Organise regular meetings of the <i>Research Integrity Committee</i> (CIR) and disseminate its main responsibilities among all VHIR personnel	2, 3, 4	Legal and Communication	Q4- 2021 to Q4-2023	- Dissemination activities - Meetings per year
4	Continue promoting dissemination, compliance and commitment of adherence to VHIR regulations and CERCA code of Conduct	2, 7	Legal and Communication	Q4-2021 to Q4-2023	- Activities organised
5	Develop the <i>Vall d'Hebron MentorINN Programme</i> in order to increase awareness on the Innovation and Impact culture and improve the entrepreneurial knowledge among the VHIR community	11	Innovation	Q1-2023 to Q4-2023	- Programme Documents - Associated Mentors - Defined impact indicators
6	Continue fostering the dissemination and accountability of research results by: a) updating the Open Access Policy to an Open Science Policy, b) defining a sustainable way to implement the Open Access Policy and c) participate in the CERCA Data Management Strategy working group together with the Catalonia Ecosystem of Research Centres and coordinate its implementation in VHIR	8	Strategy Area	Q4-2021 to Q4-2023	- Promoted initiatives and outcomes
7	Continue and improve the implementation of Responsible Research & Innovation (RRI)	9	Strategy Area	Q4-2021 to Q4-2023	- # of Implemented actions
8	Promote and adhere to Patient and Public Engagement initiatives and projects	9	Competitive Projects Area Strategy Area	Q4-2021 to Q2-2024	- Promoted initiatives and outcomes
9	Improve the purchasing tool/process in order to reduce the administrative burden for researchers and increase efficiency	6	Purchasing	Q4-2022 to Q4-2023	- New features implemented
10	Continue increasing outreach activities, such as, scientific events, public talks, Doors Open Day...	9	Communication	Q4-2021 to Q4-2022	- # Activities organised and targets

RECRUITMENT					
Action #	Action Title	C&C Principle	Units in charge	Timeframe	Indicator
11	Update the Recruitment Policy and design the Selection Procedures (from R1 to R4) according to the OTM-R Policy and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers	12 to 21	HR	Q1-2022 to Q4-2023	- Related documents - # of dissemination activities
12	Organise initiatives aimed at disseminating OTM-R Policy and fostering a new mindset for selection procedures	12 to 21	HR	Q4-2022 to Q1-2024	- Activities organised - # of participants
13	Prepare a Communication Plan in order to disseminate effectively the Recruitment Policy and Selection procedures	12, 13	HR Communication	Q1-2022 to Q2-2024	- # of dissemination activities
14	Enrich the Welcome Package to guarantee a smooth induction	12	HR	Q4-2022 to Q2-2024	- Welcome Package executed - Survey results
15	Join EURAXESS as a Contact Point in order to provide new resources and tools regarding professional career and international mobility addressed to researchers	17, 18	HR	Q3-2022 to Q2-2024	- EURAXESS activities
16	Deploy the Alumni VHIR project targeted to Master and PhD students aimed at creating a community of mutual enrichment and collaboration	12	Teaching	Q1-2022 to Q4-2022	- # of members - Launched Initiatives

WORKING CONDITIONS & SOCIAL SECURITY					
Action #	Action Title	C&C Principle	Units in charge	Timeframe	Indicator
17	Review and update the Professional Research Career and disseminate it among the research community	22, 28, 30	HR Strategy Area Communication	Q3-2022 to Q2-2024	- Document update - Dissemination made
18	Carry out a talent engagement diagnosis by measuring the attrition of the staff and explore initiatives to improve it	25	HR	Q1-2023 to Q1-2024	- Survey results - New initiatives proposal
19	Become VHIR EURAXESS Contact Point in order to provide support to researchers on international mobility, career development, job opportunities, among others	23, 28, 29, 30	HR	Q3-2022 to Q1-2024	- # and type of launched activities
20	Enrich the Equality Plan from a comprehensive perspective in terms of gender topics and local, national and international aspects	27	HR Equality Commission	Q4-2021 to Q1-2023	- # of activities by type and specific indicators by activity
21	Continue developing and planning activities around Women in Science (WinS) programme more specifically related to empower girls and women	27	HR Equality Commission	Q1-2022 to Q2-2024	- # of activities
22	Participate in the New Collective Labour Agreement of the Research Sector and improve contractual stability by applying new contract model from the New Spanish Science Law	22, 24, 25	HR Works Council	Q1-2022 to Q2-2024	- Collective agreement advancement - # of contract stabilisations
23	Improve working conditions regarding work-life balance and benefits/advantages	24	HR Works Council	Q2-2021 to Q2-2024	- Improved conditions and portfolio benefits
24	Explore new tools/initiatives in order to strengthen occupational health at laboratories (online course, etc.)	34	HR Health & Safety Committee	Q1-2021 to Q1-2024	- Launched tools and initiatives
25	Improve communication related to participation in decision making bodies	35	Communication	Q4-2022 to Q2-2024	- Initiatives and target

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT					
Action #	Action Title	C&C Principle	Units in charge	Timeframe	Indicator
26	Continue improving and enriching all VHIR training proposals within its annual Training Plan including activities addressed to all professional groups	38, 39	HR Teaching Core Facilities	Q1-2022 to Q2-2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training Portfolio summary</li> <li>- # of new initiatives</li> <li>- Survey results</li> </ul>
27	Foster leadership training targeted to Principal Investigators and/or Postdocs in their latest stage	38	HR	Q1-2021 to Q4-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- # of trainings</li> <li>- # of participants</li> <li>- Survey Results</li> </ul>
28	Develop a tailored-made Training Programme targeted to PhD students	28, 39, 40	HR Teaching	Q2-2022 to Q4-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- # of trainings</li> <li>- # of participants</li> <li>- Survey Results</li> </ul>
29	Create a PhD Committee aimed at promote new projects and initiatives that foster training, professional development, networking and be a supportive and advising contact point for the PhD community	37,38, 39	PhD Committee Teaching HR	Q3-2022 to Q4-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organised Initiatives</li> <li>- Conducted meetings</li> </ul>
30	Organise training activities targeted to research community on EU project lifecycle management, budgeting, best practices in grants application and how to embed RRI in EU projects	38, 39	Competitive Projects	Q1-2023 to Q2-2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- # of organised Initiatives</li> <li>- # participants</li> </ul>
31	Create a Project Handbook addressed to researchers to guide them throughout the different steps of project management life cycle (from ideation to closure)	38, 39	Competitive Projects	Q1-2023 to Q2-2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Document prepared and disseminated</li> </ul>
32	Foster knowledge on innovation, technology transfer and impact among research community by organising training sessions	34	Innovation	Q4-2023 to Q2-2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- # of organised sessions</li> <li>- # of participants</li> </ul>
33	Provide and disseminate resources and tools on Career Development from EURAXESS	38, 39	HR	Q4-2022 to Q2-2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- # of shared actions</li> </ul>
34	Promote training regarding legal aspects and clinical research	38	Legal Clinical Research Development Area	Q4-2022 to Q2-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- # of trainings</li> </ul>

