HRS4R – Human Resources Strategy for Researchers

Action Plan 2022-2024

Generalitat de Catalunya
Government of Catalonia

IRTA

**Institute
of Agrifood Research
and Technology**

hr

HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

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Introduction

IRTA is a research institute owned by the Government of Catalonia ascribed to the Ministry of Climate Action, Food and Rural Agenda. It is regulated by Law 04/2009, passed by the Catalan Parliament on the 15th of April 2009, and it is ruled by private regulations. It is part of the CERCA centres system of Catalonia.

IRTA's mission is to contribute to modernising, improving, boosting competitiveness, and fostering sustainable development in the sectors of agriculture, food, agroforestry, aquaculture, and fishing, as well as in all areas of activity directly or indirectly related to the supply of healthy, high-quality foodstuffs to end-consumers, while also contributing to food safety and safe processing of foodstuffs and in general enhancing the health and well-being of the population.

Its general objectives are to **promote research and technological development in agri-food**, to facilitate the **transfer of scientific advances** and to evaluate its own technological advances whilst seeking the utmost coordination and **collaboration between the public and private sectors**.

Since it was founded, IRTA has sought to establish long-lasting collaboration agreements with other public bodies that operate in Catalonia in the areas of technological research and development. This approach has led to the creation of a consortium network of centres (involving IRTA, universities, CSIC, public-sector bodies, etc.), which is, in effect, an R&D cooperative system.

Since 2015, IRTA holds the **Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) award** provided the European Commission. The award identifies the institutions and organizations as providers and supporters of a stimulating and favourable working environment. The award holders are committed in developing an HR Strategy for Researchers, designed to bring the practices and procedures in line with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (Charter and Code).

Two Action Plans have been defined and conducted since 2015. The first one comprised the period of 2015-2018 and it was based on establishing the bases and framework of the excellence in HR for Researchers. Actions such as the development of the Ethics Code and the Gender Balance Plan, the update of the Procedure for Recruitment and a specific Training Program for researchers were conducted. The second Action Plan comprising the period of 2019-2021 mainly focused on the Career Development of researchers R3-R4 and R1. This Career Development included a specific plan to establish their aspirations and motivations at IRTA, a specific Training Plan for Researchers, an Annual PhD Seminar, a FAQs documents for PhD candidates, updates in the PG-77 for Recruitment and the definition of the PhD position at IRTA in the Collective Agreement.

The **current Action Plan 2022-2024** has been defined with focus on broadening the Career Development project for R1-R4 including temporal postdocs, improving the development of the Annual Training Plan as well as including specific training for example regarding FAIR data, expanding the recruitment sites and strategies to attract talent such creating an Alumni network.

These three Action Plans enable the institution to fulfill the HR Vision and HR Strategic Objectives in alignment with the European Charter and Code principles. The description of the Plans can be found at: https://www.irta.cat/en/work-at-irta/hrs4r/

The design of the Action Plan

The HRS4R Working Group (WG) at IRTA is composed by HR representatives including the HR Director, the Scientific Director, representatives of researchers from R1 to R4 and a researcher representing IRTA's Workers Council. The definition of the Actions to be executed has been carried out in a dynamic way in which, not only representatives of the researchers and HR identify a need (gap or improvement) within IRTA, but also the Scientific Coordination Team (composed also by researchers) contributed to the definition of the actions via the Scientific Director who is also part of the WG. The overall identified actions have been presented to several Committees within IRTA (e.g., Scientific committee, Executive

committee), including the CEO, for their approval. In addition, actions have also been identified and proposed by the Board of Directors and then presented to the WG for their execution and monitoring. The main coordinators of the actions are the HRS4R Management Team (HR representatives) and the Scientific Direction together with the Scientific Coordination Team (Figure 1). The HRS4R WG meets at least twice a year and the HR Management Team and the Scientific Coordination team, weekly.
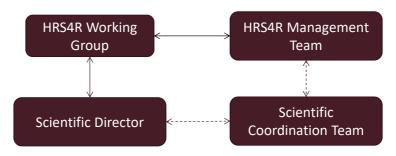

Figure 1. Scheme of the Action Plan coordination flow within IRTA

The design and development of the Action Plan considers the following aspects:

- HRS4R Charter & Code
- OTM-R Checklist
- Strategy of the institution determined by the Board of Directors
- Surveys and meetings gathered from previous actions
- Needs identified by the researchers via their Head of Program
- Collective Agreement of IRTA
- IRTA's mission and vision

Action Plan 2022-2024

The aim of the Action Plan 2022-2024 is to ensure the progress to quality of IRTA within the HRS4R framework by boosting the Career Development aspects of researchers R1-R4, by enhancing the Training Plan and by broadening the Recruitment options to enlarge their engagement and spirit of collaboration within and outside IRTA (Talent Attraction). Moreover, actions focused on Gender Balance policies are also of special interest in this Action Plan.

The Action Plan has been divided in *Annual Actions* and *New Actions*. Annual Actions are those that have been developed in prior Action Plans and that from that moment on are in motion. New Actions are those that have been identified as targets for the 2022-2024 period.

Annual Actions

ACTION	TIME FRAME	COORDINATION	INDICATOR /TARGET	STATUS
Acquisition of enough candidates with suitable requirements in the selection process	Yearly	HR	5 candidates with suitable profile / Recruitment	On-going, yearly
Offer training in soft skills in each yearly Training Plan	Q1	HR	Courses / Continuing Professional Development & Supervision and managerial duties	On-going, yearly
Offer training in ethical aspects in research	Q1	HR	Course in Ethics, Science and Technology / Ethical principles & Professional responsibility	On-going, yearly
Training Plan specific for Researchers R1 to R4	Q1 yearly	HR	Courses & Conferences/ Continuing Professional Development & Good practice in research & Dissemination, exploitation of results	On-going, yearly
Offer career advice & training to PhD candidates	Q4 yearly	HR	Courses & Conferences/ Continuing Professional Development	On-going, yearly
Satisfactory and adequate Training Plan	Q4 yearly	HR	Satisfaction score ≥4 out of 5 / Access to research training and continuous development	On-going, yearly
Organization of Annual PhD Seminar including an evaluation panel and best presentation award	Q4 yearly	Scientific Direction + Scientific Coordination Team	Seminar / Dissemination, exploitation of results & Continuing Professional Development	On-going, yearly
Standardized Promotion System for consolidated researchers including	Q4 yearly	Scientific Direction + Scientific	Promotion of researchers / Career	On-going, yearly

ACTION	TIME FRAME	COORDINATION	INDICATOR /TARGET	STATUS
external committee members		Coordination Team + HR	Development & Relation with supervisors & Access to career advice & Evaluation – appraisal system	

New Actions

ACTION	TIME FRAME	COORDINATION	INDICATOR /TARGET	STATUS
Attractive display for job posts	Q2 2022	HR + Scientific Direction + Scientific Coordination Team	Satisfaction score ≥ 4/5 on new template for job posts / Recruitment (Code)	In development
Expand the access to new recruitment platforms	Q1 2023	HR + Scientific Direction + Scientific Coordination Team	Engagement in 1 more platform / Recruitment	In development
Expand the candidates pool for research positions	Q1 2023	Scientific Direction + Scientific Coordination Team	Deployment of an Alumni platform / Value of mobility & Continuing Professional Development	In development
Expand the candidates pool for research positions	Q1 2023	Communication Office	Video on HRS4R initiatives / Public engagement & Transparency	In development
Communication with candidates on IRTA's support bureaucratic aspects for foreigners	Q3 2022	HR	Description available in job posts / Recruitment (Code)	In development
Communication with candidates on IRTA's Gender Balance commitment	Q3 2022	HR	Description available in job posts / Non-discrimination & Recruitment & Gender Balance	In development
Gender Balance tools for recruitment processes	Q2 2023	HR	Courses & Checklist / Selection & Gender Balance	In development

ACTION	TIME FRAME	COORDINATION	INDICATOR /TARGET	STATUS
Stablish a communication channel to collect Gender Balance inquiries	Q4 2023	HR + Gender Balance Commission	Open-forum platform & mailbox / Gender Balance & Complaints, appeals	In development
Non-sexist language practices	Q4 2022	HR + Gender Balance Commission	Handbook / Gender Balance & Non-discrimination & Selection	In development
Exclusive protocol for prevention and detection of sexual harassment	Q1 2023	HR + Gender Balance Commission	Separation of sexual harassment protocol from psychological harassment protocol / Gender Balance & Complaints and appeals	In development
Implementation of a Training Plan Committee	Q1 2022	HR	Agreement on annual Training Plan / Research environment & Continuing Professional Development	In development
General knowledge on annual Training Plan	Q1 2022	HR	Informative session to all personnel/ Research environment & Continuing Professional Development	Completed
Offer training in Open Science and FAIR data in research in each yearly Training Plan	Q2 2022	HR + Scientific Direction	Courses / Continuing Professional Development & Good practice in research	In development
Offer career advice & training to temporal R2 researchers	Q2 2023	HR	Courses / Continuing Professional Development	In development
Most favourable annual Training Plan	Q4 2022	HR	Standardized methodology to gather training needs / Access to research training	In development

ACTION	TIME FRAME	COORDINATION	INDICATOR /TARGET	STATUS
			and continuous development	
Updating the Satisfaction Survey for PhD candidates at the end of their thesis	Q2 2022	HR	Document update / Supervision	In development
Career Development Plan for temporal R2-R3	Q4 2022	Scientific Direction + Scientific Coordination Team	Deployment of an Internal Tenure Track Program / Career Development & Relation with supervisors & Access to career advice & Supervision and managerial duties	In development
Expansion of the Career Development Plan for R2-R4	Q1 2023	Scientific Direction + Scientific Coordination Team	Implementation to 3-4 Researchers per Program / Career Development & Relation with supervisors & Access to career advice & Supervision and managerial duties	In development
Development of a Career Development Plan for R1 including a Mentoring Program	Q1 2023	Scientific Direction + Scientific Coordination Team	Implementation for all IRTA PhD candidates & Creation of a pool of mentors / Career Development & Relation with supervisors & Access to career advice & Supervision	In development
Project Beyond Leadership for R4 – stage 1	Q3 2023	HR	Creation of a specific training plan / Supervision and managerial duties & Continuing Professional Development &	In development

ACTION	TIME FRAME	COORDINATION	INDICATOR /TARGET	STATUS
General overview for recently recruited PhD candidates	Q3 2023	Scientific Direction + Scientific Coordination Team	Welcome Day for PhD candidates/ Research environment & Access to career advice	In development
Scientific Seminars and Workshops for the research Programs	Q3 2022	Scientific Direction + Scientific Coordination Team	5 Seminars per year/ Research freedom & Dissemination, exploitation of results & Research environment	In development
Research Mobility Program for R1-R4	Q3 2022	Scientific Direction + Scientific Coordination Team	Deployment of Research Mobility Program (n=5 researchers) / Research environment & Career Development & Value of mobility	In development
Expand the research collaboration network for R1-R4	Q3 2023	Scientific Direction + Scientific Coordination Team	Submission of 1 recruitment-based EU proposal (e.g., MSCA COFUND)/ Research environment & Career Development & Value of mobility	In development
IRTA's external visibility	Q1 2023	Communication Office	Deployment of new website/ Accountability & Public Engagement & Dissemination, exploitation of results	In development
IRTA's external visibility	Q4 2024	IT & Communication Office & Scientific Direction + Scientific Coordination Team	Regular updated HR status and research topics on IRTA's new website / Research freedom & Research environment	In development

Evaluation of the Action Plan

Even though all proposed actions are monitored for their execution and quality by each coordination team, several are closely assessed as they directly impact on the career development of researchers at IRTA. Table 1 presents the methods that are in place for the evaluation of the career development plans as well as for the training plan. Surveys and follow-up meetings contribute as evaluation and monitoring tools, and they are responded in an anonymous fashion to ensure freedom and quality to the satisfaction rate. The questions placed in the surveys are related to usefulness of the action, improvement in the communication with the supervisor(s), communication of the project, development of the action and suggestions. It is important to mention that these career development actions are monitored bidirectionally, researchers and supervisors are asked for their satisfaction and perspective to be able to detect biases and miscommunication.

Table 1. Overview of the actions and their quality assessment methods

ACTION	Quality assessment method	Participants
PhD Annual Seminar	Survey	Audience + Speakers
Career Development Plan for Researchers	Survey	Researchers
Career Development Plan for Researchers	Survey & Follow-up meetings	Heads of Programs
Training Plan	Initial survey with identified needs	Heads of Programs
Training Plan	Survey at the end of each training action	Participant researchers
Attractive display of job posts	Survey	Heads of Programs
Gender Balance actions	Reports on evolution	Gender Balance Commission
Talent attraction actions	Increase of professional experience of received candidates	HR + Scientific Direction