



Excellent peripheries for a strong
European Research Area

D3.1 Good practices for the implementation of HRS4R and for researchers' careers

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Acronyms & Abbreviations	
AP	Action Plan
C&C	European Charter & Code for Researchers
D	Deliverable
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
HRS4R	Human Resources Strategy for Researchers
SC	Steering Committee
UAc	University of Azores
ULPGC	University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
UNICAL	University of Calabria
WG	Working Group
WP	Work Package

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current document is a report on Deliverable 3.1, 'Good practices for the implementation of Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) and for researchers' careers,' under the 3rd Work Package (WP3) of the EXPER project.

As WP leader, this report collects good practices from the University of Calabria (UNICAL) and suggests them to the University of Azores (UAc) and the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC), to improve the working conditions of their researchers and at the same time attract and retain talent through the HRS4R strategy.

This Deliverable outlines the core activities for the WP's 12-month duration and presents the tools, procedures, and guidelines provided to the two Widening Universities. In particular, it outlines the path of UNICAL's support in implementing the HRS4R strategy at UAc and ULPGC, focusing on targeted actions and innovative measures to attract and retain research talents, improve working conditions for researchers, exchange best practices for incentives, and facilitate the mobility of staff, researchers and students.

The document presents:

-  an introduction regarding the Starting Context highlighting challenges and threats to be faced by the two Widening Universities (UAc and ULPGC), as identified in WP1 and examined in depth through periodical meetings;
-  the key goals of Task 3.1 of WP3, titled "Implementing the HRS4R and improving framework conditions", along with the advantages of HRS4R;
-  a description of UNICAL's support regarding the implementation of HRS4R in Widening Universities and the main outputs achieved throughout the project;
-  Finally, some recommendations and suggestions for possible future.

1. INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC) and the University of the Azores (UAc) is a crucial step toward improving researchers' career conditions and enhancing institutional attractiveness.

This report outlines the strategic approach, challenges, and outcomes of HRS4R adoption and highlights the pivotal role of the University of Calabria (UNICAL) in facilitating the process.

Widening universities tackle the attraction and retention of excellent research personnel. UNICAL has supported ULPGC and UAc in implementing a tailored HRS4R strategy, further investigating and addressing the needs and areas for improvement in the framework conditions for researchers based on WP1. A contextual analysis of preventive measures and key factors has been conducted. Further, ULPGC and UAc have assessed the creation and sharing of incentives for an attractive career environment and the enhanced circulation of students and staff based on good practices shared by UNICAL.

2. INTERNAL ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION

A primary goal of the WP3 EXPER project is to enhance the excellence profile of both universities by increasing their attractiveness to local and international researchers. The internal analysis identified concrete measures aligned with the HRS4R principles.

In particular, the context analysis was carried out to assess the level of knowledge of the process and the individual and local needs, in order to tailor the support approach based on the different stages of HRS4R implementation at the two universities, with support from UNICAL.




At first, to identify key areas for improvement, UNICAL analyzed the Assessment Reports from WP1 (see D1.2 and D1.3), which highlight a significant challenge in recruiting new research talent, especially in the outermost regions (see [Annex 1](#)).

Through a self-assessment questionnaire (internal and regional ecosystem), three key components of university excellence were evaluated at both universities:

Excellence in Research
Excellence in Research is realized through creating influential scientific knowledge, with the help of a diverse group of high-caliber researchers in a well-equipped, interactive environment. To foster research excellence, universities should focus on institutional objectives, strategies, frameworks, educational capacities, and advanced research production. This part encompasses institutional objectives, strategies and frameworks, educational capacities, and advanced research production.
Talent acquisition and retention
Talent acquisition and retention are crucial for a university's reputation. Attracting and retaining exceptional researchers involves creating a positive work environment, promoting a healthy culture, and providing opportunities for career advancement. The self-assessment questionnaire addressed 5 major themes to enhance talent acquisition and retention: recruitment of new talent, career development opportunities, workplace balance and wellbeing, the culture of innovation, and ethical excellence.
Knowledge and technology transfer (KTT)
Knowledge and Technology Transfer (KTT) is an essential component of university excellence, involving the dissemination of scientific and technological research findings, techniques, and methods to both the commercial sector and broader society. This section explores KTT strategies and organizations, structures and processes towards patent and IP activities, partnership developments, and start-up support and incubation.

Both widening universities identified a serious threat regarding the recruitment of new talent.

These issues have been addressed through a multi-faceted and joint strategy with **three main areas of action**:

-  **Excellent and Responsible Research**, which encompasses capacity-building activities for researchers (transversal skills, entrepreneurial skills, and Open Science skills and tools); networking activities to develop multidisciplinary research projects and identify news research strands;
-  **Strengthening the Attractiveness of Researchers' Careers**, including improvement in career assessment, researchers' conditions, and fostering gender equality and diversity;
-  **Co-operation with surrounding ecosystem actors for the transmission of knowledge and talents**, e.g. through the creation or reinforcement of technology transfer and spin-offs offices and fostering cooperation with citizens.

Bases on these areas, the two Widening Universities have established a series of strategic objectives. The one directly linked to the implementation of the HRS4R strategy, which aims to improve the working conditions of researchers and attract talent, is:




 <small>UAc UNIVERSIDADE DOS AÇORES</small>	<p align="center">Invest in a People-Centric University and prioritizes the well-being and development of its academic community</p>
Description	
<p>This objective emphasizes the university's commitment to valuing and caring for the academic community, as people are the most important asset of UAc. To achieve this, UAc will focus on the professional and personal development of its staff and create a safe and healthy environment to promote the quality of life of the academic community. This includes improving the provision of services, such as enhancing well-being through its Health Office, promoting access to culture and sport through a variety of activities, and developing a diverse strategy at UAc. Furthermore, hiring efforts will aim to ensure that 50% of teaching staff have tenure in the relevant areas, promote continuous scientific qualification courses, and submit application for the HRS4R strategy to enhance the working conditions for researchers and offer incentives to attract talents.</p>	
 <small>ULPGC</small>	<p align="center">Develop a Committed University to focus on expanding research to address societal challenges</p>
Description	
<p>This objective underscores the university's commitment to expanding its research and innovation activities in the social sphere. It aligns with the broader social impact goals of the project and aims to foster a culture of research and innovation that addresses societal challenges. The implementation of the HRS4R strategy will improve working conditions for researchers and offer incentives to attract talented individuals.</p>	

Subsequently, UNICAL conducted an internal analysis of ULPGC and UAc through periodic meetings to better understand their institutional needs regarding the implementation of HRS4R.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HRS4R STRATEGY IN EXPER PROJECT

Task 3.1 of WP3 aims to make the widening universities more attractive to talent by improving researchers' career conditions and analyzing how brain drain can be prevented or mitigated in the two outermost regions.

In response to the significant threat to new talent recruitment identified in WP1, UNICAL has supported the implementation of the HRS4R strategy at both institutions by sharing its internationalization strategy and best practices, particularly in the following areas:

-  Incentives for creating an attractive career environment,
-  Incentives for promoting mobility and international networks,
-  Enhancing the framework conditions for researchers.

3.1 HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY 4 RESEARCHERS (HRS4R)





The "Human Resources Strategy for Researchers" (HRS4R) is an initiative of the European Commission in force since 2008 that certifies an institution's commitment and progress towards implementing the principles of the European Charter for Researchers (C&C).

The C&C addresses researchers, employers, funders, and policymakers, defining their rights and responsibilities for the development of attractive research careers aimed at supporting EU research and innovation excellence. The principles of the Charter establish high-quality standards regarding ethical and professional aspects, research environment, working conditions, recruitment, evaluation, talent attraction, support provided to researchers for their activities, and career development ([More info](#)).

Initially adopted by the European Commission in 2005 ([C&C 2005](#)), the C&C was recently updated and published together with the Recommendation of the Council of the EU of 18 December 2023 on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe ([New Charter for Researchers](#)).

Since 2005, about 1500 European institutions have endorsed the Charter. Of these, 755 have been awarded the HR Excellence in Research Award by the European Commission.

HRS4R, therefore, align with the objective of Task 3.1. The implementation of HRS4R at UAc and ULPGC is expected to bring significant advantages, typical of the HRS4R strategy:

-  **Creating an attractive career environment** by improving working conditions and advancement opportunities, with a focus on young researchers, placing them at the core, improving their status, and fostering internal collaboration;
-  **Strengthening attraction and mobility** by increasing the ability to attract and retain researchers, promoting symmetry in brain mobility;
-  **Increasing international visibility and credibility** both nationally and internationally by encouraging global research collaboration;
-  **Improving working conditions** by enhancing research environments for faculty and staff;

- 🌐 **Enhancing institutional framework conditions** by strengthening policies and support structures for researchers;
- 🌐 **Increasing international recognition** by enhancing the institution's reputation and fostering collaboration opportunities.

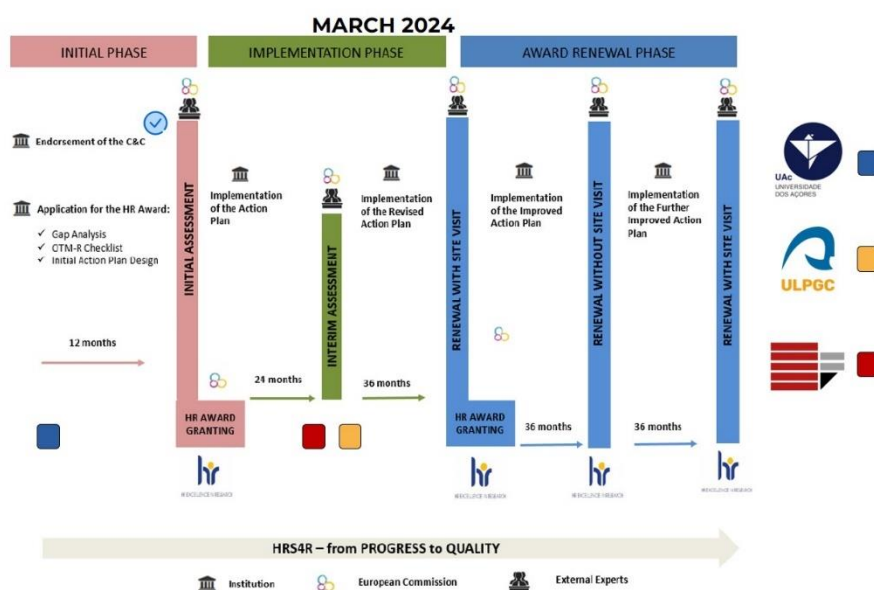
UNICAL's support was calibrated to the different level of knowledge and involvement in the HRS4R process at the two Universities Widening. As shown in [Figure 1](#), at the beginning of the Task:

- 🌐 The University of Azores was at the beginning of the process;
- 🌐 University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria was completing the interim assessment of the initial Action Plan.

In particular, UNICAL supported both universities in the implementation of a tailored HRS4R strategy:

- 1) launching the **initial phases** at UAc;
- 2) advancing subsequent phases of **implementation and renewal of the Action Plan** at ULPGC.

Figure 1. The stages of HRS4R implementation in the two Universities Widening in 18th month of the EXPER project (beginning of Task 3.1)



More in detail:

- 🌐 The **initial phase**, leads to the granting of the HR Excellence in Research award;
 - 🌐 The **implementation phase**, is an intermediate phase between initial and renewal phase, which is meant to provide guidance in the first stages of the HR award process.
- Two years (24 months) after the initial granting of the HR award are planned:
- *Interim Assessment*: Assessment of implementation of the Initial Action Plan published at initial phase;
 - Publication and assessment of the Revised Action Plan, which will cover the upcoming three years (36 months).

3.2 IMPLEMENTING THE HRS4R AT ULPGC

For ULPGC, which, at the beginning of the task, was completing the interim assessment of the implementation of the initial Action Plan (published in the initial phase), periodic meetings and the study of institutional documents, led to the proposal and development of the **Catalogue of Good Practices** for the implementation of HRS4R. This catalogue, proposed and elaborated by UNICAL, is based on a comparison between the actions outlined in both the ULPGC and UNICAL Action Plans (both initial and revised versions).

For five actions identified in the ULPGC AP, 11 good practices have been proposed based on the UNICAL AP. These actions mainly address the principles of C&C (based on the first version of the C&C label), which ULPGC prioritizes:

1. Career development,
2. Continuing professional development,
3. Gender balance/non-discrimination.

Table 1 compares the ULPGC and UNICAL Action Plans, presenting the ULPGC action followed by the corresponding good practice proposed by UNICAL for each C&C principle.

Meanwhile, ULPGC has completed its interim assessment by submitting its *Revised Action Plan* (*ULPGC Revised Action Plan*), which will cover the upcoming three years (36 months).

Table 1. Catalogue of good practices for the implementation of HRS4R and for researchers' careers for ULPGC

From Action Plan HRS4R - ULPGC		From Action Plan HRS4R - UNICAL		
Action	Principles of European Charter & Code for Researchers	Action	Principles of European Charter & Code for Researchers	Good practices proposed
Acción 4. Diseñar un programa piloto de tutoría para apoyar el desarrollo de la carrera de los investigadores.	28. Career development 30. Access to research training and continuous development	Action 14. Encourage supervisors to follow their student's providing information about any possibility of working in the field of non-academic research and EU opportunities (European Job market).	8. Dissemination, exploitation of results 30. Access to career advice 39. Access to research training and continuous development	The UNICAL Placement service is designed to support graduates and young researchers (R1-R2) in their transition to the workforce, promoting career opportunities beyond academia. Various initiatives are implemented, notified via email to graduates and young researchers. For instance, matchmaking events with local companies by involving the Regional Association of firms (Confindustria Calabria), in order to promote industrial PhD programs and establish close partnerships to leverage research outcomes and assist PhD students in identifying job opportunities.
Acción 10. Mejorar la gestión de la investigación haciendo hincapié en la formación de los investigadores.	4. Professional attitude 9. Public Engagement 37. Supervision and managerial duties 40. Supervision	Action 5. Support the continuing professional development, by improving the quality of teaching	27. Gender balance 28. Career Development 33. Teaching	1. Digital educational videos: "Language Resources for Academic Purposes" and "The use of Moodle for secure programming tests in laboratories, featuring coding tools and automated corrections" 2. E-learning platform (https://elearning.unical.it/), the utilization of which will be further improved through the design and dissemination of a Vademecum. 3. Teaching methodology videos: "Interactive lectures and complex concepts" and "Tools for improving teaching methodologies and assessment tests for students with disabilities or specific learning disorders".

		Action 17. Strengthen the professionalism of R2 researchers by increasing their continuing professional development.	38. Continuing Professional Development	Support for R2 by covering the costs of training and preparatory actions (e.g. seminars on 'how to write a successful proposal'), with specialised technical assistance in connection with National Contact Points (e.g. the Agency for the Promotion of European Research (APRE, https://apre.it/en/homepage/) aimed at improving the success rate of applications.
		Action 30. Monitor the satisfaction of temporary researchers in the relationship with the supervisors through a dedicated survey.	31. Intellectual Property Rights 32. Co-Authorship 36. Relation with supervisors	Anonymous survey dedicated to PhD students of a specific session on satisfaction with the relationship with one's supervisor.
Acción 14. Promover medidas para atraer y retener el talento.	23. Research environment 24. Working conditions 33. Teaching 13. Recruitment (Code) (suggested by UNICAL)	Action 7. Encourage external candidates to apply by publishing a fact sheet of the call in English and the Rector's decree also in English.	13. Recruitment (Code)	Launch of calls to attract international researchers: the 'Chiara Fama' programme (with two calls open in 2022-2023) Regulations for the recruitment of researchers funded by ERC/MSCA Global Fellowships https://www.unical.it/ricerca/giovani-ricercatori/marie-sklodowska-curie-fellowships/
Acción 16. Aplicar políticas de igualdad eficaces.	5. Contractual and legal obligations	Action 10. Ensure a balanced gender composition on committees in R1-R2 recruitment procedures.	14. Selection (Code) 27. Gender balance	Regulations for the Selection of: R1. The "Regulation on doctoral programmes" (https://www.unical.it/media/medias/2023/Phd_Regulations_RD_13-5-2022.pdf) extends the principle of gender-balanced composition in recruitment committees for R1 as follows "The Rector shall appoint the selection boards by decree for entry tests to PhD courses with administrative headquarters at the University upon proposal of the Boards of Lecturers, respecting gender balance, if applicable." R2, see the Italian regulation, in particular Law 79/2022, which has brought about significant changes to post-

				doctoral recruitment and training. R3 and R.4. The regulations for the selection of R3-R4 already provide for the selection committee to be appointed according to the principle of gender balance, when the lack of gender balance in some Sectors/Scientific Areas does not prevent this.
		Action 13. Organize more initiatives to stimulate debate and promote the importance of gender balance.	27. Gender balance	R2. R2, see the Italian regulation, in particular Law 79/2022.
	7. Good practice in research	Action 20. Offer a training course on Gender language aimed at preventing gender-based violence, specifically addressing sexual harassment and any form of violation of personal dignity and freedom.	10. Non discrimination 27. Gender balance 38. Continuing Professional Development	R3 and R.4. The regulations for the selection of R3-R4 already provide for the selection committee to be appointed according to the principle of gender balance, when the lack of gender balance in some Sectors/Scientific Areas does not prevent this.
		Action 23. Define a more efficient communication strategy by implementing a dedicated online platform for Gender Equality, serving as a hub to foster dialogue and promote initiatives outlined in the Gender Equality Plan (for more detail https://www.unical.it/media/medias/2024/GEP_Eng_summary.pdf)	10. Non discrimination 27. Gender balance	a) Gender Equality Plan, available at the link below: https://www.unical.it/media/medias/2023/Gender_Equality_Plan.pdf b) Development of various initiatives to promote the GEP, coordinated by the Guarantee Committee and the Rector's delegate for Equal Opportunities, with particular focus on the areas identified as critical by the first GEP monitoring focus group (2023): 1. leadership training; 2. harassment and gender-based violence (strengthening communication and dissemination of guarantee tools); 3. discrimination in STEM disciplines. c) Events open to the entire academic community: - Workshop "Tools for preventing and combating gender-based violence. The Unical experience", - Presentation of the book "Female Leadership. Does it really exist?" (by Valeria Santoro and Chiara Galgani), - Conference "MoviMenti. Women's knowledge and practices",

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshop/laboratory "Countering gender discrimination in STEM. The actions of the University of Calabria", - Presentation of the book "Now it's our turn. Women, leadership and other misdeeds", - Workshop "'Violence against women and tools to combat it: the Unical experience". d) Production of 2 videos <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tools to combat harassment and gender- based violence (https://www.unical.it/contents/news/view/10195-lo-sportello-antiviolenza-unical-uno-spazio-sicuro-contro-molestie-e-discriminazioni/); 2. Training and research activities on gender studies (https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4P3Ns_Lk2V/?igsh=MWw4czA5eXVnYmpzaw%3D%3D).
	27. Gender balance (suggested by UNICAL)	Action 26. Promote the role of Confidential Counsellor and all initiatives already implemented to intercept and manage cases of gender violence and harassment.	10. Non discrimination 27. Gender balance 34. Complaints and appeals	a) Training course (12 hours) on gender inclusive language for UNICAL staff b) To involve a wider audience of researchers, focus groups (2 hours) within departments to disseminate the guidelines on inclusive language. The initial evaluation of our GEP recommends expanding (up to 100 people) training to address sexual harassment/violence.
		Action 27. Promote the integration of a gender dimension into research content.	1. Research freedom 27. Gender balance	Publication of an annual university call for proposals for a prize for the best doctoral thesis that includes a gender dimension, aimed at PhD candidates.
Acción 17. Apoyar el desarrollo de la carrera científica de los jóvenes investigadores, formándolos para su posterior acceso al	28. Career development 33. Teaching	Action 5. Support the continuing professional development, by improving the quality of teaching	27. Gender balance 28. Career Development 33. Teaching	see above (linked to the relevant principle)

cuerpo docente de la universidad.		Action 7. Encourage external candidates to apply by publishing a fact sheet of the call in English and the Rector's decree also in English.	13. Recruitment (Code)	see above (linked to the relevant principle)
		Action 17. Strengthen the professionalism of R2 researchers by increasing their continuing professional development.	38. Continuing Professional Development	see above (linked to the relevant principle)

For more details, see the following links

UNICAL

Initial Action Plan HRS4R of UNICAL https://www.unical.it/media/medias/2022/UNICAL_Action_Plan_T4_23-3-2022.pdf

Internal Review - Action Plan 2024-2027 of UNICAL https://www.unical.it/media/medias/2024/HRS4R_Internal_Review_Action_Plan_2024-2027_UNICAL.pdf

Institutional webpage of HRS4R UNICAL <https://www.unical.it/ricerca/human-resources-strategy-for-researchers/?lang=en>

ULPGC

Internal Review - Action Plan 2023-2026 of ULPGC https://www.ulpgc.es/sites/default/files/ArchivosULPGC/vinvestigacion/action_plan_intermediate_report_es.pdf






Institutional webpage of HRS4R ULPGC https://www.ulpgc.es/vinvestigacion/hrs4r2_en

3.3 IMPLEMENTING THE HRS4R AT UAC

As for UAc, which, at the beginning of the task, had not yet embarked on the path to excellence, UNICAL has supported the accreditation process from the beginning, providing a work plan and a timeline outlining the different phases of the process and the possible approaches (mandatory and optional) to follow, based on the UNICAL model.

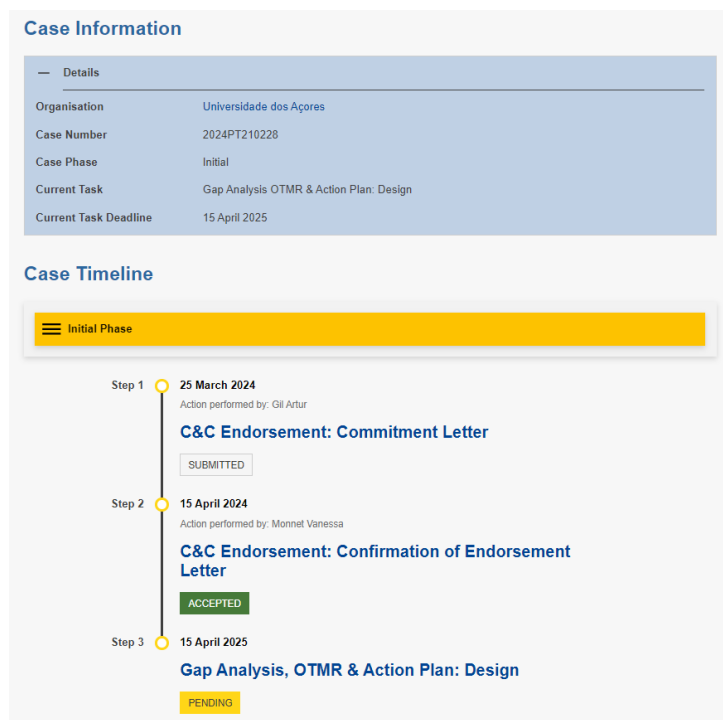
Initially, UNICAL shared its internal report and other templates provided by the EC ([UNICAL Internal Analysis](#)) and submitted for the initial accreditation phase, along with the timeline ([Table 2](#)).

During several meetings with UAc, UNICAL and UAc defined the strategy to achieve the HR Award. In particular, we addressed the following points:

-  Preparing and Sending the **Endorsement Letter** to EC,
-  Establishment of a **Steering Committee** and a **Working Group** at UAc,
-  Presenting the different phases of the HRS4R process and **possible approaches** within the timeline,
-  Clarifying both **mandatory and optional steps** and phases in the process,
-  Discussing selected approaches by UAc to ensure optimal support by UNICAL.

In April 2024, the EC approved the start of the HRS4R process at UAc, following the submission of the *Endorsement Letter* to initiate the process, and the establishment of the Steering Committee and a Working Group.



Figure 2. UAc Case Timeline on EURAXESS platform



STEERING COMMITTEE (Name)	Management line
Artur Gil	Vice-Rector for Science, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer
Suzana Caldeira	Vice-Rector for Education and Academic Management
Ricardo Teixeira	Pro-Rector for Quality and Pedagogical Innovation
Célia Amaral	Director of Science and Technology Service
Cláudia Santos	Director of Human Resources Service
Deborah Estima	Coordinator of the Technological Incubator
WORKING GROUP (departments)	Role
Vice-Rectorate for Science, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer	Vice-Rector for Science, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer
	Director of Science and Technology Service
	Coordinator of the Technological Incubator
	Local General Manager of the European University Alliance
Vice-Rectorate for Education and Academic Management	Vice-Rector for Education and Academic Management
	Director of Academic Management Service
Vice-Rectorate for Students, Wellbeing and Alumni	Vice-Rector for Students, Wellbeing and Alumni
Pro-Rectorate for Quality and Pedagogical Innovation	Pro-Rector for Quality and Pedagogical Innovation
Pro-Rectorate for Cooperation, Mobility and Internationalization	Pro-Rector for Cooperation, Mobility and Internationalization
Administration	Director of Human Resources Service
Fundação Gaspar Frutuoso	President, General Manager
Academic Association (Students)	President

Among the optional steps outlined in the Timeline (**Table 2**), UNICAL suggested collecting all identified GAPs and any constraints imposed by national legislation that hinder the full implementation of certain principles in a *self-assessment matrix* (*Focus Groups Approach*). Additionally, UNICAL recommended consulting the academic community through an *internal survey* to develop an Action Plan that addresses all necessary priorities and aligns with institutional goals (*Survey Approach*).

During the period from January 2024 to March 2025, UAc has worked (and is still working) on:

-  compiling the self-assessment matrix, which includes a point-by-point analysis of each principle of C&C
-  Identifying external constraints (National law) that hinder the full implementation of certain principles, thus completing its internal analysis and the initial phase.

The next (and final) step is to complete its internal analysis and other templates provided by the EC in order to complete the Initial Phase & Apply (by April 2025).




Table 2. Timeline of HRS4R process for UAc

	EXPER period (months)	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30		
Phasis	Description of phasis																April 2025	May 2025
Phase 0	Preliminary meeting Governance to start the HRS4R Procedure																	
Phase 1	Establishment of Scientific Committee and Technical (Working Group) (see Annex 1) and implementation of their activities																	
Phase 2	Sending Endorsement Letter: Initiation of HRS4R Procedure																	
Phase 3	Initiation Phase (start after EC Confirmation Letter)																	
Phase 4	Meetings to present the HRS4R initiative to whole Academic Community (*)																	
Phase 5	Promotion and communication actions, i.e. workshop in the university, HRS4R page in university website, post on social media, newsletter, etc.																	
Phase 6	Internal Analysis (see Annex 2 - UNICAL document)																	
	Selection of the approach to implement the Internal Analysis (in our case, we choose 2 synergistic approaches: Focus Group and Survey)																	
<u>Phases no mandatory</u>	Constitution of Focus Groups																	
	Periodic meetings of the Focus Groups																	
	Construction and compilation of <i>Self-Assessment Matrix</i> in order to design the Survey (themes, questions, etc.)																	
	Preparation and Structuring of Survey based on the results of Focus Groups' meetings (Approach 1) or another approach (chosen by you). Possible next steps (i.e. Approach 2): - Test Survey by selected team + Data Analysis - Review and Definition Survey - Sending Revised Draft Survey to Technical and Scientific Committees, Rector, Academic Senate			Another approach (chosen by you)														
	Launch Survey Possible next steps: - Remainder for Survey completion (periodically)																	

4. CONCLUSIONS

It is worth mentioning Unical's example at the end of the document. Along with the other 18 universities in Italy that have received the Award, Unical is part of the Italian Community of HR Excellence in Research, established in 2024.

This community of practice offers a space for collaboration and exchange, where we share experiences on implementing the process, dealing with critical events, and identifying good actions and indicators. A report on these issues has also been drafted, based on the following core objectives:

-  first, to share institutional strategies and collaborate jointly all actions related to obtaining and maintaining the award (e.g., the GAP analysis of the national legislation against the new principles of the C&C);
-  to exchange good practices (in terms of actions and organizational structures) to improve the attractiveness of their research environments;
-  the third goal is related to advocacy, promoting the values and principles of the charter to be reflected in National and EU policy (e.g., in Italy, fostering dialogue with the Ministry of University and Research and the EC to promote measures supporting research careers, in line with the principles of the C&C).

The Italian Community of HR Excellence in Research is also working on the transition to the new Charter for Researchers. To do this, all the Universities involved have initiated and are now finalizing a national GAP analysis of the Charter's new principles in relation to national regulations. The aim is to identify GAPs and constraints in applying the new Charter due to national legislation and share these findings and proposals with the Ministry.

The two Widening Universities would be well-advised to consider UNICAL's approach, connect with other universities in Spain and Portugal that hold the award, and collaborate within this network. This would provide mutual support during the transition to the new Charter for Researchers, while also enabling the exchange of best practices and collaborative problem-solving as they align with the new principles.

5. ANNEXES

Annex 1 - The principal issues regarding UAC and ULPGC regional ecosystem

This document summarizes the EXPER Deliverable 1.2 regarding the analysis of Azores and Gran Canaria Island ecosystems, representing the starting Context focus on main challenges and threats for ULPGC and UAC for the implementation of HRS4R.

UNIVERSITY OF AZORES

RECRUITMENT OF NEW TALENT

<i>Principal issues</i>	<i>Proposed solutions</i>
<p>Serious threat regarding the recruitment of new talent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> current low recruitment numbers, compounded by a significant portion of the workforce approaching retirement age; noncompetitive salaries; inadequate research funding; competition from more prominent institutions 	<p>Improving remuneration packages should be a priority. The University could explore reallocating resources or securing additional funding through methods such as governmental lobbying, fundraising initiatives, or industry partnerships.</p>
	<p>Enhance research funding by fostering a grant-application-friendly environment, i.e. grant-writing workshops or creating a dedicated office to support faculty members in their grant applications.</p>
	<p>Improve competitiveness by focusing resources on specific disciplines in which UAC excels and present a competitive advantage, also enable more collaborative projects and exchange programs, enhancing global visibility.</p>

CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

<p>Lack of awareness about career advancement strategies amongst academic personnel, especially PhD students and post-doctoral fellows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> career progression appears to be replacement-based, largely hinging on the retirement of existing faculty members temporary contracts tied to specific projects or services heightened worries about job security and long-term career prospect 	<p>Implement a Career Progression Tracking System, i. e. digital tools that monitor key milestones, achievements, training completed, etc.</p>
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<p>Lack of knowledge or information about such training opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> his persistent unawareness may suggest transparency issues within these institutions a common practice where training is individually arranged by each researcher 	<p>1) Transparent Communication on career progression policies, expectations, and opportunities, providing feedback, conducting performance reviews, and openly discussing career objectives and paths.</p> <p>2) Career Development Opportunities: Offer opportunities for professional growth such as training, workshops, or further education.</p>
<p>Not track any performance metrics or is unaware of such tracking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a breed dissatisfaction and disengagement, ultimately leading to higher attrition rates Talented individuals who perceive that their efforts and accomplishments are not recognized may be more inclined to explore opportunities outside the institution 	<p>1) Establish clear, objective criteria for promotions and ensure these are applied consistently across the board.</p> <p>2) Recognize and celebrate achievements, contributions, and milestones.</p> <p>3) Implement channels for employees to share their feedback, concerns, and suggestions.</p>

WORKPLACE BALANCE AND WELLBEING	
<p>Adequate employment compensation: the heavy workload and intense demands of their jobs vs. salaries and opportunities for career advancement disproportionate to their responsibilities and efforts.</p>	<p>Recognize and compensate for overtime work, ensuring reasonable job responsibilities, and providing opportunities for career progression based on merit.</p>
<p>Flexible working hours</p>	<p>Improve Working Conditions: Review and improve the working conditions, including addressing personal conflicts, providing contractual stability, and fostering opportunities for career progression. This might also involve providing spaces for informal and social activities to build camaraderie among staff members. Lastly, maintaining an open dialogue about mental health and stress management can help address issues related to burnout and stress, common in high-pressure environments like universities.</p>

RECRUITMENT OF NEW TALENT

<i>Principal issues</i>	<i>Proposed solutions</i>
<p>Lack of a structured welcoming program for new staff members, an issue that poses a significant hurdle could lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> unfamiliarity with the institution's culture and norms, insufficient knowledge about administrative procedures, reduced productivity, and performance, missed opportunities for networking, limited awareness of available resources and support services, increased stress and the possibility of burnout. 	<p>Establish an Onboarding Program, in order to ensure new staff members are integrated into the institution efficiently</p> <p>Attractive Compensation Packages: While salaries are rated as satisfactory, offering competitive benefits packages could also be a major draw for potential employees. This might include housing assistance, travel allowances, or relocation packages for those moving to the Canary Islands.</p> <p>Improvement in Research Funding: Despite the satisfactory rating, it's crucial to continuously seek more funding opportunities for research. More funding not only attracts potential candidates but also provides them with the resources they need to conduct high-level research.</p>

CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Inadequate development of complementary competencies and the communication with university administration	<p>Development of Complementary Competencies: Replace standalone courses with interconnected, comprehensive skill-building programs. Develop courses with a common theme, allowing students to progressively build their skills. Introduce a competency-based learning system to ensure students have mastered the necessary skills before advancing.</p>
Frustrations regarding the establishment of fair and meaningful career progression systems, i.e. no clear system in place, with many citing a lack of incentives geared towards research activities.	<p>Career Progression Systems: Create a transparent, performance-based system that rewards high-performing researchers with recognitions, grants, or opportunities. For less productive researchers, implement a mentorship system to improve their productivity and enhance the research culture within the university.</p>

Fragmentary approach to course offerings can hinder a comprehensive skill acquisition process - in the absence of an overarching program framework, students could struggle to understand how each course contributes to their overall career development.	Feedback Mechanism: Conduct regular satisfaction surveys involving students to continuously improve the quality of education and services. Share the outcomes publicly to demonstrate transparency and responsiveness to student needs.
No acknowledge by students on surveys to gauge satisfaction with career progression, this oversight could potentially neglect the experiences and concerns of students.	

WORKPLACE BALANCE AND WELLBEING

No offer any resources to mitigate the psychological stress endured by its personnel.	Mental Health Support: Given the concerns about stress and burnout, the university should consider providing resources to mitigate psychological stress. This could include things like access to counseling services, stress management workshops, mental health days, and training for managers on how to support their teams' mental health.
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