

## **Human Resources Strategy for Researchers - HRS4R**

### Table of Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. The Stages of Recognition	5
3. The HRS4R of UNIFG	7
4. The Process Leading to the Development of the HRS4R 2024-2026	8

#### Attachments:

- HR Action Plan 2024-2026
- OTM-R Policy Actions 2024-2026

## 1. Introduction

The “Human Resources Strategy for Researchers” (HRS4R) is an initiative of the European Commission aimed at promoting the full implementation of the **European Charter for Researchers** and the **Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (Chart & Code)**.

The C&C, adopted by the European Commission in 2005 and updated in December 2023 with the new European Charter for Researchers, aims to enhance the competitiveness of European research at the international level through a gradual process of cultural change, discussion, and dialogue among all stakeholders. This process is to be achieved through the attainment of micro-objectives, which are realized through the implementation of the 40 principles outlined in the European Charter for Researchers and the adherence to the provisions of the Code of Conduct. This Code aims to **promote optimal strategies for the management of research staff and making career paths in the research field more attractive**, within a dynamic and open European Research Area (ERA).

The *Human Resources Excellence in Research* recognition certifies an institution commitment and progress towards the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers (“Charter”).

The Charter is addressed to researchers, employers, funders, and policymakers, defining their rights and responsibilities for the development of attractive research careers aimed at supporting the excellence of research and innovation in the EU. The principles outlined in the Charter establish high-quality standards regarding ethical and professional aspects, the research environment, working conditions, recruitment, evaluation, talent attraction, and the support provided to researchers in their activities and career development.

Specifically, the C&C outlines **the general principles** that specify the **role, responsibilities, and rights of researchers** (professionals engaged in the development or creation of new scientific knowledge based on original concepts or hypotheses) at all stages of their careers, **as well as those who employ and/or fund them**. It also details the standards and procedures that employers and/or funders should apply when hiring researchers. The principles contained in the Charter and the Code can be attributed to the following aspects:

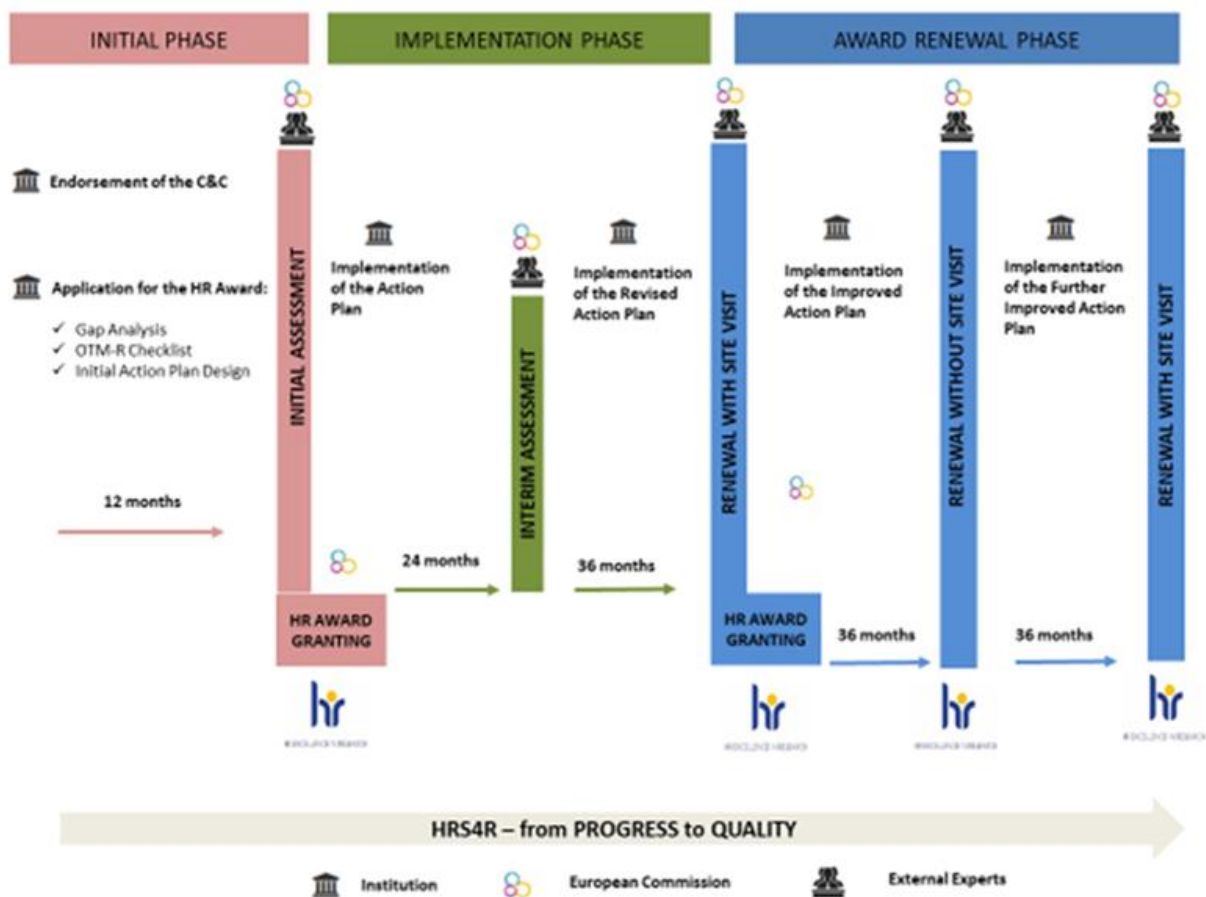
- **freedom of scientific research**
- respect for **ethical principles**
- **professional** and financial **responsibility**
- commitment to the dissemination and **valorization of achieved results**
- commitment to **continuous professional growth**
- **recognition of the profession** of all researchers
- **prohibition** of all forms of **discrimination**

To obtain the HR recognition, it is necessary to adhere voluntarily to the principles of the C&C by submitting a specific declaration of intent. The interested entities are then required to undertake a

process of verifying compliance with these principles within their own organization and to plan any corrective measures, if needed.





The process, established by the European Commission, aimed at obtaining and maintaining the *HR* recognition is divided into three phases:

1. **INITIAL PHASE:** this phase lasts 12 months. During this phase, a specific letter of endorsement is prepared. An internal GAP analysis is conducted through the administration of a questionnaire addressed to the researchers in order to identify the level of compliance with the 40 principles of the C&C in the organization policies and internal practices. Additionally, an Action Plan is developed, and a checklist for the implementation of the OTM-R (Open, Transparent, and Merit-based Recruitment) policy is also created.
2. **IMPLEMENTATION PHASE:** the positive feedback from the **European Commission** on the Action Plan and the OTM-R policy grants the organization the right to be included among the certified “*HR Excellence in Research*” entities (“Institute of Excellence in Human Resources Management”). The organization is also permitted to use the related logo to promote its visibility. This highlights the status as an institution that fosters a stimulating and supportive research environment. The Action Plan is then implemented for the next 2 years, after which an **internal self-assessment analysis** is conducted to verify the status of the action plan implementation and to update it. Then, the revised HR Action Plan is implemented in the following three-year period.
3. **RENEWAL PHASE OF THE RECOGNITION:** to obtain the renewal of the *HR Award*, periodic evaluations (**every 3 years**) are carried out by the European Commission to assess the progress of the implementation of the Action Plan, the advancements made in achieving the objectives set in the action plan, and the results actually achieved. The evaluation process by the European Commission alternates, on a three-year basis, between on-site visits and remote evaluations, according to the framework outlined below.



Source: Euraxess (<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/node/5765/#hrs4r-tabs-tab-3-name>)

## 2. The stages of the HR recognition at the University of Foggia

	<p>On November 17, 2008, our University, along with seven other Italian universities (Camerino, Padova, Palermo, Udine, Urbino, Verona, and the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies of Pisa), signed the “Declaration of Commitment to Implement a Human Resources Strategy Inspired by the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers”. This declaration was then individually signed by each institution, and subsequently notified to the European Commission on June 18, 2009</p>
	<p>On March 10, 2010, the European Commission awarded the University of Foggia the “HR Excellence in Research” certification, in recognition of the university commitment to promoting human resources management policies consistent with the principles of the C&amp;C.</p>
	<p>In August 2012, the European Commission approved the biennial self-assessment report, allowing the University of Foggia to continue using the HR logo.</p> <p>In November 2012, the Academic Senate approved the new version of the Strategy, which was then updated in November 2013 and May 2014.</p>
	<p>In July 2014, the University of Foggia received an inspection by the European Commissioners for the official renewal of the HR recognition, which was granted in January 2015.</p>
<p>Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers OTM-R</p>	<p>In November 2017, the Academic Senate approved the new HRS4R Strategy, which was integrated and developed according to the recommendations of the commissioners and the “enhanced” HR procedure (which came into effect on January 1, 2017). The strategy incorporates the principles of open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment of researchers (OTM-R).</p>



In May 2018, the Academic Senate approved the revision of the HR Strategy, in accordance with the recommendations of the European Commission, along with the internal monitoring of the 2015-2017 three-year period.

In May 2019, the University of Foggia underwent another inspection by the European Commissioners for the renewal of the HR recognition, which was granted in October 2019.

In June 2021, the Academic Senate and the Board of Directors approved the final monitoring of the HRS4R Strategy and the actions for the OTM-R policy for the 2018-2020 period.

In July 2021, the Academic Senate approved the HR Action Plan and the OTM-R policy for the 2021-2023 period.

In July 2022, the monitoring of the actions for the HRS4R carried out in 2021 was approved.

In March 2023, following the verification of the administrative documentation conducted remotely by the European Commission, the University of Foggia obtained the renewal of the HR recognition.

In March 2024, the Academic Senate approved the monitoring of the HR Action Plan and the document related to the OTM-R policy of UniFG for the years 2022 and 2023.

In July 2024, the internal University body for HRS4R approved the actions of the HR Strategy and the OTM-R policy for the 2024-2026 period, which were subsequently approved by the Academic Senate and the Board of Directors in October 2024.

### 3. The HRS4R of UniFG

The Human Resources Management Strategy for Research at the University of Foggia is part of the broader university strategy aimed at substantial repositioning of research activities at the national and international levels. It constitutes an adaptation to new national (Law 140/2010 of the Ministry of Education, University, and Research) and European guidelines. It therefore represents a strategy within the broader university strategy and is reflected in the promotion of the professional development of researchers throughout their entire career, recognizing the value of geographical, intersectoral, and interdisciplinary mobility as a strategic asset to strengthen scientific knowledge and enhance the professional development of researchers. Additionally, it aims to encourage researchers, employers, and funders to pursue the objectives set forth by the C&C. The HR Strategy is prepared with a three-year time horizon, while the results are monitored annually to make any necessary adjustments to the Action Plan in order to achieve the objectives set in the three-year strategy.

It is important to highlight that the University of Foggia was the first university in Italy and the second in Europe to obtain the **HR recognition**. Having initiated the certification process as an institution promoting the principles of the C&C in 2008, the recognition by the European Commission as an “**Institute of Excellence in Human Resources Management in Research**” allowed UniFG to use the *HR Excellence in Research* logo starting from 2010.

The most significant stages of the process of change in the direction outlined by the C&C reveal a highly encouraging outcome, demonstrating that UniFG has been doubly virtuous, not only being the first university in Italy to obtain the HR recognition but also maintaining it over the years by successfully passing the evaluations conducted by the European Commission.

In October 2020, the *HR Strategy Unit* was established within the organizational structure of UniFG, responsible for the administrative management of the Strategy. In February 2021, the *University Internal Body for “Human Resources Excellence in Research”* was established. The body consists of 6 members, one of whom, serving as President, is the Rector’s Delegate for the University HR Strategy, while the other 5 represent each of the academic, scientific and cultural areas, as well as the 4 different job positions defined by the C&C (R1, R2, R3, R4), ensuring gender equality.



#### 4. The process that led to the development of the HRS4R 2024-2026.

The definition of the HRS4R Strategy for the 2024-2026 period at UniFG is the result of a process that involved the entire academic community through a participatory, inclusive, and constructive approach, in which all the parties were able to contribute based on their roles, areas of work, and the competencies they possess.

This process, coordinated by the University internal body for HR with the support of the University HR Strategy Unit, considered, first and foremost, the outcomes of the monitoring of actions carried out in the 2021-2023 period, as well as the University and Department strategic plans. It also considered regulatory and technological updates, the new technological infrastructure of the University, and the guidelines provided in the European Union Council Recommendation of December 18, 2023, on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation, and entrepreneurship talent in Europe.

In March 2024, the monitoring of the actions carried out in the 2021-2023 period was completed. Therefore, in the meeting of March 15, 2024, the University internal body approved both the HR Action Plan and the actions for the OTM-R policy for the recently concluded period, highlighting that the University of Foggia has concretely demonstrated its commitment to implementing the HRS4R principles in its human resources management policy and within the University strategic policies. It also acknowledged the good work done, particularly in light of the positive outcome of the last evaluation, which was conducted remotely on the administrative documentation by the European evaluators in March 2023. Also in March 2024, the Academic Senate approved both the HR Action Plan and the actions for the OTM-R policy for the 2021-2023 period.

Despite changes in *governance*, the university administrative structures, and the composition of the University internal body for HR Excellence in Research, good results have been achieved overall. In particular, the actions planned within the “Ethics and Professional Aspects” area have all been carried out, and the related indicators are mostly positive.

The actions in the “Recruitment Procedures and Social Security” area, on the other hand, have been only partially implemented. Therefore, those actions that are no longer feasible have been adjusted or removed from the HR Strategy for the 2024-2026 period, in favor of new actions, also considering the principles of the new European Charter approved in December 2023. The actions for the HR Strategy related to the “Training” Area have mostly been completed, while those that were not implemented by the end of 2023 but were still ongoing, were concluded during 2024.

Overall, the HR Action Plan for the 2024-2026 period, in pursuing the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct, also takes into account the provisions included in the 2023-2025 University Strategic Plan, and specifically the following strategic objectives and lines of action:

- *Teaching and Internationalization DI.2 Promote quality and innovation of teaching activities* – Lines of action: strengthen and expand the activities carried out by the University Teaching Training Center; invest in the quality of university teaching through initial training for newly hired faculty and continuous training for current faculty, including on topics related to quality assurance processes (HR Action Plan actions 38.02, 38.03, 39.02 and OTM-R action 09.02);



- *DI.3 Promote the internationalization of curricula and student mobility* – Lines of action: Allocate a portion of doctoral scholarships to candidates who have obtained their degree abroad; ensure that doctoral students spend at least three months at foreign institutions or universities; organize Italian language courses and specific events to promote integration with other students, faculty, and the university spaces and procedures; encourage faculty who choose to make their courses available in English; complete the university website pages that are not yet in English (HR Action Plan actions 29.01, 29.04, 29.05, 29.11).
- *Research R.1 Promote and optimize research activities with a competitive perspective* – Lines of action: allocate annually university resources for internal competitive calls (University Research Programs - PRA) to support publication costs, including for open access journals, and the purchase of bibliographic, statistical, and scientific information databases; allocate resources from funding for the upgrading and expansion of existing core facilities/technology platforms (HR Action Plan actions 08.10, 23.04, 38.01 and OTM-R action 07.05);
- *Research R.2 Promote the quality and productivity of research with a competitive and international perspective* – Lines of action: expand relationships, collaborations, and networks with national and international universities and/or organizations; increase the mobility of faculty and researchers, both incoming and outgoing, through the funding of specific calls and consolidating and strengthening current collaborations with international universities and research organizations, and/or involvement in excellence projects with functional and modern university structures capable of generating synergies between entrepreneurial activities, research centers (Core Facilities), laboratories, and advanced training; enhancing project management and the ability to attract resources in a competitive and international perspective to identify new research funding opportunities; develop relationships through the creation of ties, collaborations, and networks between universities and/or national and international organizations; enhance services dedicated to project design to support faculty in submitting research proposals for competitive calls (HR Action Plan actions 28.02, 29.10);
- *Social Impact and Responsibility IRS.2 Promote the cultural development, innovation, and social, environmental, and economic sustainability of the University* – Lines of action: promote cultural initiatives on themes related to health, equality, gender-based violence, and sexual orientation; expand policies for the development of patents and the economic valorization of filed patents; increase the number of framework agreements with local businesses and organizations; promote research activities for the socio-economic growth of the region to be co-designed with stakeholders; encourage activities and present projects on the themes of inclusion and social cohesion (HR Action Plan actions 08.07, 08.09, 09.02, 09.03, 09.04, 39.01);
- *Human Resources and Wellbeing RUB. 2 Promote organizational wellbeing* - Lines of action: promote cultural initiatives on health, equality, gender-based violence, and sexual orientation; expand on patent development policies and economic valorization of filed patents, through enhancing the ability to commercially exploit the rights derived from them; strengthen actions to valorize the outcomes and experiences from scientific research results; increase the number of framework agreements with local businesses and entities; redevelop green areas within the University, also to promote inclusion and integration among members of the academic community; enhance psychological counseling services to prevent, among other things,

discrimination based on sexual orientation; establish an on-site daycare facility (Action Plan actions 10.05, 24.02, 34.01);

- **RUB. 3 Enhance the role of professors and researchers** - Lines of action: allocate part of the resources for the recruitment of high-profile academic and research staff from other institutions or countries, using specific national or international programs or tools; award prizes and/or incentives to professors and researchers based on criteria that recognize merit and contributions to achieving positive results for the University (Action Plan actions 08.11, 32.01).

Additional actions that the HR Strategy plans to implement for the 2024-2026 period are as follows: award research prizes through the UniFG Research Award (action 08.11), including references to the researcher profiles (R1, R2, R3, R4) in recruitment calls (action 12.04), and, considering that since May 2021, the University of Foggia has become a Local Contact Point (LoCP) for Euraxess, there are plans to enhance support services for researchers in mobility by creating and publishing a brochure and providing dedicated tutors (action 29.07).

With a view to adhering to the principles established by the new European Charter for Researchers, the *Italian HR Practice Community* was established in June 2024, initiated by the Polytechnic University of Turin. All Italian universities that have obtained the HR recognition, including the University of Foggia, joined the community. The Practice Community is open to all Italian institutions that are in the process of obtaining the HR award or intend to obtain it. The HR Practice Community aims to foster collaboration among member institutions through a collective effort to obtain and maintain the Award, exchange strategies for implementing the principles of the new European Charter for Researchers, and engage in *advocacy* to influence national and European policies and measures based on the values and principles of the Charter. Priorities have been established on the key topics to work on, and in October 2024, a gap analysis was conducted on the 20 principles of the new Charter, with contributions from UniFG. The goal is to prepare, by December 2024, a document that highlights the obstacles to implement fully the principles of the Charter. Participation in the HR Practice Community will enable UniFG to implement the HR Strategy with greater awareness and effectiveness.

OTM-R (Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment) is one of the pillars of the European Charter for Researchers (2005) and, in particular, the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. Open, transparent, and merit-based processes (OTM-R) ensure that the most suitable person is recruited for the job, thus promoting greater equality, improving the competitiveness of national research systems, and strengthening international collaboration and cooperation. The OTM-R recruitment policy aims to ensure that recruitment processes result in the appointment/hiring of the most suitable person for each research position.

The practical application of OTM-R principles is beneficial not only for researchers but also for research organizations and, more broadly, for the research system as a whole. Specifically, the OTM-R process makes research careers more attractive, ensures equal opportunities for all candidates, and facilitates mobility, thus contributing to the development of the European Research Area (ERA) and enhancing the level of excellence in research within institutions that adopt it.

On June 10, 2024, the European Commission launched the *European Research Area Talent Platform*, a new online one-stop portal for researchers and research organizations. It responds to the research community's request for a centralized hub that provides all relevant information and improves interoperability between various initiatives. The ERA platform provides access to a wide

range of services: EURAXESS, the HR Excellence in Research initiative, the RESAVER pension system, the Innovation Talent Platform, the Research Career Observatory, and ResearchComp.

As for the University of Foggia recruitment policy for researchers (OTM-R), most of the actions established for the 2021-2023 period have been carried out, and several indicators show improvements in aspects such as the transparency of recruitment procedures, working conditions, and the attractiveness of the university for researchers, including foreign ones. For the 2024-2026 period, some new actions (actions 07.03, 07.04, 07.05) have been introduced, and one indicator (action 09.02) has been adjusted.

The actions outlined in the HRS4R 2024-2026 of the University of Foggia are presented in the attached tables of the HR Action Plan and the Actions for the OTM-R policy.