

HRS4R Strategic Framework and Action Plan 2026-2029

Internal Review – EURAXESS / HR Excellence in Research

National Research and Development Institute for Industrial Ecology – ECOIND

Case no. 2023RO46811



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

1. Strategic Context and Direction

INCD-ECOIND considers the implementation of the European Charter for Researchers and the HR Excellence in Research Strategy (HRS4R) an integral component of its institutional development framework. Rather than being approached as a stand-alone human resources initiative, HRS4R is embedded within the Institute's broader strategy for strengthening scientific excellence, institutional performance, international competitiveness and long-term organisational sustainability.

The implementation of the INCD-ECOIND Development Strategy 2025–2029, structured around five strategic objectives and six cross-cutting objectives, provides the principal institutional framework for this development. The Strategy is aligned with national research and innovation priorities and with Horizon Europe and seeks to consolidate ECOIND's position as a leading research organisation in industrial ecology and environmental protection while expanding national and international partnerships.

Within this framework, human resources are regarded as a strategic asset and a fundamental driver of institutional performance. ECOIND will therefore continue to develop an attractive, transparent, inclusive and performance-oriented research environment capable of recruiting, developing, supporting and retaining highly qualified researchers at all career stages.

2. Strategic Transition

During the implementation period 2026-2029, ECOIND's priorities are evolving from institutional consolidation toward sustainable international competitiveness and measurable research impact.

In the short term, strategic intervention will focus on strengthening the institutional foundations required for sustainable development. Priorities include consolidating governance and quality-management processes; modernising research infrastructure and analytical capabilities; developing expertise in emerging research areas; strengthening recruitment, training and career development; implementing HR Excellence principles; improving digitalisation, project management and risk management; maintaining accreditation and regulatory compliance; and increasing institutional visibility.

In the medium term, these strengthened capabilities will support a transition toward European scientific leadership. ECOIND aims to increase its participation and leadership in Horizon Europe and other international programmes, attract international research talent, strengthen European research networks, diversify competitive funding, expand strategic cooperation with industry and public authorities, increase technology transfer and valorisation of research results, and enhance international scientific visibility.

Key Strategic Shifts

- **Operational excellence** → Strategic growth: institutional consolidation becomes the foundation for increased competitiveness and organisational development.
- **Research capability** → Research impact: expertise and infrastructure are increasingly translated into scientific, technological, economic, environmental and societal impact.
- **National orientation** → International leadership: European projects, mobility, talent attraction, international partnerships and scientific networks become stronger drivers of development.
- **Capacity maintenance** → Sustainable competitiveness: resilience is reinforced through diversified funding, innovation ecosystems, workforce development and strategic partnerships.

3. Strategic Human Resources Objectives

- **Strengthen recruitment and talent attraction.** Implement open, transparent and merit-based recruitment practices and increase the international visibility of research vacancies.
- **Develop sustainable research careers.** Strengthen transparent career pathways, mentoring, professional development, performance evaluation, recognition and opportunities for scientific advancement.
- **Attract and retain early-career and international researchers.** Support workforce renewal, succession planning, internationalisation and long-term research capacity.
- **Strengthen researcher competencies.** Expand structured training, participation in national and international projects, mobility, interdisciplinary collaboration, leadership development and transferable-skills training.
- **Enhance the research working environment.** Maintain high-quality infrastructure, effective governance, ethical research practices, equality of opportunity, occupational health and safety, and mechanisms supporting researcher participation and wellbeing.
- **Promote internationalisation and mobility.** Strengthen European research networks, researcher exchanges, international partnerships and participation in competitive European programmes.

- **Align performance and career development with institutional objectives.** Link scientific performance evaluation, career progression, recognition and individual development more closely to strategic institutional priorities.

4. Strategic Implementation of HRS4R

Implementation of HRS4R will follow a structured cycle of planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement. Each action will be linked to clearly defined objectives, responsible organisational units, implementation timelines, measurable indicators and target values.

Implementation will be supported through institutional policies and procedures, training programmes, digital tools, dedicated information resources, revised HR practices and stakeholder participation. The HRS4R Action Plan therefore functions not simply as a compliance instrument but as a strategic management mechanism for organisational development.

Actions are systematically classified as Completed, In Progress, Extended or New. Completed actions are to be embedded in routine institutional practice; actions in progress remain under active implementation; extended actions require continued or revised implementation; and new actions respond to emerging strategic, legislative or organisational priorities.

5. Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment

A strategic priority is the continued development of an Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) system. ECOIND has progressed from an initial procedural framework based primarily on national legislation and internal recruitment procedures toward a dedicated institutional approach to OTM-R.

The next strategic phase will place greater emphasis on effectiveness and measurable outcomes. Particular attention will be directed toward increasing international applications, strengthening international talent attraction, developing structured onboarding, reaching researchers from the Romanian scientific diaspora and monitoring recruitment outcomes over time.

6. Researcher Training and Career Development

Continuous professional development will remain a central component of ECOIND's human resources strategy. Researchers will continue to be encouraged to participate in scientific conferences, specialised courses, workshops, research projects, doctoral activities, scientific exchanges and international collaborations.

The next implementation phase will progressively move from predominantly project-linked training toward a more systematic institutional professional-development framework. Strategic measures will include strengthening doctoral supervision capacity, formal mentoring, transferable-skills and leadership training, international mobility and systematic evaluation of training outcomes.

7. Strategic Alignment with Institutional Development

The 2025–2029 Development Strategy, optimisation of the organisational structure, implementation of the scientific performance evaluation framework, expansion into emerging research fields and stronger international collaboration all directly influence the HRS4R Action Plan.

Consequently, HRS4R implementation will increasingly support recruitment, career development, performance management, training, succession planning, international mobility, engagement and retention as interconnected components of institutional strategy.

8. Monitoring and Performance Management

Implementation will be monitored through a combination of action-specific and institutional indicators. Each action will continue to include a defined implementation period, responsible organisational unit, measurable indicators, targets, implementation status and evidence of achievement.

Strategic performance indicators will include recruitment and retention of researchers; attraction of international and early-career researchers; participation in training, mentoring and mobility activities; implementation of performance-evaluation mechanisms; researcher working conditions and satisfaction;

international collaboration; participation in European programmes; and achievement of the HR-related objectives of the 2025–2029 Development Strategy.

Monitoring will progressively evolve from measuring activities and outputs toward assessing outcomes and institutional impact, thereby enabling evidence-based management and timely corrective action.

9. Strategic Outcome

Through the continued implementation of HRS4R, INCD-ECOIND aims to establish an internationally competitive research environment in which institutional excellence and researcher development reinforce each other.

- from implementing HRS4R actions to embedding HRS4R principles;
- from documenting activities to demonstrating measurable outcomes;
- from nationally oriented recruitment to international talent attraction;
- from project-based development opportunities to structured research careers; and
- from HR compliance to strategic human-capital development.

In this way, the European Charter for Researchers and the HR Excellence in Research framework will remain active instruments supporting ECOIND's long-term objectives of scientific excellence, internationalisation, innovation, organisational resilience and sustainable institutional competitiveness.

10. Integrated HRS4R Action Plan

The following action plan incorporates the actions recorded in the Internal Review. The wording of the action titles and the reported implementation status have been preserved

Action	Strategic Action / Measure	Status
1	Creating a section dedicated to relevant information on research freedom, limitations and opportunities on the institute's website	IN PROGRESS
2	Supporting researchers to perform research activities in other domains than those specific to their department	EXTENDED
3	Updating the section dedicated to information on ethical principles application and Commission of ethics activity on the institute's website https://www.incdecoind.ro/informatii-de-interes-public-legea-nr-5442001	IN PROGRESS
4	Maintenance and further development of institutional repository ECOLIB	IN PROGRESS
5	Development and dissemination to researchers of a guide regarding professional responsibility with accent on new tendencies related to open data, open science	EXTENDED
6	Training courses and support for young researchers in order to submit project proposals within national and especially international competitions	EXTENDED
7	Creating a section, on ECOIND website, dedicated to research funding process and management of research projects	IN PROGRESS
8	Translation to English of documents regarding contractual and legal obligations and their publication to institute's website and https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/ in order to attract researchers from abroad	IN PROGRESS
9	Organising yearly training sessions on contractual and legal obligations within research activity	IN PROGRESS
10	Maintain and develop the informatics integrated platform Microsoft Dynamics NAV	IN PROGRESS
11	Organising training sessions on social responsibility	IN PROGRESS
12	Development and dissemination to the personnel of a guide related to procurement process within research projects	COMPLETED
13	Development and dissemination to researchers of a guide dedicated to good practices within research activity	COMPLETED
14	Setting up a methodology/specific procedure on data protection - GDPR	COMPLETED
15	Organising training sessions on response in case of disasters, work safety and prevention of risks	IN PROGRESS
16	Training sessions on introduction to market of new technologies / products / services based on research results	IN PROGRESS
17	Creating a section on CTT-ECOIND website dedicated to support commercialisation of research results and engagement of general public	EXTENDED
18	Development and implementation of a specific procedure related to the way of signalling possible discrimination regardless of their type	COMPLETED
19	Development of an online platform for filling in, handling and aggregation of self-assessment form	EXTENDED
20	Elaboration of OTM-R policy	IN PROGRESS
21	Regular use of https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/ not only in the case of vacant positions within research projects but for all available job positions.	EXTENDED
22	Revising of PS-05 Human resources and IL-17 – Recruitment of research personnel procedure. Revisions are needed in some areas such as: upgrading the template of job adverts (to include data in future development perspectives), feedback given to unsuccessful candidates, setting up selection commissions, defining mentoring activities.	COMPLETED
23	Revising administrative tasks of human resources compartment in line with OTM-R mandatory requirements	EXTENDED
24	Developing evaluation competences of selection commissions members (trainings, courses)	NEW
25	Creating a section on the institute's website dedicated to mobility opportunities	IN PROGRESS

26	Increasing researchers number by attracting additional funding, other national and European funding	IN PROGRESS
27	Development of an internal regulation on remote working for research activities	COMPLETED
28	Development on an internal regulation on sabbatical leave	COMPLETED
29	Assuring suitable working conditions for researchers, including for disabled researchers	IN PROGRESS
30	Elaboration of a guide dedicated to development opportunities for ECOIND researchers career	IN PROGRESS
31	Periodic negotiation of individual labour contracts in order to minimise inflation negative effects and/or to financially stimulate researchers	IN PROGRESS
32	Elaboration of a policy on research career development including: Development of a draft framework and content for an individual development plan for research staff that is flexible enough to take into account individual qualification levels, subject specifics and the individual needs of research staff; Development of a plan to strengthen the management skills of research staff who are new to management positions, taking into account the specifics of the different levels of management; Implementation of individual development plans and their use in regular staff appraisals and the provision of two- way feedback between supervisor and employee	EXTENDED
33	Elaboration of an procedure/internal regulation focussed on mentors activity in each stage of research career including: Setting up the framework for selection of mentors (from R4 researchers) Types of mentoring activities Setting up the framework for monitoring and evaluation	EXTENDED
34	Organising training courses on research methodologies, planning of research projects, ethical aspects of research projects	IN PROGRESS
35	Elaboration of a documented ECOIND policy on intellectual property rights and exploitation of research results	COMPLETED
36	Training of early stage researchers on intellectual property rights and exploitation of research results	EXTENDED
37	Elaboration of a ECOIND internal procedure on co-authorship	COMPLETED
38	Training for implementation of co-authorship procedure	EXTENDED
39	Developing professional trainings and learning packages specific to each career stage	EXTENDED
40	Organising training sessions on the internal regulations and structure responsible for solving complains/appeals	EXTENDED
41	Organising periodic information sessions on results of information, consultation and decision making bodies	EXTENDED
42	Setting up and operationalise institute's ombudsperson (external actor)	COMPLETED
43	Review and enhance the existing HR policy and performance evaluation system to embed a talent management function. Framework and tools to attract, develop, and retain foreign researchers	EXTENDED
44	Development of Gender Equality Strategy and Gender Equality Plan for the period 2026-2029	NEW
45	Development of a guide on preventing and combating sex based harassment and moral harassment in the workplace	NEW
46	Organise yearly info session by the institutional ombudsperson	NEW

11. Strategic Follow-up for the Next Assessment

The next review cycle should concentrate on closing the gap between implementation and demonstrated impact. Particular priority should be given to actions that remain Extended or In Progress, while New actions should be integrated into the institutional monitoring system from the outset.

- convert completed actions into stable institutional practice and retain documentary evidence of routine implementation;
- define outcome-oriented indicators for training, ethics, recruitment, mobility, mentoring and career development;
- strengthen international recruitment and monitor application, selection and retention trends;
- increase systematic mentoring, career planning and transferable-skills development;
- monitor researcher satisfaction and use the findings to guide corrective and improvement measures;
- link HRS4R indicators with the 2025–2029 Development Strategy and management-review process; and
- use the Action Plan as a living strategic management instrument, with documented decisions on extension, completion, revision or addition of actions.