



The Czech Academy
of Sciences



Institute of
Thermomechanics
of the CAS

Renewal Review with Action Plan

August 2026



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

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Introduction

This document summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of current practices at the Institute of Thermomechanics of the CAS, along with the actions proposed to address these weaknesses and further align its practices with the European Charter for Researchers. It represents a formatted output of the Renewal Report submitted to the European Commission for assessment during the “Renewal with Site Visit” phase of the HR Excellence in Research Award process.

1 Organisational Information

The Institute of Thermomechanics of the Czech Academy of Sciences is a public non-university research institution conducting multidisciplinary research in applied physics and engineering, including fluid dynamics, thermodynamics, solid mechanics, electrical engineering and electrophysics. Although the Institute does not award Ph.D. degrees, doctoral candidates are employed as early-stage researchers and supervised by recognized, established, and leading researchers. Key outputs include international journal publications, patents, and applied research for industry.

STAFF & STUDENTS FTE

Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, doctoral candidates either full-time or part-time involved in research	109.85
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)	16.7
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is the host organisation)	0
Of whom are women	18.25
Of whom are R3 or R4 = established or leading researchers with a large degree of autonomy (e.g. holding the status of principal investigator or professor)	57.65
Of whom are R2 = recognised researcher (e.g. postdoctoral researcher, junior researcher)	17.95
Of whom are R1 = first stage researcher (e.g. doctoral candidate, research apprentice)	34.25
Total number of students	0
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching, and research staff)	182.725

RESEARCH FUNDING (2025)

Total annual organisational budget	€ 9,434,624
Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)	€ 5,125,919
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)	€ 3,036,815
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	€ 226,715

2 Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice

Ethical and professional aspects

Strengths

As curiosity-driven research is firmly embedded in the Institute's mission, researchers enjoy considerable research freedom to explore the frontiers of knowledge, supported by internal funding for exploratory projects. This is complemented by applied and contract research in collaboration with industry and the public sector. Recent successful technology commercialization further reinforces the societal relevance of our research.

Our Finance and Operations Division provides comprehensive administrative, budgetary, and contractual support, ensuring a high-level of compliance with national and institutional regulations as well as auditing procedures. All standard forms, regulations, and contract templates are easily accessible on the intranet. In addition, the Office of Research Support assists researchers with public outreach and knowledge transfer.

We actively engage with the general public through participation in the national Science Fair, annual autumn open-door days featuring lab tours and lectures, and a regular media presence (TV, radio, digital, and social media).

To ensure non-discriminatory practices, the Institute maintains an independent Ombudsperson and a Working Group for Equal Opportunities, supported by annual activity reports and gender statistics. Finally, our mandatory 5-year formal evaluation process ("atestace") is regularly updated to align with the Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS) standards and internal institutional needs.

Weaknesses

Grant application success rates, while above the national average, fluctuate significantly, particularly for basic-research grants.

Furthermore, the 2025 staff survey revealed limited researcher awareness regarding Trade Union activities, IT data backup tools and strategies, internal affairs of the Institute, and Open Science principles.

The Institute currently lacks a structured onboarding system to train new hires in ethical principles, workplace culture, and research conduct, as well as a dedicated contact point for practical research ethics consultations. Institutional guidelines addressing the ethical risks of Generative AI in research are also missing. In addition, formal risk-management mechanisms regarding research security, foreign interference, and sanctions compliance for high-risk business trips are yet to be developed.

Driven by requirements from international partners like the European Space Agency (ESA), the Institute needs to better integrate corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental standards into its operational policies.

Finally, the 5-year evaluation process ("atestace") does not provide continuous career tracking or timely feedback—a limitation particularly felt by early-career and international researchers. Research support staff (V1 grade) are currently omitted from formal evaluation frameworks entirely.

Remarks: In addition to closing the gaps identified in the previous internal review through our Action Plan, we implemented several concrete measures during the implementation period to support our strengths and mitigate emerging weaknesses:

- To further strengthen research freedom, in January 2026, we introduced "Post-GAČR" internal projects. These projects support unfunded basic research proposals submitted to the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR) that received scores in the top 25%. To minimize administrative burden, applicants submit their official GAČR evaluation protocol instead of a new proposal.
- In April 2025, the Institute formally adopted and communicated two key Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS) frameworks: the Code of Ethics for Researchers (covering scientific integrity, authorship, IP protection, and misconduct) and the Code of Conduct (setting standards for workplace culture, mutual respect, equal opportunities, and procedures to prevent and resolve workplace conflicts, bullying, and harassment). Furthermore, in July 2026, we nominated a leading researcher to the CAS Scientific Integrity Committee to contribute to CAS's ethics standards and stay aligned with current best practices (decision expected in Autumn 2026).
- To increase familiarity with funding mechanisms, the Institute intranet introduced bilingual sections dedicated to open calls and internal projects in December 2023, followed by a Mobility Support section in July 2026 detailing outbound and inbound mobility opportunities supported by CAS, national and international funds. Additionally, in January 2026, a dedicated Project Administration Department was established within the Finance and Operations Division to provide targeted administrative support for large research projects.
- In June 2026, we launched our latest 5-year formal evaluation cycle (2021–2026) for researchers. The updated evaluation methodology incorporates qualitative assessment elements in line with the CAS CoARA Action Plan 2024–2027 (published July 2024).

Finally, to systematically address our current weaknesses, we are proposing several new measures in our updated Action Plan: Action 37 (grant writing support), Action 39 (institutional resilience), Action 40 (annual reflective feedback), Action 41 (sustainable research practices), Action 43 (electronic IP asset register), Action 45 (e-learning ethics and culture module), and Action 46 (ethical use of AI), alongside partial contributions from Actions 42, 48, and 49.

Recruitment and Selection

Strengths

The Institute consistently applies OTM-R principles in accordance with its updated OTM-R Policy (July 2026). Recruitment procedures are centralized within the HR Office, which streamlined previously fragmented roles into a single operational unit.

To support talent attraction and retention, the Institute offers a comprehensive employee benefits package that significantly exceeds statutory requirements.

International integration is supported by annual International Researchers' Meetups and introductory lab tours for new hires and interns. Furthermore, postdoctoral appointments feature clear guidelines regarding their maximum duration (5 years) and professional development objectives, with explicit recognition of career breaks.

Weaknesses

Selection committee members currently lack structured training and practical guidance to minimize unconscious bias during interviews. Standardized guidance is also needed to ensure consistent application of qualitative evaluation criteria, such as judging overall merit, mobility experience, and career breaks.

Due to limited HR Office capacity, detailed feedback on application strengths and weaknesses cannot yet be provided automatically to all non-shortlisted applicants; it is currently issued to interviewed candidates and to others upon request.

Recent legislative changes regarding guaranteed income for graduate students have made PhD recruitment more complex, leading to a reduced overall intake despite our agreements with major technical universities. Furthermore, lower average remuneration compared to Western European institutions continues to hinder our ability to attract top international talent. Because both of these challenges stem primarily from national legislative and financial frameworks, Institute leadership actively raises them through strategic channels within the Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS), which advocates on behalf of its institutes at the national level. While these systemic constraints lie beyond the scope of direct internal Action Plan measures, we continue to seek institutional and co-funding mechanisms to mitigate their impact.

Remarks: In addition to closing the gaps identified in the previous internal review through our Action Plan, we implemented several concrete measures during the implementation period to support our strengths and mitigate weaknesses:

- Following the appointment of an experienced HR Manager in July 2025, previously fragmented OTM-R responsibilities were centralized under the newly established HR Office (operational since January 2026, comprising the HR Manager and the Ombudsperson). This centralization significantly improved onboarding and induction efficiency by transferring relevant administrative duties from the Payroll Office and the Office of Research Support. The new HR Office has also introduced expanded employee benefits, launched regular "HR hours", and actively engages with hiring managers throughout the recruitment process.
- To standardize and support the OTM-R process, the Institute developed practical internal tools, including recruitment checklists and quality assurance mechanisms for job advertisements. In 2026, these tools were integrated into the newly established HR Award Resources Hub, accessible to the HR Manager, management, and the HR Award team to guide ongoing implementation and monitoring.
- In June 2026, the Institute underwent a comprehensive institutional gender audit conducted by an external expert organization; among other operational areas, its recommendations also address gender balance within recruitment and selection practices.

Finally, to systematically address our current weaknesses, we are proposing several new measures in our updated Action Plan: Action 42 (good practice for selection and interviewing), alongside partial contributions from Actions 39, 40, 46, and 47.

Working Conditions

Strengths

The Institute ensures high employment stability, with 60% of research staff holding open-ended contracts (65% for those below retirement age) and fixed-term conditions firmly regulated under the Collective Agreement. Institutional funding and internal project calls are actively used to bridge grant funding gaps, support exploratory research ideas, and develop research infrastructure.

Working conditions feature a comprehensive benefits package exceeding statutory requirements, including flexible hours, remote work (up to 40 hours/month), 5 personal leave days, paternity leave income top-ups, pension contributions, subsidized language courses, a recreation facility, and access to reduced-rate rental housing. Gender equality and work-life balance are continuously advanced through our Gender Equality Plan.

Researchers benefit from high-quality infrastructure, professional administrative support, strict health and safety standards, and clearly defined IP exploitation procedures. Relations with supervisors are grounded in mutual respect and co-authorship recognition, and researchers are adequately represented in the Institute's decision-making bodies.

Finally, a structured multi-tiered complaints mechanism is available via the intranet, covering an institutional Ombudsperson for workplace misconduct, whistleblowing for financial misconduct, and general feedback tools, complemented by CAS-level channels (CAS Ombudsperson and Scientific Integrity Committee).

Weaknesses

Relatively lower pay levels compared to the private sector and Western European institutions drive high demand for non-financial benefits and housing support for junior staff. Female representation in decision-making positions and the Director's advisory bodies remains below expectations, while researchers consistently request a reduced administrative burden and greater service digitization.

While the Institute offers high overall employment stability, it currently lacks a formalized, transparent tenure-track framework and clear criteria for awarding permanent employment contracts.

The update of our Career Development Strategy is delayed due to pending overarching CAS framework updates and integration with a newly launched strategic management project. Furthermore, while 5-year mandatory formal evaluations recognize geographical mobility, other forms (intersectoral, interdisciplinary, virtual, and public-private) are not explicitly codified.

Additionally, 38% of R2–R4 researchers in the 2025 staff survey indicated that evaluation feedback should be improved in order to provide more valuable professional career advancement advice.

Regarding intellectual property, the Institute lacks a centralized repository for non-commercial assets (e.g., software, prototypes, methodologies) beyond statutory invention obligations. Lastly, researchers without direct university affiliations face limited access to students, hindering research group expansion.

Remarks: In addition to closing gaps identified in the previous review through our Action Plan, we implemented several concrete measures during the implementation period to support strengths and address weaknesses regarding working conditions:

- To systematically reduce the administrative burden on researchers, internal workflows have been progressively digitized since December 2023. Key advancements include digital telework requests and approvals via the intranet (November 2024), a fully electronic grant proposal tracking and approval system (March 2026), and a central HelpDesk portal (June 2026) for operational requests (IT, facility maintenance, and Occupational Health and Safety).
- In June 2026, the Institute underwent a comprehensive institutional gender audit conducted by an external expert organization to evaluate operational practices, analyze the gender pay gap, and formulate actionable recommendations. Concurrently, an employee workshop on the "Prevention of Inappropriate Behavior, Bullying, and Sexual Harassment" was conducted in June 2026, covering workplace toxicity, unconscious bias, manipulation techniques, group stereotyping, and concrete reporting mechanisms for victims and witnesses.
- The updated Collective Agreement introduced several new benefits, including wage top-ups to 100% of average earnings during paternity leave, work anniversary awards for every 10 years of continuous service, paid volunteering leave, and leave for socially relevant research or educational activities. Building on completed Action 24 (teleworking) and Action 35 (workload reduction framework), the Institute also introduced personal leave provisions, national leisure card subsidies (MultiSport), and access to reduced-rate rental housing.

To systematically address remaining weaknesses, our updated Action Plan introduces Action 38 (connecting non-teaching staff with university networks), Action 47 (tenure and tenure-track framework), Action 48 (travel regulations), and Action 49 (administrative burden reduction), alongside partial contributions from Actions 39, 40, 43, 44, 45, and 46.

Training and Development

Strengths

The Committee for Doctoral Studies provides comprehensive oversight across the entire PhD lifecycle—including recruitment, selection, annual evaluation, and career advice. PhD candidates are evaluated annually against pre-defined milestones and assigned to one of three quality tiers, with top performers offered increased workloads. Currently, the Institute employs 18 PhD candidates (15.2 FTEs), 11 of whom hold full-time 1.0 FTE contracts and 2 have open-ended contracts. The Committee ensures a structured supervisor-candidate relationship, assigns dedicated contact persons for professional duties, and conducts semi-annual seminars where candidates present their progress and receive feedback from senior researchers. To continuously capture student feedback, the HR Award Team organizes annual roundtables bringing together PhD candidates, Institute management, and PhD Committee representatives.

Results from the 2025 staff survey confirm high trust in supervisors, with researchers considering feedback regarding their professional growth as constructive. In accordance with the Czech Academy of Sciences Code of Ethics, relations with early-career researchers emphasize fair leadership, skill transfer, and supportive mentorship.

Regarding continuous professional development, researchers can attend courses (e.g., language courses, academic writing) during regular working hours. A dedicated Training & Development intranet hub—maintained by a designated contact person—provides centralized access to language courses, fundamentals of research work courses, EURAXESS webinars, archived training presentations, educational resources, and e-learning tools.

Weaknesses

Recent legislative changes regarding guaranteed minimum income for graduate students have increased financial requirements for PhD positions. Consequently, the total PhD intake has decreased, creating pressure for faster dissertation completion to manage institutional costs and necessitating even stricter performance evaluations.

Utilization of voluntary Supervision and Training Plans (STPs) remains relatively low. This is driven by varying supervision styles, differing candidate maturity levels, and the fact that advanced doctoral candidates generally require less rigid oversight.

While scientific mentorship occurs naturally, it remains informal. Mentoring and supervisory activities are not yet explicitly recognized or rewarded within the 5-year mandatory formal evaluation framework.

Finally, due to budgetary constraints, external training is mostly limited to free or subsidized courses. This limitation is reflected in staff feedback, with the proportion of researchers rating overall training opportunities as insufficient rising from 21% to 25% between 2023 and 2025.

Remarks: In addition to closing gaps identified in the previous review through our Action Plan, we implemented several concrete measures during the implementation period to support strengths and address weaknesses regarding training and development:

- Beyond the regular 2025 Staff Survey, two dedicated inquiries were conducted in 2025: a structured questionnaire survey among PhD candidates (available as an annex to this internal review) and an exploratory inquiry among supervisors conducted via face-to-face discussions and email correspondence (and thus not available as a standalone formal document). Results confirmed a high level of trust in supervisors and strong candidate satisfaction with supervision quality. Based on insights from these inquiries and PhD roundtable discussions, the Institute is considering adjusting the composition of the Committee for Doctoral Studies to increase the representation of experienced supervisors.
- Between May and July 2026, staff were provided free access to a series of webinar training courses on the application of AI in research, organized by another institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences. To ensure equal access, temporary recordings were made available to registered participants unable to join live, including researchers on parental leave.
- A specialized training program focused on management and supervisory skills for senior research staff and line managers is scheduled for November 2026.

To systematically address remaining weaknesses (focusing on measures independent of external budget constraints), our updated Action Plan introduces Action 37 (grant writing support), Action 38 (connecting non-teaching staff to university networks), and especially Action 44 (scientific mentoring scheme), alongside partial contributions from Action 49.

Have any of the priorities for the short- and medium-term changed?

While the Institute's strategic commitment to the principles of the European Charter for Researchers remains firm, our short- and medium-term operational priorities have evolved to reflect improved internal capacity, external financial realities, and new systemic requirements.

Internally, the appointment of an HR Manager and the establishment of the centralized HR Office in January 2026 marked a key operational milestone. With OTM-R procedures now centralized and well-controlled, our short-term focus shifted from establishing basic recruitment rules to workflow digitization, operational efficiency, and direct HR service support. This reduced the need to propose additional new action items in the OTM-R area.

Externally, persistent budget constraints and the legacy of 2022–2023 inflation redirected our medium-term priorities toward non-financial employee benefits, work-life balance provisions, and housing support, rather than unfeasible salary adjustments or expensive commercial training. Similarly, legislative changes in doctoral funding forced a priority shift toward stricter PhD performance evaluations and supporting timely dissertation completions.

Furthermore, our medium-term priorities expanded to incorporate emerging horizontal dimensions mandated by evolving national, European, and technological expectations. In response, our updated Action Plan broadens its scope to include institutional resilience and research security, cybersecurity governance in intellectual property management, sustainable research practices aligned with partner requirements, and institutional guidelines for the ethical use of artificial intelligence in research and administration.

Have any of the circumstances in which your organisation operates changed and, as such, have had an impact on your strategy for the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers?

Four major external factors have changed the environment in which the Institute operates, requiring changes to our implementation strategy.

First, high inflation in 2022–2023 continued to put pressure on our salary budgets and operating costs between 2023 and 2026. Lower salaries compared to Western European institutions made it harder to recruit international researchers and limited our budget for external training. To adjust, we expanded non-financial employee benefits, used internal bridging funds, and focused on free or subsidized training courses offered within the Czech Academy of Sciences.

Second, new national legislation set a guaranteed minimum income for PhD students, which raised the cost of each doctoral position. Consequently, our total intake of PhD students decreased. To manage this change, we must strengthen oversight through the Committee for Doctoral Studies, introduce stricter annual progress reviews, and use institutional and project funds to support students so they can finish their degrees in a shorter time.

Third, external expectations around digital safety, research security, and sustainability have significantly broadened. Stricter national cybersecurity legislation requires stronger protection of our digital infrastructure and intellectual property. In parallel, evolving EU and national guidelines on research security, foreign interference, and sanctions compliance prompt us to introduce lightweight risk-management tools. At the same time, requirements from major partners like the European Space Agency and frameworks such as the MSCA Green Charter led us to incorporate sustainable research practices into our updated Action Plan for 2026–2029.

Fourth, the growing use of artificial intelligence in research created a need for clear internal rules. Since 2025, the Institute has been active in the Czech Academy of Sciences program Strategy AV21 ("AI: Artificial Intelligence for Science and Society"). In response to this emerging topic, our updated Action Plan introduces dedicated guidelines for the responsible and ethical use of AI in research and administration.

Are any strategic decisions under way that may influence the action plan?

Several ongoing institutional and umbrella-level strategic decisions directly influence the scope and timelines of our updated Action Plan.

First, in early 2026, the Scientific Council of the Czech Academy of Sciences initiated a comprehensive revision of the overarching "Career Development Rules for Employees with a University Degree" (unchanged since 2008), which is expected to overhaul qualification grades and progression criteria. In parallel, in October 2025, the Institute launched a national strategic management project co-funded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the European Union (running through 2028). This project addresses key complementary aspects of our career strategy, including alignment with our Gender Equality Plan and the formalization of support mechanisms like mentoring. Finalizing the update of our internal Career Development Strategy (extended Action 21) is intentionally aligned with these initiatives to ensure full synergy.

Second, the Czech Academy of Sciences is currently evaluating the impact of its CoARA Action Plan 2024–2027 to gather feedback and share good practices. Upon completion of this reflection exercise in December 2027, relevant outcomes regarding research assessment reform will be integrated into the Institute's processes.

Finally, the term of the current Institute Director ends in November 2026, with the selection committee currently evaluating candidates.

Continued strategic support for HRS4R implementation remains highly likely, as two of the three candidate directors are active members of the Institute's HRS4R team and have explicitly expressed their ongoing commitment to the effort. Action Plan (newly proposed actions).

3 Action Plan

Note: The following actions constitute the Institute's Human Resource Strategy for Researchers. **Newly proposed actions (Actions 37–49) can be found further below.**

Institute of Thermomechanics of the Czech Academy of Sciences HR Excellence in Research Award Action Plan

Updated on August 16, 2026

Completed | Extended | New



Principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (2008 version):

1. Research freedom, 2. Ethical principles, 3. Professional responsibility, 4. Professional attitude, 5. Contractual and legal obligations, 6. Accountability, 7. Good practice in research, 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results, 9. Public engagement, 10. Non-discrimination, 11. Evaluation/appraisal systems, 12. Recruitment, 13. Recruitment (Code), 14. Selection (Code), 15. Transparency (Code), 16. Judging merit (Code), 17. Variations in the chronological order of CVs (Code), 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code), 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code), 20. Seniority (Code), 21. Postdoctoral appointments (Code), 22. Recognition of the profession, 23. Research environment, 24. Working conditions, 25. Stability and permanence of employment, 26. Funding and salaries, 27. Gender balance, 28. Career development, 29. Value of mobility, 30. Access to career advice, 31. Intellectual Property Rights, 32. Co-authorship, 33. Teaching, 34. Complaints/appeals, 35. Participation in decision-making bodies, 36. Relation with supervisors, 37. Supervision and managerial duties, 39. Access to research training and continuous development, 40. Supervision.

No.	Action	Gap principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators	Current Status	Remarks
A1	Strengthen awareness of internal regulations (Code of Ethics, regulations on intellectual property rights and their protection, dissemination and exploitation of results, evaluation process/rules) by moving them from the intranet to the Institute website and making them available in English.	2, 3, 8, 11	Q4 2021	Office of Research Support	Ethics Code, IP regulations, regulations on exploitation of results, evaluation process/rules published on the Institute website in Czech and English	COMPLETED	The relevant documents can be found on the Institute's website .
A2	Appoint an external independent ombudsman to improve impartiality in resolving ethical disputes, work-related conflicts, issues of fair treatment and discrimination. Adopt an internal regulation to define the ombudsman's statute.	2, 10, 34	Q4 2021	Director	External ombudsman appointed and statute defined by internal regulation	COMPLETED	Appointed in January 2022, the Ombudsperson operates under the Statute adopted in December 2021. The details can be found on the Institute's website (English Czech).
A3	Develop the Institute's mission statement defining the key strategic goals of the organization and recognizing the HRS4R strategy as one of the tools to achieve the goals and communicate it on the Institute website to ensure researchers at all levels can familiarize themselves with the strategic goals of the organization.	4	Q4 2022	Director, Vice Director for R&D, International Advisory Board, Office of Research Support	Mission statement published on the Institute website	COMPLETED	The mission statement can be found on the Institute's website (English Czech).

No.	Action	Gap principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators	Current Status	Remarks
A4	Organize an annual all-Institute seminar to allow the research department leaders to share their strategic goals across all research departments, facilitate inter-department collaborations and raise awareness of the research strategies among researchers at all levels.	4	Q2 2022	Vice-director for R&D, Office of Research Support	All-institute seminar organized every year	COMPLETED	The Institute-wide seminar was first held in June 2022 and has taken place annually ever since. Updates can be tracked on the Institute's website .
A5	Communicate a link to a mental health counselling service to streamline access to mental health assistance for researchers	7	Q2 2021	Office of Research Support, WG1 of the HRS4R implementation team	Contact to mental health counselling service published on the Institute website	COMPLETED	The Institute's website features a link (English Czech) to a page with resources for crisis hotlines and psychological counselling. Furthermore, these resources are directly accessible via the Employee Guide and the Trustbox sections on the Institute's intranet.
A6	Adopt and communicate a guideline for secure backup of research and confidential data stored in personal computing devices and provide the necessary software solution	7	Q2 2022	IT dept., WG1 of the HRS4R implementation team	Data backup guideline adopted and published on the intranet	COMPLETED	The internal regulation 'Recommended Practices for Operational Data Backup and Data Protection on Devices of Employees' was adopted and published on the intranet in Czech and English. It establishes rules for short- and medium-term operational backups of work-in-progress data on employee devices to ensure research continuity in case of hardware failure, theft, or data corruption. Backups are supported using the Institute's computing infrastructure as well as services of the CESNET association, of which the Institute is a member. Due to cybersecurity considerations regarding sensitive operational backup strategies, the full text is restricted to the internal network.
A7	Translate key internal regulations and training materials into English to enable access of researchers with foreign nationality to the same scope of information as provided to local researchers. This will include safety training materials, information about available research funding, and regulations on intellectual property rights and their protection, dissemination and exploitation of results (commercialization and knowledge transfer). Provide the translated safety training materials to the Safety Officer.	7, 23, 31	Q4 2021	Office of Research Support, Safety Officer	Regulations and training materials translated and regularly updated	COMPLETED	All key internal regulations, Director's directives, and core documents (approximately one-third of all internal documentation) have been translated into English and are accessible on the intranet. All intranet services and resources are fully bilingual, including information on grant calls and mobility opportunities. A comprehensive repository of bilingual and translated forms and templates is available to all staff via the intranet, covering Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) initial briefing documents, internal project applications and reporting forms, intellectual property notification forms, researcher evaluation materials, telework forms, and business trip reports. Furthermore, key regulations and strategic documents developed or updated as deliverables of the HR Award Action Plan are published on the Institute's website . These include the OTM-R Policy, Internal Regulation on Handling Research Results, Code of Ethics, Gender Equality Plan (GEP), Institutional Career Development Strategy, Supervision Plan Template for PhD Candidates & Postdocs, Regulation on Telework Rules, and Collective Agreement.
A8	Adopt and communicate a guideline on commercialization, knowledge transfer and intellectual property rights protection consolidating fragmented internal regulations on exploitation of results	8, 31	Q4 2022	Office of Research Support, Chairman of the Commercialization Board, Director (to adopt)	Commercialization guideline adopted and published	COMPLETED	The internal regulation on "The Method of Handling Research, Development and Innovation Results" details the rules for intellectual property protection, exploitation/commercialisation of research results and collaborative research. The regulation can be found on the Institute's website (English Czech). The regulation is also available on the Institute's intranet.
A9	Entrust the chairman of the trade union to negotiate improved working conditions for researchers endangered by discrimination (including female and elderly researchers)	10, 24	Q4 2021	Chairman of the trade union, WG1 of the HRS4R	Trade union chairman entrusted	COMPLETED	In 2022, the Collective Agreement was updated to allow employees with open-ended contracts to request a temporary reduction in their working hours for family or health reasons. The document can be found on the public website (English Czech). In 2026, the Collective Agreement was further updated (see Action 35) to

No.	Action	Gap principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators	Current Status	Remarks
	and to allow researchers to apply for a temporary reduction of workload (part-time working) for personal (family etc.) reasons either by means of the Collective Agreement or by internal regulation			implementation team			expand the target group to include employees with fixed-term contracts, broaden the scope beyond family or health reasons, and enhance job security by guaranteeing the automatic reinstatement of the employee's original working hours and salary after the temporary period.
A10	Update the evaluation methodology to extend the evaluation criteria to include national/international collaboration, administrative duties, public awareness activities, all types of mobility) during regular evaluations of researchers' performance and improve feedback quality (by adding a career advice note in the evaluation report).	11, 29, 30	Q4 2022	Evaluation Committee, Vice-director for R&D	Evaluation methodology updated	COMPLETED	The Director's Order on the Methodology for Evaluation of Researchers was updated in 2021 and published on the intranet alongside the updated evaluation form and guidelines. The Methodology was further updated in 2026 and is described on a dedicated 'Researcher Evaluation Rules and Guidelines' page on the Institute's website, accessible from both the HRS4R homepage and the 'Working with us' page). The corresponding Czech version is available at https://www.it.cas.cz/atestace/ .
A11	Create an orientation kit for new researchers, which will include information about evaluation process/rules, code of ethics, access to research funding, mandatory safety training, employee benefits and social security provisions, and career development strategy/rules. The orientation kit will be provided to new hires (in electronic or paper form) after their admission to accelerate their orientation in the Institute's policies and guidelines and to help them familiarize with the internal processes	11, 23, 24, 28	Q4 2022	Office of Research Support, WG2 of the HRS4R implementation team	Orientation kit created	COMPLETED	Orientation information for new researchers can be found on the Institute's website in English and Czech . To ensure a greater practical impact of the orientation information, new measures were proposed, developed, and implemented (Actions 25, 26, and 32).
A12	Develop and adopt a gender action plan to encourage adequate representation of both genders at all levels of staff, and propagate the gender equality culture. Establish cooperation with a dedicated organization for this purpose.	27	Q4 2022	WG3 of the HRS4R implementation team	Gender action plan developed and adopted	COMPLETED	The Gender Equality Plan can be found on the Institute's website (English Czech), and is also available from the HRS4R homepage (English Czech).
A13	Develop, adopt and communicate the Institute's own Career Development Strategy describing the prospects the researchers can expect in the Institute and the milestones to reach them. The strategy will include provisions on the role of all types of mobility in the career development and access to career advice by means of consulting the supervisors/mentors. Communicate the strategy to all researchers including via the Institute website and the orientation kit.	28, 29, 30	Q2 2022	WG3 of the HRS4R implementation team, Director (to adopt)	Career Development Strategy adopted and communicated	COMPLETED	The Career Development Strategy can be found on the Institute's website (English Czech). To improve its quality, detail, and strategic depth, Action 21 was introduced.
A14	Design and implement "training and supervision plans" (TSPs) for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers. The plans will include a clearly defined schedule, objectives, milestones and the first (immediate) and other supervisors. The plan must be signed by the researcher and his supervisors and regularly reviewed/updated	36, 40	Q2 2022	WG4 of the HRS4R implementation team, Director (to adopt)	Training and Supervision Plans for all doctoral and postdoctoral researchers created and signed, updated at intervals defined in the plan	COMPLETED	Supervision and Training Plan (STP) templates are accessible on the intranet and on the public website (English Czech). The STP includes an 'Annual Assessment Report for a PhD Candidate' section, which is compulsory for all doctoral candidates. Given the Institute's status as a non-university research organization, the remainder of the STP is optional for both PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers. It is primarily utilized when PhD candidates participate in institutional projects unrelated to their main thesis topic, which is already covered by their university STPs.

No.	Action	Gap principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators	Current Status	Remarks
	with the frequency defined in the plan. The competency of the first supervisor will be endorsed by the signature of the department head.						
A15	Develop a Training & Development site with training resources (links to training materials, online or class-based courses organized by the Czech Academy of Sciences, the Institute or third parties, e-learning etc.) covering all aspects of researchers' skills including: managerial/supervision skills, academic writing, writing proposals, intellectual property rights protection, language skills, presentation skills, negotiation skills etc. The site will include information about mobility opportunities and institutional funding (subject to availability).	3, 8, 31, 37, 38	Q4 2022	Contact person for Training and Development	Education & Training site launched and regularly updated	COMPLETED	The 'Training & Development' page is available on the Institute's intranet in both Czech and English and is regularly updated. Additionally, dedicated pages for 'Open Calls & Funding' and 'Mobility Support' provide up-to-date information on research funding and mobility opportunities.
A16	Implement a tool/solution for project management/team coordination to support a more efficient leadership of early-stage researchers and research/project teams. Make the tool available on the intranet.	37	Q3 2023	IT department, WG4 of the HRS4R implementation team	Project management tool implemented and made available on the intranet	COMPLETED	The action has been completed through the implementation and launch of the 'Groups' module integrated into the intranet. The tool allows users to create Project, Team, or Event groups in Open or Private modes, featuring chat capabilities, file sharing, noticeboards, and access for external guests. While the technical infrastructure was fully delivered and made available to all staff as planned, user adoption among research groups for project management remains minimal, as scientific teams largely prefer their established workflows and external coordination tools. The platform nevertheless remains available on the intranet for future use.
A17	Appoint a contact person for Training and Development for all requests/queries related to access to training and measures for the continuous development of research staff (including mobility opportunities). The person will be responsible for developing training plans for different researcher roles/groups and developing/maintaining the Training & Development site (see action above).	2, 3, 8, 31, 39	Q4 2021	Director	Contact person for Training and Development appointed	COMPLETED	A designated contact person for Training and Development has been appointed and is listed on the intranet's Training & Development page. The contact person maintains the page, identifies training needs and opportunities, secures resources, and organizes in-house training for researchers.
A18	Adopt a guideline for open, transparent and merit-based recruitment and selection of researchers at all levels aligned with the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and recommendations in the OTM-R toolkit. Communicate it on the Institute website and using other channels. The guideline will: consider issues of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups, define admission rules for all career levels, career development prospects, selection criteria/merits, rules for recognizing the value of mobility and variations in the career chronology, rules for postdoctoral appointments, composition of selection committees, a complaint mechanism and	12–18	Q4 2022	WG2 of the HRS4R implementation team, Office of Research Support, Director	OTM-R guideline adopted and communicated	COMPLETED	The OTM-R policy can be found on the Institute's website (English Czech), provided both as the downloadable full text of the internal regulation on Filling of Positions for University-Educated Staff in Research Departments and as a dedicated, user-friendly page titled 'OTM-R Policy Explained'.

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	feedback. A quality control system for OTM-R will also be implemented on the basis of supervision by staff knowledgeable in the Institute's OTM-R policy and archiving selection templates. The guideline will include a provision ensuring efficient communication of open permanent positions to researchers with fixed-term contracts.						
A19	Develop an evaluation template for selection committees to assist them in applying the provisions of the OTM-R guideline during the evaluation of candidates. The template will also include guidelines for selection committees and for interviewers, rules for recognizing the value of the mobility experience and variations in the career chronology of candidates and provide reference information on the procedure for the recognition of academic qualifications (including the national legal framework, national recognition tools and other available channels such as enic-naric.net). The template will be made available on the intranet.	14, 16–19	Q4 2022	WG2 of the HRS4R implementation team	Evaluation template developed and made available to the selection committees on the intranet	COMPLETED	To complete this action, two measures were implemented: • a Candidate Evaluation Sheet was developed and made available on the intranet as a practical tool to assist selection committees in scoring and ranking candidates against defined criteria; • a procedural guidance article was published in the intranet Employee Guide to walk selection committees through the formal selection workflow, basic OTM-R compliance steps—covering the core OTM-R principles of selection (Principle of Non-discrimination, Principle of Merit Recognition, Principle of Career Recognition, Principle of Recognition of the Value of Mobility, Principle of Transparency, and Principle of Equal Opportunities)—alongside guidelines on declaring conflict of interest, unconscious bias, interviewing, and links to services for the recognition of academic qualifications. (Note: The core principles of candidate assessment introduced here serve as a baseline and will be substantially expanded into a comprehensive Handbook of Good Practice and Unconscious Bias Briefing Package under Action A42.)
A20	Develop a sustainable system to raise awareness of internal issues (ongoing research projects and research funding opportunities, staff changes, new policies/tools/processes, events, updates on HR Award activities, employee benefits, fulfilment of the Gender Equality Plan, etc.).	4	Q2 2024	WG1 + Office of Research Support	I20.1 A system developed and implemented. I20.2 Awareness of internal issues tested every two years through employee surveys.	COMPLETED	This action has been completed through the implementation of a comprehensive internal communication system: 1. Institute Newsletter (since 11/2023) - Covers news on personnel changes, events, regulations, HR Award outputs, and success stories. Published online in Czech and English, with a limited number of printed copies for non-academic staff to balance accessibility with environmental sustainability. 2. Intranet News (since 12/2023) - Regular news and updates published on the intranet in both Czech and English. 3. Institute-Wide Seminar - Established in 2022 as Action 4 of the Action Plan, its focus and format were re-evaluated between 2024 and 2026 based on feedback from the 2023 staff survey. Consequently, the agenda in 2025 and 2026 shifted from a scientific focus toward an internal institutional agenda (including the Director's report, HR Award progress, HR updates, Open Science, financial and administrative issues, cybersecurity training, and Q&A). To improve the seminar's accessibility for non-research staff, the 2026 seminar was held in Czech, with AI-assisted automatic two-way interpretation between Czech and English. 4. Institute Email Aliases (since 2024) - A system of email aliases used to optimize the delivery of internal communications to specific staff groups (all staff, researchers, organizational units, postdocs, PhD candidates). These aliases draw on up-to-date mailing lists generated in real time, enabling targeted and relevant email communication. 5. Employee Email Signatures - To improve internal and external communication, guidelines for creating standard email signatures (including institutional branding and the HR Award logo) were added to the intranet Employee Guide, as the

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							current institutional email solution does not support automated centralized signatures. In accordance with Indicator I20.2, progress in raising awareness continues to be systematically monitored through regular bi-annual staff surveys. In the latest staff survey (June 2025), respondents cited using key internal channels as sources of information about the Institute and its activities: Intranet News was used by 49% of researchers and 67% of non-researchers, the Institute-Wide Seminar by 51% of researchers and 19% of non-researchers (the lower rate among non-research staff was likely because the 2025 seminar was still held entirely in English), and the Institute Newsletter by 34% of researchers and 33% of non-researchers.
A21	Review and update the Institute's Career Development Strategy for researchers.	28, 29, 30	Q4 2024	WG3 + WG4 + Vice Director for R&D	I21.1 The Career Development Strategy for researchers updated – shortcomings of its quality, detail and strategic dimension addressed.	EXTENDED	Respondents to the 2023 staff survey repeatedly pointed to unclear career development rules and identified the newly adopted Career Development Strategy as lacking in quality, detail, and strategic depth. This action aims to address these shortcomings, with improved stakeholder involvement to ensure better adoption of this key document. A dedicated Task Group was established for this action and developed several initial concepts and preliminary measures. However, two major developments required the extension of the deadline: 1. In early 2026, the Scientific Council of the Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS) initiated a comprehensive revision of the overarching "Career Development Rules for CAS Employees with a University Degree" (which has not been updated since 2008). This revision is expected to overhaul researcher qualification grades and progression criteria across all CAS institutes. Finalizing the Institute's internal strategy now would risk making it obsolete almost immediately upon the release of the new CAS rules. 2. In October 2025, the Institute launched a national project co-funded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic and the European Union, focused on improving strategic research management. Running through 2028, this project contains several key activities that will directly shape and strengthen the Institute's Career Development Strategy. Consequently, the implementation deadline for this action has been extended to Q2 2028. This timeframe allows the Institute to first adapt to the revised CAS Career Development Rules upon their expected release, and subsequently finalize and operationalize its internal strategy in alignment with the milestones of the ongoing national project running through 2028.
A22	Develop a policy to replace the current practice of noncompetitive appointment of research department heads with a new practice based on a competitive process. Update the OTM-R process and related policies accordingly.	12, 13, 14	Q2 2025	WG2	I22.1 Guidelines for a competitive process for the selection of candidates for the position of research department heads defined and implemented in the internal regulations.	COMPLETED	This action has been completed by updating the OTM-R policy. The internal regulation on Filling of Positions for University-Educated Staff in Research Departments now contains a dedicated Section 2.3 setting out a transparent procedure for appointing heads of research departments. The previous practice of direct appointment has been replaced by a structured selection process. Based on an assessment of the department's needs and financial resources, the Director decides whether to conduct an internal recruitment procedure or an open (external) recruitment procedure. Selection is carried out by a Selection Committee based on defined criteria: scientific excellence, leadership skills, academic experience, and the candidate's vision for the department's scientific and personnel development. The initial term of office is up to five years. Upon its expiry, a new selection procedure must be initiated; the incumbent head may reapply, with no limit on the number of consecutive terms. The regulation is available on the Institute's website (English Czech).

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A23	Develop a return-to-work process after an extended employee absence.	10, 24	Q2 2024	WG3	I23.1 Return-to-work process defined and communicated with relevant stakeholders. I23.2 Good practice for the return-to-work established and guidance written.	COMPLETED	The Institute developed the methodological document "Measures to Support the Return of Employees After Long-Term Absence from Work" (Indicator I23.2), which establishes a standardized 4-phase return-to-work framework. To ensure transparency, the complete document has been published on the Institute's HRS4R website under the Working Conditions section as "Return-To-Work Guidelines" (English Czech). To address Indicator I23.1, the defined process was integrated into the internal Employee Guide available on the intranet. Given the Institute's historical context—with only 1–2 relevant cases over the past five years—placing the guidelines in the Employee Guide and making them permanently accessible on the intranet and public website was chosen as the most effective communication approach, ensuring that affected staff and line managers have immediate access to guidance whenever the situation arises.
A24	Establish and communicate a clear and transparent remote work policy.	24	Q4 2023	WG3 + Director + Vice Director for Financial Affairs & Operations + dept. heads	I24.1 Policy established and communicated to employees.	COMPLETED	This action has been completed by establishing an internal regulation on Telework Rules and introducing an electronic application and approval system for occasional remote work on the intranet (Indicator I24.1). Under this policy, employees wishing to utilize remote work must obtain approval from their supervisor and sign an agreement with the Institute. Specific details—such as contact information, work locations, and schedule type (regular vs. occasional)—are outlined in a registration sheet attached as an annex to the agreement and signed by the supervisor. The policy was communicated to all staff and quickly integrated into daily operations. Since its introduction in October 2024, a total of 67 employees have signed the agreement, 48 of whom were researchers. Currently, 46 researchers (32% of all research staff) hold a valid remote work agreement. Furthermore, as of July 2026, nearly 700 individual requests for occasional remote work have been submitted via the intranet. A number of researchers have also been granted regular remote work or extended arrangements (exceeding the standard 5 days of occasional remote work per month) to accommodate temporary family or health needs. Overall, the remote work policy has formalized and standardized past practices, establishing fair and flexible working conditions for all eligible staff. The Telework Rules are available on the Institute's official website (English Czech).
A25	Create a more efficient induction process to facilitate a smooth transition to the onboarding phase for new employees	23, 24	Q2 2025	WG2 + Vice Director for Financial Affairs & Operations + Payroll dept. + IT dept.	I25.1 Induction process defined; guidance and tools created. I25.2 Responsible persons appointed.	COMPLETED	To address previous procedural fragmentation, the Institute established a dedicated HR Manager position in 2025 to lead and centralize the induction process. Serving as the primary coordinator, the HR Manager oversees a newly appointed network of key responsible persons across the IT Department, Payroll Office, Welcome Office, Health & Safety, and Research Department Assistants. As a core tool, the entry form for new hires was fundamentally revised and expanded, enabling HR to gather essential details in advance and thoroughly prepare all administrative, IT, and workspace logistics prior to arrival. Institutional guidance and a practical Induction Checklist were developed and integrated into the newly launched "HR Award Resources Hub" on the intranet. Furthermore, pre-arrival alignment meetings are conducted with supervisors to ensure research departments are fully prepared for incoming staff. The modernized workflow systematically covers employment paperwork, medical checks, mandatory OHS training, and early post-arrival satisfaction check-ins. Practical assistance with accommodation, banking, and employee benefits is also provided to facilitate a seamless transition into the onboarding phase. Through clearly defined roles, enhanced administrative tools, and effective cross-departmental coordination, this action has been successfully completed.

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A26	Establish the practice of onboarding buddies for new researchers.	23, 24	Q2 2025	WG2 + Office of Research Support	I26.1 Practice established, recommendations/guidelines formulated and communicated to relevant stakeholders. I26.2 Information about the process included in the onboarding information.	COMPLETED	This action has been fully implemented. Implementation of Indicator I26.1: We formulated the practice of onboarding buddies by drawing on best practices and experiences gained at ETH Zurich. Based on these insights, we formulated a dedicated methodology called the "Onboarding Buddy Practice Note," which was further adjusted using practical feedback from one of our research groups that successfully piloted a multi-level onboarding buddy system. The resulting recommendations and guidelines were communicated to relevant stakeholders across departments. Implementation of Indicator I26.2: Information and core principles regarding the onboarding buddy process have been fully integrated into our institutional onboarding documentation. Specifically, this includes the detailed Onboarding Guide available within the intranet Employee Guide, as well as the public-facing "Welcome Guide for Researchers," which has been published on the Institute website in the Induction & Onboarding section of the HRS4R Home (English Czech).
A27	Create a process/tools for obtaining feedback from departing employees.	11, 30	Q4 2023	WG2	I27.1 A process/tools created and communicated to relevant actors through internal channels (tools made available on the intranet)	COMPLETED	This action has been successfully completed. To establish a structured mechanism for gathering feedback from departing personnel, the Institute designed and launched a dedicated Exit Survey for regular researchers in January 2024 (Indicator I27.1). Recognizing the specific needs of different groups, the initiative was further expanded to include an Internship Feedback Survey tailored for international interns, as well as the option for a personal one-to-one exit interview with the HR Manager. Due to a low staff turnover rate at the Institute, the number of departing researchers during the implementation period was very low. Departing staff utilized both the electronic survey and individual interviews to share their feedback. Information collected through these channels is systematically analyzed, shared with relevant supervisors, and used to continuously improve HR processes, career support, and the overall research environment. To ensure proper internal management and communication, both survey tools and process guidelines were placed in the "HR Award Resources Hub" on the intranet, ensuring permanent access for the HR Manager and the HR Award team to facilitate and oversee the exit process.
A28	Expand the range of recruitment tools - implement an e-recruitment tool for research positions, create a recruitment process checklist to ensure compliance with the OTM-R policy, create a conflict of interest reporting form for the selection committees and candidates, and identify online tools that can be used to ensure gender-neutral language in job advertisements in English.	13, 27	Q4 2025	WG2	I28.1 E-recruitment tools reviewed and an appropriate online tool for recruitment of researchers identified and implemented. I28.2 Recruitment tools expanded and made available to relevant stakeholders (recruitment process checklist, conflict of interest reporting form, online tool to check gender-neutral language in job advertisements).	COMPLETED	A market analysis of available e-recruitment tools was conducted (I28.1). However, the evaluated software solutions were found to be either financially unsustainable for our institute's scale or lacking full bilingual (CZ/EN) functionality, which is essential for our operations. Considering proportionality and cost-effectiveness, our current email-based recruitment system—strengthened by newly introduced OTM-R tools—was evaluated as fully sufficient and compliant. Consequently, the primary objective of Action 28 (improving recruitment quality and OTM-R compliance) was successfully achieved through targeted alternative tools (I28.2). These include a comprehensive recruitment checklist and conflict-of-interest reporting forms for selection committees and applicants. Furthermore, exceeding the original target (which focused solely on English), two online tools were identified for screening English job ads, and a custom LLM-based tool was developed to evaluate both Czech and English vacancy announcements for gender neutrality and various types of unconscious bias. This tool was used to refine institutional job templates and is systematically applied when finalizing individual vacancy announcements.
A29	Monitor developments and align with the action plan of the Czech Academy of Sciences following the signing of the agreement with the Coalition for Advancing	14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20	Q2 2026	Vice Director for R&D + WG1 + WG2	I29.1 Responsible person appointed to monitor the activities of the Czech Academy of Sciences in COARA.	COMPLETED	This action has been successfully completed. Monitoring of developments in research assessment within the Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS) is continuously led by the Evaluation Committee Chair as part of their core duties (Indicator I29.1). Following the publication of the CAS CoARA Action Plan 2024–2027 in July 2024 and its application during the 2020–2024 periodic institute evaluations, the Institute

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	Research Assessment (COARA) in November 2022.				I29.2 Evaluation rules/practice aligned with the CAS's action plan for COARA (to be published in November 2023).		systematically aligned its internal researcher evaluation rules and practices with CoARA principles (Indicator I29.2). In May 2026, the Institute updated its methodology for mandatory periodic researcher evaluations ("atestace") for qualification grades V3 to V6 within the ongoing 2021–2026 evaluation cycle. The updated evaluation process applies to all individual researcher evaluations starting in June 2026. To ensure complete transparency, a dedicated summary document titled " Reflection of CoARA Principles in the Institute Evaluation Strategy " is publicly available on the Institute's official HRS4R website and is linked under the " Researcher Evaluation Rules and Guidelines " section on the main HRS4R page . Similarly, a Czech version of the document is available on the Czech website .
A30	Implement a process for managing open science/FAIR data requirements and research data management issues	7, 8, 9	Q2 2026	WG1 + Director + contact person for open science/data	I30.1 Appointed a point of contact for the issues of Open Science/FAIR data and research data management. I30.2 Institute-wide policy on Open Science/FAIR data and research data management issues developed and adopted. Access to relevant services/infrastructures made available to researchers.	EXTENDED	In November 2024, the Czech Academy of Sciences adopted an overarching Open Science Policy to guide its research institutes. In line with this commitment, the Institute met Indicator I30.1 in 2024 by appointing an Institutional Data Steward/Open Data Coordinator to serve as the central point of contact for Open Science and research data management. The coordinator's profile and contact details are publicly available on the Institute's official HRS4R website (English Czech). Following the Interim Assessment recommendation to 'divide this action into stages,' we adopted a phased implementation approach: 1) In 2023 and 2024, we developed Data Management Plans for our two major scientific projects, co-funded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic and the European Union. These projects served as pilots to establish an institute-wide practice, which is now implemented across all other research projects. 2) The Institute recommends the Zenodo platform for research data management. Simultaneously, we are evaluating other emerging platforms, such as the ASEP platform of the Czech Academy of Sciences, and we are piloting our own centrally accessible data storage for the early stages of the scientific data life cycle. 3) To ensure consistent implementation across all research departments, we created a network of departmental contact points, who are currently being trained by the Data Steward/Open Data Coordinator. Furthermore, the principles of Open Data have become part of our annual Institute-Wide Seminar (since 2025), and recommended practices are available to researchers in the intranet Employee Guide. While the practice of Open Data has been widely implemented across the Institute, we have decided to extend the implementation deadline for indicator I30.2 (development of the institute-wide policy and access to infrastructure) to Q2 2027. This extension creates synergy with a major strategic initiative: in 2025, the Institute secured a project co-funded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic and the European Union, focused on improving strategic research management. Running through 2028, this project contains dedicated activities that will directly shape, fund, and strengthen the Institute's official Open Data Policy and infrastructure. The Open Data Coordinator is responsible for the design and implementation of the policy within this project.
A31	Improve the adoption of internal regulations/policies by establishing a practice of adding simple executive summaries to the preambles of the key internal regulations/policies. These summaries should explain the purpose of the	4	Q2 2024	All WGs	I31.1 Key internal regulations/policies that require summaries identified. I31.2 Summaries added to identified regulations/policies	COMPLETED	The original objective of Action A31—adding executive summaries into the preambles of key regulations—was successfully implemented through a more practical, portal-based approach. Retrofitting preambles directly into existing regulations proved impractical, as it would require formal re-issuance and complex coordination across various administrative units. Instead, concise and practical summaries are now published on the intranet directly alongside all internal

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	regulation/policy and describe the main provisions and policy choices.						documents (regulations, Director's orders, and policies), allowing staff to review key provisions before downloading full texts. Currently, summaries are live for 58 Czech and 20 English internal documents. This approach fully achieves the goal of Action A31 while providing significant advantages: it applies uniformly to all active documents (both legacy and newly issued) and allows summaries to be updated flexibly without the need to formally re-issue the underlying legal texts.
A32	Review and update the onboarding information to help new researchers with more practical internal aspects	23, 24, 28	Q1 2024	WG2 + Office of Research Support	I32.1 Intranet-based step-by-step procedures for researchers reviewed, updated and translated into English. I32.2 Intranet procedures combined with induction information on the Institute's website to provide a more comprehensive induction package aimed at both policy awareness and management of internal practicalities.	COMPLETED	This action has been fully implemented. Based on the intranet-based internal procedures for researchers, a detailed Onboarding Guide with a more practical approach has been developed and added to the intranet Employee Guide in both English and Czech (indicator I32.1). Furthermore, a public-facing "Welcome Guide for New Researchers" was derived from this detailed internal version by distilling the essential information most relevant to prospective candidates and new hires; this guide has been published on the Institute website in the Induction & Onboarding section of the HRS4R Home (English Czech), covering pre-arrival, relocation, induction, and onboarding phases, as well as policy awareness (indicator I32.2).
A33	Increase support for the long-term development of the English language skills of administrative staff supporting international researchers.	10	Q4 2025	WG1 + WG3 + Office of Research Support	I33.1 Administrative and support functions relevant to international researchers identified, recommended language requirements for future job advertisements defined for relevant functions. I33.2 A voluntary program for relevant staff to improve their level of English established.	COMPLETED	This action has been successfully completed. To fulfil Indicator I33.1, the Institute established a practical Language Requirements Tracking Tool to systematically map and monitor English language proficiency among administrative and support staff assisting non-Czech-speaking researchers. Specific roles interacting with international staff were identified, and appropriate English proficiency standards were defined for each position. The tool was placed in the HR Award Resources Hub on the intranet and integrated into the internal Recruitment Checklist to ensure that future job advertisements systematically specify required language levels. Additionally, current staff in these roles were mapped against the new standards, with those needing language development categorized on a 1-to-5 priority scale. To address Indicator I33.2, a flexible voluntary language support program was established for relevant staff. First, staff listed in the tracking tool are given the option to attend external language courses during working hours upon request, as well as courses organized by the Czech Academy of Sciences where employees cover only a small administrative fee. Second, assistance and optional training sessions were offered on utilizing AI tools to support written English correspondence, such as drafting and reviewing emails. Third, brief instruction was provided on using widely available mobile applications for real-time, two-way voice translation to assist staff during face-to-face interactions with international researchers.
A34	Communicate the implications of the mission statement and add a vision to the mission statement.	4	Q4 2024	Director, Vice Director for R&D, International Advisory Board	I34.1 Implications of mission explained and communicated to researchers. I34.2 Vision added to mission.	EXTENDED	This action has been marked as EXTENDED, with Indicator I34.1 fully completed and Indicator I34.2 extended to Q4 2027. To fulfil Indicator I34.1, the Institute focused on translating the four abstract pillars of its mission statement into concrete operational tools, evaluation workflows, and support mechanisms rather than merely publishing descriptive text. The practical implications across all pillars were embedded into daily institutional operations: aligning research directions through a digital grant proposal registration system; supporting basic research via a new internal "Post-GAČR" grant scheme and CoARA-aligned qualitative peer evaluations; recognizing societal impact through a new comprehensive competency matrix; and enhancing HR development via expanded intranet guides, wellbeing initiatives, and training hubs. These practical implications were systematically communicated to staff through institutional seminars, newsletters, and intranet updates. Furthermore, a dedicated summary page titled "Our Mission Explained" was published and linked on the official HRS4R Home page (English Czech),

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							Indicator I34.2 (adding a long-term vision to the mission statement) has been extended to Q4 2027 to ensure strategic alignment with higher-level institutional planning. Institute management decided that the long-term vision should be derived directly from the mandatory 5-year Institutional Strategic Plan (Dlouhodobá koncepce rozvoje výzkumné organizace – DKRVO), which defines the Institute's overarching research, HR, and infrastructure goals. As the DKRVO framework is scheduled for submission in August 2026 and official publication in November 2026, the formulation of the long-term vision in consultation with key stakeholders (including the International Advisory Board) will proceed upon its completion, using the approved strategic document as its baseline.
A35	Mandate the trade union to negotiate an extension of the Collective Agreement's provision on temporary workload reduction to include employees with fixed-term contracts and to extend the possible reasons for reduced working hours beyond family and health reasons.	24, 28	Q1 2024	Trade union, WG3	I35.1 Trade union mandated, terms of temporary workload reduction discussed with institute management. I35.2 The collective agreement updated if the negotiations are successful.	COMPLETED	This action has been successfully completed, with both Indicators I35.1 and I35.2 fully met. Building upon Action 9, negotiations between the Institute Trade Union and management resulted in updated provisions for temporary workload reductions, codified in Article 9.5 of the Collective Agreement effective from January 2026. Eligibility for temporary working-hour reductions was extended from permanent staff to all employees, including those with fixed-term contracts, ensuring equal contractual access across the entire workforce. In addition, qualifying reasons were broadened beyond strict health or family grounds to illustrative examples, explicitly incorporating study and professional development (effectively establishing an unpaid sabbatical framework). The updated framework safeguards job security by executing reductions via fixed-term contract amendments, guaranteeing automatic reinstatement of original working hours and salary upon expiration under the Labour Code. The updated Collective Agreement is publicly available on the official HRS4R Home page (English Czech).
A36	Undertake a gap analysis of the current system of remuneration of researchers at all levels in terms of fairness and transparency and in relation to the performance, level of qualification and responsibilities of researchers.	26	Q4 2024	WG3 + Director	I36.1 Gap analysis completed and communicated to stakeholders. I36.2 Follow-up actions defined.	COMPLETED	This action has been successfully completed, with both Indicators I36.1 and I36.2 fulfilled. To address Indicator I36.1, a comprehensive internal audit was conducted, resulting in the report "Research Staff Remuneration Gap Analysis: Gender Equity and Qualification Levels". The findings were communicated to key institutional stakeholders—including Institute Management, the HR Office, the Payroll Office, and the HR Award Team—to enable them to analyze the results and design targeted follow-up measures. Due to privacy and data protection concerns stemming from small sample sizes in certain qualification categories, the report is shared with evaluators as an internal review annex rather than a public web link. To fulfil Indicator I36.2, two concrete follow-up actions were established to increase salary transparency and fairness: Guide to Researcher Compensation, Bonuses, and Benefits: Published on the institutional intranet, this guide outlines the researcher remuneration system, fixed and variable salary components, and pathways to increase earnings through scientific outputs, grant activity, and institutional roles. Itemized Bonus Breakdown on Electronic Payslips (Work in progress): To make variable pay fully transparent, an itemized bonus structure is being introduced into electronic payslips during bonus payout months. This breakdown specifies exact bonus amounts, funding sources (specific grant projects, contracts, or institutional overhead), and standardized bonus categories (e.g., project participation, publication rewards, managerial performance, or special extra-duty contributions).
A37	Establish an internal grant writing support initiative leveraging internal expertise and accessible resources to improve proposal quality.	4, 37, 38, 39	Q1 2028	Office of Research Support	I37.1: Grant writing guidelines and good practice examples published on the intranet.	NEW	Addresses researchers' need for professional development in grant writing at zero/low financial cost. It capitalizes on our key internal asset—researchers serving on grant review panels—and systematically connects staff with free external training opportunities.

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					I37.2: Internal experience-sharing sessions organized (leveraging agency review panel members) and relevant free external seminars promoted.		
A38	Establish a research and thesis topic management system to connect non-teaching staff with university networks to attract young talent.	22, 33, 37	Q4 2027	Office of Research Support	I38.1: Topic collection template and workflow integrated into existing infrastructure, enabling researchers to easily submit thesis proposals. I38.2: Direct promotion channels established with relevant university departments for topic sharing (leveraging existing contacts). I38.3: Research and thesis topics from non-tenured researchers systematically collected and made available to university partners.	NEW	As a public research institution where many researchers lack university affiliations, this system provides non-teaching staff with essential access to students needed for long-term group growth. Furthermore, it directly addresses a key vulnerability identified in exit surveys, where foreign staff report feeling isolated from the Czech academic community and rate networking opportunities poorly.
A39	Strengthen institutional resilience and manage risks in international cooperation, recruitment, and travel.	5, 7, 12, 23, 31	Q1 2029	Institutional Resilience Coordinator, IT Team	I39.1: Internal regulation adopted to establish risk- assessment procedures for international agreements, foreign guest hosting, and high-risk recruitment. I39.2: Travel guidelines updated with pre-travel briefings for high-risk destinations, supported by dedicated travel IT hardware (laptops/ phones) provided by the IT team.	NEW	The Institute established the role of the Institutional Resilience Coordinator in 2026 to respond to increasing EU and national guidelines on research security, foreign interference, and sanctions compliance. As a public research institution with active international mobility, we need basic, lightweight risk-management mechanisms. This action protects our researchers on high-risk business trips and safeguards institutional know-how, while maintaining a lean, pragmatic process suitable for a small institute.
A40	Develop a voluntary framework for annual reflective feedback and appraisal dialogues to complement mandatory evaluations.	11, 16, 22, 28, 29, 30	Q4 2028	HR Manager, WG2, Institute Director	I40.1: A simple, voluntary feedback toolkit (open-form template and practical guidance on constructive feedback) created and published on the intranet—featuring methodology for narrative reflection on a broad spectrum of career contributions. I40.2: Toolkit piloted in at least one research group, refined based on user experience, and rolled out for institute-wide voluntary use.	NEW	This action introduces a voluntary annual reflective feedback framework to complement mandatory formal evaluations. Because mandatory evaluations operate on a 5-year cycle, they do not allow for continuous tracking of career development or timely feedback, which is particularly felt as insufficient by early-career and international researchers. Additionally, research support staff (V1) were previously omitted from evaluation frameworks entirely. The new annual framework provides V1 staff with an accessible feedback mechanism for the first time, while offering all researchers (V2-V6) a continuous, low-pressure dialogue option. It serves as a flexible environment to pilot modern career evaluation elements aligned with CoARA and the European Charter, including recognition of all mobility types, mentoring, Open Science, narrative reflection, and structured career advice.
A41	Promote sustainable research practices.	2, 3, 5, 6, 7	Q3 2027	WG1 + Head of Finance & Operations Division (THÚ)	I41.1: Institutional guidelines aligned with the MSCA Green Charter and ESA CSR Code of Conduct published on the intranet to define basic sustainable operational practices.	NEW	This action establishes clear internal guidelines to promote sustainable research practices across the institute. As an active contractor for international partners such as the European Space Agency (ESA), the institute seeks to anchor corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental standards directly into its operational policy. Aligning our framework with the MSCA Green Charter and ESA CSR guidelines ensures full alignment with partner expectations while proactively preparing the institute for future European research standards, where environmental sustainability is increasingly emphasized. The action provides a practical green

No.	Action	Gap principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators	Current Status	Remarks
					I41.2: A practical "Green Research Checklist" published on the intranet to offer clear, voluntary steps for staff to reduce their daily environmental footprint.		research checklist to support staff in reducing their daily environmental footprint through voluntary, pragmatic steps.
A42	Develop a comprehensive Handbook of Good Practice for Selection and Interviewing and unconscious bias briefing materials for selection committees.	10, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20	Q4 2028	HR Manager, WG2	I42.1: Handbook of Good Practice for Selection and Interviewing—covering all OTM-R policy selection criteria, structured interviewing, and an unconscious bias checklist—created and published on the intranet. I42.2: Selection committee briefing package (handbook and unconscious bias guidelines) systematically provided by HR to committee members prior to evaluation and interview rounds.	NEW	This action strengthens the practical implementation of our internal OTM-R policy by ensuring selection committees fully understand and consistently apply key evaluation principles, particularly judging merit, recognizing CV variations and career breaks, mobility experience, and seniority. To establish a sustainable and cost-effective internal capacity-building process, the institute intends to upskill HR staff to systematically provide panel members with a comprehensive handbook and briefing package prior to evaluation and interview rounds. This pragmatic in-house approach equips committee members with structured interviewing guidelines and unconscious bias awareness, ensuring high OTM-R standards across all recruitment procedures.
A43	Establish a secure electronic IP asset register and updated reporting guidelines.	5, 6, 7, 8, 31	Q4 2027	Office of Research Support, IT Department, Finance & Operations Division Head	I43.1: IP guidelines in the internal regulation on handling research results updated, defining categories for all IP asset types and establishing data security standards for reporting. I43.2: A secure electronic IP registration tool/module launched on the intranet for simplified submission and safe management tracking.	NEW	This action expands the institute's intellectual property management framework to systematically track all types of IP assets, including software, prototypes, methodologies, and patents, beyond those with immediate commercial potential. By updating internal regulations and launching an electronic IP register, the institute strengthens institutional governance and research protection. To address cybersecurity and research security risks, updated reporting guidelines and user prompts will ensure researchers log essential metadata without exposing sensitive technical details, safeguarding core know-how against potential security breaches.
A44	Establish a voluntary scientific mentoring scheme for early-stage researchers, new hires, and employees returning after long-term absence.	11, 24, 28, 37, 39	Q3 2028	WG4, HR Manager	I44.1: Simple voluntary mentoring guidelines (defining matching principles, roles, and confidentiality) published on the intranet. I44.2: Initial pool of voluntary mentors established and pilot mentoring pairs launched for target groups. I44.3: Evaluation form for 5-year formal mandatory evaluations updated to formally recognize mentoring activities.	NEW	This action establishes a voluntary scientific mentoring scheme focused on scientific guidance, publication strategies, and grant integration within the institute. To ensure clear implementation, scientific mentoring is explicitly distinguished from routine administrative supervision and general operational onboarding. The scheme specifically supports early-career researchers, new hires, and staff returning from extended leave, such as parental leave, thereby strengthening talent retention and career development. To motivate senior researchers to participate as mentors, mentoring contributions will be formally recognized in mandatory formal evaluations, directly aligning with Principles 11, 28, and 37 of the European Charter for Researchers.
A45	Develop an onboarding e-learning ethics and culture module, and establish a consultation channel for research ethics questions.	1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 27	Q2 2028	WG1, Office of Research Support	I45.1: Interactive e-learning ethics module—covering both Czech Academy of Sciences ethics codes, workplace conduct and cultural norms (e.g., gender equality and core values), practical boundaries of research freedom, and a short assessment quiz—integrated into	NEW	This action strengthens institutional ethics and research freedom awareness by integrating an interactive e-learning module into mandatory onboarding for all new hires. The module covers the Code of Ethics for Researchers of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Code of Conduct of the Czech Academy of Sciences, and workplace culture, including diversity and gender equality. In line with Principle 1 of the European Charter, it explicitly outlines the operational framework of research freedom, balancing methodological autonomy with organizational goals, infrastructure, and ethical standards. Complementing the training, the institute is establishing a designated research ethics consultation point and an intranet

No.	Action	Gap principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators	Current Status	Remarks
					mandatory onboarding alongside OHS training. I45.2: Designated research ethics advisor/consultation procedure established and a practical intranet resource published with Q&As and guidance on research ethics issues.		guidance resource to support researchers with practical questions, including publishing ethics and the use of AI in research.
A46	Establish institutional guidelines on the responsible and ethical use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in research and administration.	2, 3, 7, 11, 14, 31	Q4 2027	Office of Research Support, IT Dept., WG1	I46.1: Institutional policy/guidelines on the ethical and secure use of AI tools in research and administration published on the intranet. I46.2: Intranet FAQ and practical use-case resource published (clarifying permitted vs. prohibited AI applications). I46.3: Promotion and provision of guidance on verified "secure" AI tools/infrastructures that protect research data and intellectual property by preventing unauthorized model training on user prompts.	NEW	This action addresses emerging vulnerabilities regarding Generative AI in research by developing institutional guidelines and practical resources on its ethical, transparent, and secure use. Aligned with Principle 3 (Professional Responsibility), the proposed policy will clarify acceptable boundaries for AI tools, establishing clear rules for proper attribution, scientific integrity, and data reproducibility. To safeguard intellectual property and personal data (GDPR), it will prohibit uploading confidential or non-public research data into unapproved external tools while guiding staff toward secure, privacy-compliant AI infrastructure. Furthermore, it will embed strict human-in-the-loop safeguards against automated decision-making in recruitment and performance evaluations. Supported by planned intranet FAQs and use-case guidance, this initiative will complement our institutional resilience framework (Action A39) by protecting institutional know-how while supporting modern research practices.
A47	Update the Institutional Career Development Strategy to establish clear criteria for indefinite contracts and formalize the tenure and tenure-track framework.	11, 15, 22, 25, 28	Q1 2029	HR Manager, Institute Director, Trade Union	I47.1: Institutional Career Development Strategy updated and published on the intranet and the public website, explicitly defining transparent criteria, expectations, and procedures for tenure-track positions and awarding indefinite employment contracts. I47.2: Guidance resource published on the intranet and the public website, communicated to staff and research group heads to ensure clear understanding of career pathways and tenure criteria across all departments.	NEW	This action addresses a key gap in career predictability under the Stability and Permanence of Employment principle by establishing a formalized, transparent framework for tenure-track positions and awarding permanent (indefinite) employment contracts. While the current Collective Agreement regulates fixed-term contracts, this initiative will replace ad-hoc transitions with clear, objective benchmarks linked to formal evaluation outcomes and qualification levels. Implementation is aligned with and depends on the completion of the extended Action A21 (scheduled for Q4 2028). Once finalized, the updated strategy and practical guidelines will be published on the intranet and website to ensure full clarity on long-term career pathways across the institute.
A48	Update the internal travel regulation to set clear travel rules, support researcher well-being, and cut administrative burden.	10, 24, 27	Q3 2028	WG3, Head of Finance & Operations Division (THÚ)	I48.1: Internal travel regulation published on the intranet establishing clear rules for travel parameters (accommodation limits, rest/travel time buffers, leave combination, weekend/off-hour travel principles, parental needs, and disability support).	NEW	This action updates the internal travel regulation to replace ad-hoc approvals with clear, transparent, and predictable rules for all staff, directly supporting Principle 24 (Working Conditions) and Principle 10 (Non-discrimination). The revised framework will introduce practical guidelines for hotel price limits, rest time before events after long flights to handle jet lag, and rules for combining work trips with annual leave. It will also support work-life balance and inclusion by addressing weekend travel, family needs, and extra cost support for staff with disabilities. Additionally, we will review the current electronic travel request and reporting workflows to make sure the administrative process stays simple and efficient.

No.	Action	Gap principles	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicators	Current Status	Remarks
					I48.2: Review of the current electronic travel request and travel report workflows completed to verify that the administration process remains simple and optimal.		
A49	Reduce the Administrative Burden for Researchers and Leaders.	4, 23, 24, 37	Q4 2028	WG3, Head of Finance & Operations Division (THÚ), Department Heads	I49.1: Internal mapping of administrative and managerial tasks completed, and a comprehensive support service catalogue (including delegation frameworks, e.g., for deputy heads) published on the intranet. I49.2: Principles for recognizing and compensating delegated leadership roles officially incorporated into internal organizational rules. I49.3: Additional internal administrative processes requiring software support identified, digitized, and integrated into intranet/software workflows to further reduce administrative burden and optimize researchers' efficiency. I49.4: Feedback on administrative burden integrated into the regular biennial staff survey to continuously optimize support staff utilization and maximize researchers' time dedicated to scientific work.	NEW	This action systematically reduces the administrative workload for researchers and research leaders to maximize their time dedicated to scientific work. In line with Principle 24 (Working Conditions) and Principle 37 (Supervision and Managerial Duties), the institute will map routine administrative tasks to identify those suitable for shifting to support staff, backed by a clear service catalogue published on the intranet. To ensure sustainable leadership sharing, clear principles for recognizing and compensating deputy department heads will be officially incorporated into internal organizational rules. Additionally, further internal administrative workflows will be digitized, and staff feedback will be monitored through regular biennial surveys to continuously optimize support utilization.

Comments on the implementation of the OTM-R principles

Since endorsing the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, the Institute of Thermomechanics of the CAS has systematically embedded Open, Transparent, and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) principles into its institutional culture. The primary milestone achieved during this phase is the successful adoption and full implementation of our comprehensive internal regulation governing the recruitment of university-educated research staff (covering all research grades V1–V6, including PhD candidates). This regulation establishes a binding framework that ensures clarity, fairness, and transparency across all stages of the recruitment process—from job vacancy announcements and composition of selection committees to candidate evaluation and complaints handling.

To operationalize these principles effectively, the Institute has created a centralized digital HR Award Resources Hub on the intranet. This hub equips hiring managers and selection committees with a comprehensive suite of practical tools, including standardized bilingual job ad templates aligned with EURAXESS requirements, a job ad generator with unconscious bias checks, digital requisition forms, conflict-of-interest declarations, and standardized candidate evaluation sheets.

Our commitment to open and transparent recruitment is reflected in our advertising practices. Research vacancies are systematically published on our official website in both Czech and English, on the EURAXESS portal, the Czech Academy of Sciences job portal, and commercial channels like LinkedIn, ensuring broad international and local outreach. Furthermore, our policies successfully attract diverse talent from abroad, with the number of international researchers growing substantially over the years.

While our internal regulation and daily practices ensure a robust, high-quality recruitment process—supported by structured interviews, clear merit criteria, and active engagement of the HR Manager in overseeing quality—we continuously seek to optimize our procedures. Feedback from our internal review has highlighted areas for further enhancement, leading to the introduction of Action A42 in our current Action Plan. This action focuses on developing a dedicated Handbook of Good Practice for Selection and Interviewing, which will provide advanced guidance on judging merit, handling career breaks, recognizing diverse mobility paths, and implementing unconscious bias briefings for all selection committee members by Q4/2028.

Overall, OTM-R principles are now firmly anchored in our daily operations, balancing institutional needs with high European standards to ensure that the Institute continues to attract, select, and retain excellent researchers.

4 Implementation Process

General overview of the implementation process

During the reported period, the Institute of Thermomechanics of the Czech Academy of Sciences continued to embed the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers into its organizational culture and daily operations. The implementation process was driven by a commitment to institutional development, transparent management, and continuous improvement of working conditions for all staff groups.

Governance and Executive Leadership: Implementation relies on direct executive authority and active management involvement. Under national legislation and Academy regulations, the Director holds sole decision-making authority over HR policies, recruitment, and evaluations. Rather than delegating oversight, the Director actively serves on both the Steering Committee and an HRS4R Working Group. The Steering Committee further includes the Deputy Director for Finance & Operations, the Vice-Chair of the Supervisory Board (Secretary of the Doctoral Studies Committee), and the Head of the Research Support Office. This high-level representation ensures that decisions can be implemented immediately across administrative and research departments without operational bottlenecks.

Strategic Alignment and Policy Integration: The HR Strategy for Researchers is fully incorporated into the Institute's core policies and strategic frameworks:

- The official Mission Statement explicitly commits to implementing Charter & Code principles and constantly enriching our HR strategy.
- Internal regulations formally define our OTM-R policy ("Filling of Positions of University-Educated Staff in Research Departments") and ensure transparent selection procedures.
- The Gender Equality Plan, originally created within the HRS4R framework, remains closely aligned with our strategic goals.
- HRS4R measures are systematically linked with major development projects, notably our current 2025–2028 management project funded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT), which targets HR development, internationalization, intersectoral cooperation, research security, and Open Science.
- The HR Award commitment is integrated across institutional identity, appearing on official letterheads, presentation templates, email signatures, regulations, forms, and internal methodologies.

Consultation and Feedback Culture: The implementation process was built on extensive consultation across all career stages (R1–R4) and support staff. In 2025, we conducted a comprehensive review process combining quantitative and qualitative tools: the Biennial Staff Survey, a PhD Supervisor Survey, a PhD Candidate Roundtable, and a PhD Candidate Survey. Crucially, we introduced a Management Feedback Loop, where leadership formally analyzed and responded to all constructive staff comments. Input was also gathered through internal advisory bodies, departmental meetings, and strategic guidance from the International Advisory Board.

Adaptive Execution and Focus on Quality: Our approach to monitoring and timelines prioritizes functionality, quality, and consensus over rigid calendar dates. Deadlines in the Action Plan are managed flexibly to reflect human resource capacities, financial constraints, and stakeholder feedback. Measures are finalized and launched only after thorough consultation to ensure they are practical and widely accepted.

Forward-Looking Action Plan (A37–A49): Building on previous results, we have formulated 13 new actions for the upcoming period. These target key institutional priorities: internal grant writing support (A37), thesis

topic management (A38), research resilience (A39), voluntary annual feedback dialogues (A40), green research practices (A41), OTM-R selection handbooks (A42), secure IP registration (A43), scientific mentoring (A44), onboarding ethics training (A45), responsible AI use (A46), updated career development strategies (A47), modern travel regulations (A48), and systematic reduction of administrative burden (A49). Progress on these actions will be tracked using clear qualitative, quantitative, and survey-based indicators.

How have you prepared the internal review?

The internal review was initiated in 2025 through an extensive consultation process combining quantitative surveys, targeted consultations, and direct engagement across all staff groups.

1. Biennial Staff Survey (June 2025)

Tailored survey versions were distributed to R1–R4 researchers and non-research staff, omitting researcher-specific questions for non-research staff to allow both separate and comparative analysis. Participation reached 49% among research staff and 21% among non-research staff. The survey comprised five parts:

- **Part 1 – Action Awareness:** Tested awareness of 6 actions implemented in previous phases.
- **Part 2 – Information Needs:** Evaluated staff familiarity with key internal topics over time.
- **Part 3 – Long-Term Quality Monitoring:** Monitored satisfaction with evaluation, training, remuneration, and IT services.
- **Part 4 – Proposed New Measures:** Allowed respondents to vote on newly proposed initiatives.
- **Part 5 – Open Comments:** Collected qualitative feedback and suggestions.

New Feature – Management Feedback Loop: Introduced for the first time in the 2025 survey, management and responsible units analyzed, grouped, and answered all constructive comments. Although this delayed the final results, it provided staff with honest feedback and greatly improved transparency.

2. PhD Supervisor Survey (November 2025)

A personal consultation (combining face-to-face interviews and written questionnaires) was conducted with PhD supervisors. A total of 10 out of 12 supervisors participated (representing 20 of the 23 active PhD candidates at the time) to examine the practical implementation of Supervision and Training Plans (Action 14).

3. PhD Candidate Roundtable (November 2025)

A joint discussion was held involving PhD candidates, Institute management, and representatives of the Committee for Doctoral Studies. Management communicated measures already implemented (particularly Supervision and Training Plans) and gathered feedback on supervision structures. To include candidates who could not attend, the topics raised during the roundtable helped us prepare a follow-up structured survey.

4. PhD Candidate Survey (December 2025)

Participated in by 16 out of 23 active PhD candidates (70%) and 2 out of 9 recent graduates (22%). The survey focused on evaluation transparency, Doctoral Committee structure, supervisor-student relationships, procedures for reporting ethical issues, and the practical use of Supervision and Training Plans.

5. Stakeholder Integration & Governance

Beyond formal surveys, HRS4R Team members continuously gathered feedback through departmental meetings, internal advisory bodies, ad-hoc discussions, and regular board meetings. This direct feedback helped us identify gaps and draft new initiatives, including Actions 37, 38, 43, 47, and 48.

Because the HRS4R Team meets as a full group rather than in smaller sub-teams, the Steering Committee took part in all main discussions and decisions. This ensured clear and continuous leadership oversight.

Full reports for the 2025 Research Staff survey, the 2025 PhD Candidate survey, and the 2025 Supervisor survey are attached as annexes to this Internal Review. The 2025 Non-Research Staff survey is not attached because it was conducted in Czech.

6. Involvement of the International Advisory Board

The International Advisory Board, which advises the Director on strategic research directions, regularly discussed HR priorities, helped identify operational gaps, and suggested concrete measures.

How have you involved the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?

We involved the research community and key administrative stakeholders through direct representation, regular departmental discussions, targeted consultations, and team expansion.

- **Broad Representation in the HRS4R Team:** The Implementation Team includes active representatives from 4 out of 6 research departments (until recently 5 out of 6), as well as administrative and support staff. This structure ensures that different academic and operational perspectives directly influence implementation.
- **Continuous Departmental & Peer Consultations:** Team members regularly discussed planned measures with their colleagues during monthly departmental meetings, internal committee sessions, and individual consultations. This bottom-up feedback helped shape the final details of selected actions.
- **Targeted Engagement with Early-Career Researchers:** PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers were regularly consulted through annual roundtables with Institute Management and the Committee for Doctoral Studies. These sessions allowed early-stage researchers to directly address supervision, evaluation, and career support needs.
- **Active Team Building and Strengthening Capacity:** The HR Award Manager actively sought suitable members across the Institute to ensure all essential roles were represented. A major improvement occurred in 2025 when the newly hired HR Manager joined the team (Working Group 2 on Recruitment, and the Steering Committee). She immediately took ownership of several key recruitment-related actions.

Do you have an implementation committee and/or steering group regularly overseeing progress?

Yes, progress is regularly overseen by a dedicated Steering Committee, which forms the executive core of the HRS4R Implementation Team.

Steering Committee Composition (6 members):

- Institute Director
- Deputy Director for Finance and Operations

- HR Manager
- HR Award Manager / Head of Research Support Office
- Vice-Chair of the Supervisory Board / Secretary of the Committee for Doctoral Studies (R3 researcher)
- International Senior Researcher (R3 researcher)

Oversight & Governance Structure:

- **Direct Leadership Involvement:** The direct participation of the Institute Director (who holds final decision-making authority) ensures streamlined oversight and fast decision-making throughout the implementation process.
- **Integrated Meetings:** The Steering Committee does not work in isolation. Instead, the entire HRS4R Implementation Team—including all Steering Committee members—meets regularly as a single unified body.
- **Consensus-Driven Process:** All discussions, adjustments, and decisions are made continuously and by consensus. This collaborative approach ensures smooth progress, strong executive backing, and clear alignment across both administrative and scientific units

Is there any alignment of organisational policies with the HR Excellence in Research award process? For example, is the HR Excellence in Research award recognised in the organisation's research strategy or overarching HR policy?

Yes, the HR Strategy for Researchers is fully aligned with the Institute's overarching strategic, operational, and communication frameworks.

1. Mission Statement

The principles of the European Charter for Researchers are explicitly embedded at the highest strategic level. The Institute's official Mission Statement formally commits to the award process:

"To achieve the best results, we foster enthusiasm, motivation and confidence of our staff by implementing the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and constantly enriching our Human Resource Strategy for Researchers."

2. Policy and Project Integration

- **Recruitment & OTM-R Policy:** Our internal regulation "Filling of Positions of University-Educated Staff in Research Departments" formally defines our OTM-R policy and governs the practical implementation of OTM-R principles across all research departments.
- **Gender Equality Plan (GEP):** The GEP was originally created as one of the earliest actions within the HRS4R framework and remains closely aligned with our overall HR strategy.
- **Strategic Project Alignment:** We systematically align Action Plan measures with major institutional development projects. In particular, our current strategic management project funded by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT, running from 2025 to 2028) directly focuses on HR development in line with the HR Award, internationalization, intersectoral cooperation, institutional resilience, cybersecurity, and Open Science.

3. Institutional Identity

Visual Identity: The HR Excellence in Research logo is integrated into official PowerPoint templates, executive presentations, letterheads, the intranet, and email signature guidelines.

Document Branding: The logo is systematically placed on all internal regulations, methodologies, forms, templates, and internal documents developed with the contribution of the HR Award process.

How has your organisation ensured that the proposed actions would also be implemented?

According to Czech national legislation and regulations of the Czech Academy of Sciences, the Director of the Institute is the sole person authorized to adopt policies and make final decisions on recruitment and researcher evaluations. Evaluation and selection committees serve an advisory role, while final authority rests with the Director.

For this reason, the Director's active involvement in both the Steering Committee and a working group is essential, as it allows for direct engagement with stakeholders and fast adoption of HRS4R measures. In addition, the Steering Committee includes other key decision-makers—the Deputy Director for Finance & Operations, the Vice-Chair of the Supervisory Board (who also acts as Secretary of the Committee for Doctoral Studies), and the Head of the Research Support Office. All of these members have the operational authority needed to streamline implementation.

The HRS4R Implementation Team receives full support from management, who view the HR Excellence in Research Award as a strategic tool to improve scientific performance through human resource development. The implementation of new actions will continue following the same established workflows that proved successful in previous periods.

How are you monitoring progress (timeline)?

Progress on planned actions is regularly reviewed during joint meetings of the HRS4R Implementation Team and the Steering Committee. The team evaluates the status of deliverables and updates target dates based on realistic institutional conditions.

We use an adaptive approach to timeline management. Target deadlines in the Action Plan are treated as operational goals, but they are flexibly adjusted according to available human capacities, financial resources, stakeholder feedback, and external circumstances.

Our main priority is the long-term functionality and quality of every measure. Rather than rushing to meet a fixed date, we take the time needed to thoroughly consult solutions with stakeholders and adjust them based on feedback. This approach ensures that finalized measures are fully effective and accepted by the institute community.

How will you measure progress (indicators) in view of the next assessment?

To measure progress in view of the next assessment, each of the 13 newly proposed actions (A37–A49) has been assigned specific, measurable indicators. These indicators combine formal adoption, digital implementation, practical rollout, and user feedback.

Progress will be measured across four main categories of indicators:

1. Adoption and publication of internal regulations and guidelines:

- Research resilience risk-assessment regulations and pre-travel guidelines (A39).
- Green Research guidelines and checklist (A41).

- OTM-R Handbook of Good Practice for Selection and Interviewing (A42).
- Guidelines on research ethics, research freedom, and the responsible use of AI (A45, A46).
- Updated Institutional Career Development Strategy (A47).
- Updated internal travel regulation (A48).

2. Deployment of technical tools and intranet modules:

Measuring the launch of new digital infrastructure, such as:

- The research and thesis topic collection module (A38).
- The secure electronic IP asset register (A43).
- The interactive onboarding e-learning ethics module (A45).
- Digitized administrative workflows and the administrative support service catalogue (A49).

3. Participation milestones:

Evaluating the active implementation of new initiatives, including:

- Piloting voluntary feedback dialogues in research groups (A40).
- Establishing an initial pool of scientific mentors and matching pilot pairs (A44).
- Organizing internal grant-writing experience-sharing sessions (A37).
- Providing selection committees with pre-interview briefing packages (A42).

4. Feedback evaluation:

Using qualitative feedback and the regular biennial staff survey (in 2027 and 2029) to evaluate the actual impact of implemented measures, particularly regarding researchers' administrative burden (A49) and user experience with new feedback and career development frameworks.

The HRS4R Implementation Team and Steering Committee will systematically review these indicators during regular meetings to ensure all actions remain on track for the next assessment.

How do you expect to prepare for the external review?

To prepare for the site visit, our focus is on clear internal communication, coordination with the assessment panel, and concise documentation:

- At an institute-wide seminar in June, we informed staff about the purpose, format, and timing of the site visit. We explained that assessors will meet with employee representatives to discuss both the strengths and challenges of the institute. We asked staff to answer questions openly, using this review to identify areas for further improvement beyond survey data.
- We will contact the lead assessor to discuss their specific requirements. Based on their input, we will organize the interview groups, set up the schedule, and manage all physical and logistical arrangements for the visit.
- Ahead of the site visit, we will meet with the selected interview groups to answer any questions they may have regarding the evaluation process, the implementation of the Action Plan, and practical expectations.
- We will prepare briefing packages for the assessors and interview participants summarizing our main achievements, key highlights, and the updated Action Plan.

Additional remarks/comments about the proposed implementation process

The Institute benefits from a motivated and enthusiastic HRS4R Implementation Team made up of volunteers who truly believe in positive change. No one was forced to join, and no one is pressured to stay. As a result, the team enjoys low turnover and a stable foundation.

Over time, our regular and ad-hoc team meetings have become a natural routine—one that management views as an integral part of an ongoing organizational culture shift. Our understanding of the HR Award process has evolved significantly: while basing our actions on the gap analysis, it took us a while to reflect our resources and capacity when setting priorities. We feel much more relaxed in the process, tapping into the natural creativity of our researchers to propose practical measures and solutions.

We are fully aware that, as a small organization, our resources are limited. For this reason, every action is designed thoughtfully and realistically to ensure we actually deliver on our commitments, driving research quality and making the Institute an attractive place to work.

6 Acknowledgements

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Title	ID	Program	Duration
Rozvoj strategického řízení Ústavu termomechaniky AV ČR (HR Award)	CZ.02.2.69/0.0/0.0/18_054/0014697	Operational Program Research, Development, and Education (OP VVV)	2020–2022
Zkvalitnění strategického řízení výzkumu v Ústavu termomechaniky AV ČR	CZ.02.01.01/00/23_026/0011450	Operational Program Jan Amos Komenský (OP JAK)	2025–2028



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