

HR Excellence in Research

Renewal Review

Internal Review

Case number

2021IT599603

Name Organisation under review

University of Palermo

Organisation's contact details

Piazza Marina 61, Palermo, Italy, 90133, Italy

Submission date to the European Commission

06/05/2026

1. Organisational Information

Please provide an update of the key figures for your organisation. Fields marked with * are compulsory.

STAFF & STUDENTS	FTE
Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, doctoral candidates either full-time or part-time involved in research *	2889

STAFF & STUDENTS	FTE
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality) *	117
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is the host organisation) *	128
Of whom are women *	1318
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) *	1208
Of whom are R2 = recognised researcher (e.g. postdoctoral researcher, junior researcher) *	501
Of whom are R1 = first stage researcher (e.g. doctoral candidate, research apprentice) *	1037
Total number of students (if relevant) *	48042
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching, and research staff) *	4358

RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for the most recent fiscal year)	€
Total annual organisational budget	373260193,51
Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)	0,00
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)	31445139,00
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	2081513,33

ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE (a very brief description of your organisation, max. 100 words)

The University of Palermo (UniPa), is a public institution for education and research comprising 16 Departments and School of Medicine. The structure also includes the University Library System, UNIPA Heritage Museum System, Language Center, School of Italian Language for Foreigners, Doctoral School, Orientation Center, Sports Center. The educational offerings for 2025/2026 include: 75 Bachelor's degrees, 76 Master's degrees, 9 Single-cycle degrees, 3 Advanced training courses, 24 Professional Master's programs, 44 Specialization Schools; 33 PhD programs; 53 Double-degree agreements; 20 programs taught entirely in English. UNIPA recorded the enrollment of 210 international students and currently hosts 651 incoming ERASMUS, 186 inter-institutional agreements.

2. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice

Please review the strengths and weaknesses under the four pillars of the European Charter for Researchers, as provided by your organisation in the initial assessment phase. When doing so, you should do not only look back, but also consider new priorities, strategic decisions, etc. which may further influence the action plan. Please also provide a brief commentary in the 'Remarks' column if major changes have occurred versus the initial plan.

Note: Click on the name of each of the four thematic headings of the European Charter for Researchers to open the editor and provide your answers in the section dedicated to internal review for the interim assessment.

Strengths and weaknesses (initial phase)**Strengths and weaknesses (interim assessment)****Strengths and weaknesses (award renewal, max. 500 words) ***

The University of Palermo (Unipa) has established a solid institutional framework supporting research freedom, ethical conduct and inclusive research environments.

Academic freedom is explicitly guaranteed by the University Statute, which recognises freedom of research as a fundamental principle guiding institutional activities. **(1)**

The Ethical Code and the Code of Conduct define the fundamental principles of integrity, responsibility and professional conduct expected from members of the academic community **(2)**. The Ethical Code has recently been supplemented with the addendum "Ethical Code in Research," which specifically addresses aspects such as authorship, intellectual property, plagiarism, and research misconduct more broadly **(3)**.

Unipa has also implemented policies addressing discrimination, harassment prevention and gender equality, and has adopted a Gender Equality Plan aimed at promoting equal opportunities and inclusive working environments, that is currently reviewed and updated **(4)**. Additional support mechanisms include the presence of a "Consigliera di Fiducia" **(5)**, who is a Counsellor, external to the University, appointed to manage harassment and discrimination cases, a Committee for Equal Opportunity (Comitato Unico di Garanzia) **(6)**, which is an institutional body dedicated to equality and well-being, and a Center for Gender Studies and Policy **(7)**.

The promotion of ethical awareness and responsible research is further supported through interdisciplinary initiatives and research structures addressing global challenges. In particular, the Interdepartmental Research Centre "Migrare" promotes research and activities on migration, human rights and inclusion **(8)**, while other Interdepartmental Centres focus on Sustainability **(9)** and Biodiversity **(10)**, contributing to the integration of environmental and societal perspectives into research and academic activities.

Unipa also supports open access to research outputs through the institutional repository IRIS **(11)** and aligns its practices with the principles promoted within European research programmes, including Horizon Europe and OpenAIRE.

Despite these strengths, several areas for improvement have been identified.

There is a need to reinforce the implementation and monitoring of the "Research Integrity and Good Research Practice" Checklist for Supervisors of Research Students, ensuring its systematic integration within the documentation processes of Master's and PhD programmes. Furthermore, clearer and more unified Research Integrity Guidelines applicable to researchers at different career stages would contribute to strengthening consistency in research practices across disciplines.

Additional improvements concern the development of training activities related to responsible research practices, such as research integrity, data management, ethical aspects of digital research, environmental and social responsibility in research.

Not all departments have structured policies and infrastructure supporting research data management and long-term archiving. Clearer guidance on research documentation management would help ensure consistent practices across the University. Two University's committees have been nominated to develop Guidelines on the "Use of AI in teaching and research" as well as on "Dual Use", following national guidelines. While the institutional repository and open access initiatives are in place, incentives and structured dialogue on Open Science practices could be further developed taking into account the new legislation on IPR Management that abolished the so called "Professor Privilege" and the protection of critical technologies that could be eligible for the STEP Sovereignty Seal.

Remarks (max 500 words)

Unipa recognizes the importance of maintaining high standards of ethics, integrity and responsible research practices to ensure the quality, credibility and societal relevance of academic research. In a research environment characterized by rapid technological change, increasing digitalisation and growing expectations regarding the social and environmental impact of research, universities are required to strengthen governance mechanisms that support responsible research and innovation.

In this context, Unipa aims to reinforce its institutional framework for research integrity and responsible practices.

A key priority is the adoption of a comprehensive **Research Integrity Framework**, aligned with the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and relevant European standards, that includes new emerging topics such as **Artificial Intelligence** and **Dual Use**. This framework will contribute to strengthening coherence across departments and disciplines, ensuring that researchers at all career stages are supported by clear and shared guidelines. **(NEW ACTION 22)**

Another important objective concerns the integration of research integrity tools within the University's quality assurance system. In particular, the inclusion of the **“Research Integrity and Good Research Practice” Checklist for Supervisors of Research Students** (Master's and PhD students) within the documentation flow of Master's and PhD programmes will help promote responsible supervision practices and support the development of a strong culture of research integrity among early-career researchers and their supervisors. Monitoring of its implementation **through the institutional quality assurance system** will further strengthen its effectiveness. **(NEW ACTION 23)**

Unipa also plans to reinforce **training opportunities for researchers and supervisors** to increase awareness of responsible research practices. Dedicated training initiatives for PhD candidates will be organized by the School of Doctoral Studies. The HR Excellence in Research Working Group will promote initiatives for R2, R3 and R4 researchers. **(NEW ACTION 28)**

In addition, the University intends to strengthen institutional practices related to research data management, archiving and preservation by developing a **Unipa-wide policy on data management and research documentation**. This initiative will contribute to promoting consistent standards for the management of research data across departments taking into account IPR management and European priorities on critical technologies (STEP) protection. **(NEW ACTION 24)**

Strengths and weaknesses (initial phase)**Strengths and weaknesses (interim assessment)****Strengths and weaknesses (award renewal, max. 500 words) ***

Unipa recognises that transparent recruitment procedures, responsible research assessment and clear career development opportunities are essential elements for creating an attractive and sustainable research environment. Recruitment processes follow national regulations and are designed to promote open and transparent competition. Calls for positions are systematically published on the institutional website as well as on national and European platforms, including the websites of the Italian Ministry of University and Research (MUR) and EURAXESS. In recent years, the University has continued to improve the accessibility and transparency of its recruitment processes by ensuring the publication of calls on national and European platforms and by implementing fully digital application procedures through the PICA platform. These measures contribute to facilitating participation in recruitment procedures and increasing the visibility of opportunities available at the University. To support international participation, calls and application forms are also made available in English. These measures contribute to enhancing the transparency and accessibility of recruitment procedures and support the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment (OTM-R). **(12)**.

Guidelines have been developed and published on the University website and are currently under review to ensure alignment with recent amendments to Italian legislation (2025-2026) concerning short-term and tenure-track recruitment policies. However, some challenges remain in ensuring full accessibility for international candidates. In particular, non-EU applicants may encounter administrative barriers related to national regulations governing documentation and self-certification procedures, which can complicate the recognition of qualifications and the submission of required documents. These limitations derive primarily from national legislative constraints and are therefore only partially within the direct control of the University.

With regard to research career assessment, Unipa has formally committed to the reform of research evaluation practices by joining the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) in November 2022 and signing the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA) **(13)**. This commitment reflects the University's intention to contribute to the development of more responsible and balanced approaches to research assessment at the European level. Despite this commitment, research evaluation practices still rely largely on traditional metrics such as publication indicators, journal impact factors and research funding performance. While these indicators remain important components of research evaluation, the integration of broader qualitative criteria is still developing. In particular, aspects such as open science practices, mentoring activities, and societal impact are not yet systematically recognized in research assessment processes.

Another area requiring further development concerns career progression and support for early-career researchers. Although national regulations define the general framework for academic careers, the availability of structured institutional support mechanisms for early-career researchers remains limited. Clearer guidance on career development pathways and transparent criteria for progression between different career stages (R1–R2–R3) would contribute to improving the predictability and transparency of academic careers. Furthermore, mentoring and professional development opportunities for early-career researchers could be further strengthened to support their career development and integration into the research system.

Remarks (max 500 words)

Unipa acknowledges that certain administrative constraints affecting international candidates originate from national legislation and may create additional procedural requirements for applicants from outside the European Union. In order to mitigate these difficulties, the University intends to strengthen institutional support mechanisms for international candidates. The establishment of a dedicated **International Researchers Recruitment Contact Point** is envisaged to assist non-EU applicants during recruitment procedures and to provide support to non-Italian-speaking members of selection committees. This initiative is expected to improve the accessibility and transparency of recruitment processes and further promote the internationalisation of the University. **(NEW ACTION 25)**

In parallel, Unipa is committed to contributing to the ongoing European reform of research assessment. By signing the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment and joining CoARA, the University has expressed its willingness to progressively align its evaluation practices with the principles of responsible research assessment. In this context, Unipa intends to promote **stronger synergies between the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers and the activities related to CoARA** by encouraging coordination and exchange between the respective working groups. In addition, Unipa will continue its participation in the national Community of Practice, established in 2024, in order to foster exchange of best practices and to establish a structured dialogue with the Ministry on legislative constraints affecting the implementation of the Charter principles, especially for new recruitments, career assessment and progressions. Selection procedures are often rigidly regulated, with evaluation criteria that are not always adaptable to the specific profile or position advertised, and that fail to recognize career breaks or non-linear, multidisciplinary, and hybrid career paths. In addition, there is a lack of adequate funding to support career progression. **(NEW ACTION 26)**

Strengths and weaknesses (initial phase)**Strengths and weaknesses (interim assessment)****Strengths and weaknesses (award renewal, max. 500 words) ***

Unipa recognises that providing supportive working conditions and clear institutional frameworks is essential for fostering a productive and attractive research environment.

Besides centralized and departmental administrative support for proposals submission and grant management, research capacity at Unipa is strengthened by centralized infrastructures that offer a wide variety of services; these include i) library services **(14)**; ii) an Advanced Technologies Network Center **(1** **(<https://www.unipa.it/servizi/atencenter/en/home.html>)5** with centralized thematic laboratories; iii) a University Technology Transfer Center **(16** **(<https://ut2c.unipa.it/homepage/>)**). Researchers at Unipa are also provided support services for patenting and Horizon proposals preparation through subcontracted external services.

Unipa supports research activities through internal funding schemes, such as the Fondo Finalizzato alla Ricerca (FFR) sustain basic research, while programmes such as Eurostart support researchers in preparing competitive proposals for European funding calls.

Administrative and research support services are monitored through the annual satisfaction surveys conducted within the national Good Practice benchmarking initiative coordinated by the Politecnico di Milano. These surveys collect feedback from researchers, PhD candidates, and academic staff on the quality of institutional services. In the most recent survey, satisfaction scores were above 4 (on a 1–6 scale) for library services (4.41), while lower scores were reported for campus services (3.35), IT services (3.36), communication services (3.61) and portal/social media services (3.66). Overall results remain slightly below the average of mega Italian universities, although a modest improvement has been observed compared with the previous year (+0.22 with respect to 2024). Researchers report challenges related to administrative workload and limited support for identifying suitable funding calls and preparing proposals.

Employment conditions for researchers are defined within the national legislative framework and formalised through clear contractual arrangements. Unipa provides contracts specifying the rights and duties of researchers and has issued guidelines on academic careers, available both in Italian and English **(17)**. Negotiation of working conditions have been in place for hiring researchers coordinating European projects or national projects of similar importance. However, employment stability remains a challenge, as a significant proportion of researchers are employed through fixed-term contracts. While the University supports tenure-track positions through co-funding mechanisms, the available resources for expanding stable career opportunities remain limited.

Unipa promotes work–life balance and well-being through several support services. The organizational well-being, falls under the responsibility of the Vice-Rector for Organizational Well-being, who assesses needs, develops an action plan, and monitors the effectiveness of its implementation. All initiatives are advertised in the new portal “Benessere Organizzativo”. These include campus mobility services, medical assistance through the University medical centre **(18)**, reduced fees to access the University sport facilities **(19)**, and counselling services addressing equal opportunities and cases of harassment or discrimination **(20)**. An online portal has been created where Unipa personnel can find special offers and services which aim to improve the quality of life of the academic community through welfare services, health initiatives, sports programs, and social activities **(21)**. Childcare services are available through a university nursery (0–3 years) open to staff, researchers and doctoral candidates and a kindergarten (3–6 years), extended to students with children **(22)**.

Remarks (max 500 words)

Unipa intends to reinforce institutional support for research activities by expanding internal funding schemes will contribute to sustaining basic research activities and supporting researchers in the early stages of their careers. **(ACTION N. 34)**

At the same time, the Unipa plans to reinforce administrative support structures to assist researchers in the identification of suitable calls, preparation of proposals and management of research projects. The expansion of administrative support staff dedicated to grant acquisition and management is expected to reduce the administrative burden currently faced by principal investigators and research teams, allowing researchers to focus more effectively on their scientific activities. **(ACTION N. 31)**

Employment stability remains an important structural issue that requires coordinated efforts at both institutional and national levels. UniPa is committed to supporting the development of tenure-track opportunities within the limits of available resources and national regulations. In this regard, Unipa intends to advocate at national level for increased funding and policy measures aimed at expanding tenure-track positions and strengthening long-term career opportunities for researchers.

The University manages the procedures related to the legal and economic status of full professors, associate professors, tenured researchers, fixed-term researchers under Article 24, paragraph 3 letters a) and b), and RTT/Tenure Track researchers, from their hiring to their termination. Special attention is given to the reception and linguistic and cultural mediation for foreign researchers and professors, taking into account the application of the fundamental principles of the European Charter for Researchers, ensuring that the access rules, rights, and duties, which contribute to the career development of researchers and professors, are clear. The University prepares and ensures that recruitment calls are in line with European standardization processes. It drafts contracts for hiring and termination decrees. It prepares actions for interdepartmental, intersectoral, and inter-university mobility. It accepts requests for leave for study purposes, in order to support research activities. It manages requests for leave of absence and changes in workload (full-time/defined time) as well as those related to mandatory maternity and parental leave.

Indeed important objective consists in improving accessibility and transparency of contractual and regulatory information, particularly for international researchers. Unipa plans to progressively translate and publish researcher contracts schemes/frames and key institutional regulations in English to facilitate access to information for non-Italian-speaking researchers. In addition, the University intends to develop the architecture of a dedicated institutional portal designed to support and encourage the arrival of international researchers. This portal will provide practical information on recruitment procedures, contractual frameworks, and administrative processes, thereby contributing to improving the accessibility and attractiveness of the University for international researchers **(NEW ACTION 25)**.

Strengths and weaknesses (initial phase)**Strengths and weaknesses (interim assessment)****Strengths and weaknesses (award renewal, max. 500 words) ***

Unipa promotes research careers and professional development through a variety of institutional initiatives aimed at supporting researchers at different stages of their careers.

The recently established Unipa Doctoral School **(23)** plays a central role in coordinating interdisciplinary, cultural and professional development initiatives for doctoral candidates. In addition to these cross-disciplinary activities, individual PhD programmes provide field-specific training in accordance with national regulations, contributing to the scientific and professional development of early-career researchers.

Different types of research positions are offered at Unipa preceding the tenure-track career and include: Research grants, PhD grants, Research assignments, Post-Doc assignments, Research contracts; recent ruling has been developed to avoid overlapping of scope and to define ranges of salary and duration.

Several initiatives also support the development of complementary skills among researchers. Structured training opportunities are offered for newly recruited academic staff in order to develop pedagogical competences through the activities of the Teaching Learning Center -Centro per l'Innovazione e il Miglioramento della Didattica Universitaria **(24)**. Furthermore, seminars and workshops organized within the framework of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) contribute to promoting awareness of research careers and professional development opportunities.

Unipa also provides opportunities for continuous professional development through digital learning initiatives. Researchers have access to a wide range of Open Badge certifications that recognise skills acquired through training activities. In addition, Unipa participates in the FORTHEM European Universities Alliance and coordinates the FORTHEM Digital Academy **(25)**, which offers further opportunities for training and collaboration within a European academic network. Moreover, the Centro Linguistico di Ateneo (CLA) offers to researcher (PhD student, R1-R4) language courses (conversation, scientific writings, Open Badge for C1 IELTS, etc.) **(26)**.

Regarding the promotion of innovation and knowledge transfer, Unipa has recently strengthened its institutional support structures through the restructuring of the University Technology Transfer Center (UT2C). This structure supports technology transfer activities and encourages intrapreneurial initiatives, including the creation of academic spin-offs, thereby contributing to the valorisation of research results both within and beyond the academic environment.

Despite these strengths, several areas for improvement remain. While professional development opportunities are available, participation in training activities by researchers at intermediate and advanced career stages (R2–R4) remains limited. Increasing engagement in professional development programmes would contribute to strengthening skills related to research management, leadership and innovation.

Another important area concerns the recognition and support of diverse career paths. At present, there is no structured institutional framework specifically dedicated to supporting career opportunities outside academia, particularly for doctoral candidates. Strengthening career guidance services for PhD students would help broaden awareness of professional opportunities beyond the academic sector.

Finally, supervision practices vary across departments and research groups, reflecting differences in disciplinary traditions and organisational structures. Although many supervisors actively support the professional development of doctoral candidates, the absence of standardised training for supervisors may lead to variations in supervision practices across the institution.

Remarks (max 500 words)

Unipa recognises the importance of supporting research careers through structured training opportunities, mentoring practices, and initiatives aimed at strengthening researchers' professional development. The University is therefore committed to further developing institutional structures and programmes that support researchers throughout their career trajectories.

Through a questionnaire specifically designed and circulated to the entire research community (R1–R4) as part of the implementation of the 2023–2025 HRS4R Action Plan, the need for developing transversal skills and research management competences was assessed **(27)**. Based on the responses, a priority list was defined and a series of seminars and workshops was organised **(28)**. Participation was much more limited than expected, and the reason given was the overlap with other institutional commitments.

For this reason, Unipa plans to establish a **Unipa Researcher Training Academy**, dedicated to developing the most appropriate methodologies to support the continuous professional development of researchers on topics such as grant writing, project management, leadership, PhD candidate supervision, public speaking, Open Science, and the assessment of DNSH principles, among the others. It will adopt a variety of pedagogical and training formats—including videos, podcasts, and both online and in-person seminars. Unipa will envisage different forms of incentives to encourage broad and systematic participation in these initiatives **(NEW ACTION N. 27)**.

Another important objective is to further institutionalise initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue on research careers and professional development. In this context, the **Researcher Development Days** will be integrated among the official activities included in the University academic calendar, ensuring its regular organisation and increasing the visibility of professional development initiatives within the academic community **(NEW ACTION N.28)**.

Unipa also intends to strengthen support mechanisms related to career guidance and career diversification. The establishment of a dedicated **career service for PhD placement** will contribute to improving awareness of professional opportunities outside academia and to supporting doctoral candidates in exploring career paths in the public and private sectors. This initiative is expected to complement the activities of the Technology Transfer Center and other structures promoting innovation and knowledge transfer **(NEW ACTION N. 30)**.

Have any of the priorities for the short- and medium-term changed? (max. 500 words)

Preparation for the "National research evaluation (VQR 2020-2024) and for the "AVA:3 Autovalutazione, Valutazione e Accreditamento – terza versione" (Self-assessment, Evaluation and Accreditation – third cycle) has significantly influenced the short- and medium-term priorities of the University of Palermo, as is often the case in Italian universities operating within the national quality assurance framework. Both VQR and AVA3 processes are coordinated by ANVUR, the Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes, an independent public body operating under the supervision of the Ministry of University and Research.

Results of VQR influence reputation and part of the distribution of national research funding. AVA3 assesses whether universities have effective processes to guarantee and improve quality over time. Preparation for the VQR required a strong institutional focus on the collection, validation and selection of research outputs, as well as on the monitoring of research productivity at the level of departments and individual researchers. This process has mobilized a substantial amount of administrative and academic effort, as departments must identify the most representative publications, verify bibliometric data and ensure compliance with the evaluation criteria established by the ANVUR. Internal working groups have been activated and central support services to assist departments in the preparation of submissions have been strengthened.

At the same time, preparation for AVA3 accreditation required a systematic review of internal governance processes and documentation for the quality Insurance. This involved a thorough revision and updating of procedures, strengthening internal quality assurance structures, and ensuring that institutional policies were fully aligned with national guidelines, publicly accessible, and transparent.

The Self-Evaluation Report (Scheda di Autovalutazione) and related documentation was uploaded to the ANVUR accreditation platform by 11 August 2025. The Commissione di Esperti della Valutazione (CEV) began the remote analysis of the documentation starting in September 2025. The CEV site visit (remote and on-site) to the University of Palermo was done from 27 to 31 October 2025. CEV prepares its report, and ANVUR issues the final accreditation report within about six months after the visit.

For both the VQR 2020-2024 exercise and the AVA3 accreditation Unipa is awaiting the final reports. In the “medium term”, however, these evaluation processes contributed to strengthening institutional planning and governance. Overall, while the preparation for VQR and AVA3 have temporarily redirected institutional attention towards evaluation-related activities, they contributed to develop more structured governance systems, stronger internal quality assurance mechanisms, and more systematic monitoring of research and teaching performance.

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? (max. 500 words)

In addition to the update of the University Strategic Plan for 2024–2027 **(29)**, beyond accreditation (AVA3) and the Research Quality Assessment (VQR), which are recurring processes, a major factor shaping Unipa’s research strategy has been the implementation of the React-EU programme, translated in Italy into the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR). This initiative has had a direct and positive impact on the University of Palermo by strengthening its participation in extended partnerships, national research centres, and regional innovation ecosystems. It has also enabled significant investments in research infrastructure and the recruitment of new researchers, albeit predominantly under fixed-term contracts.

Are any strategic decisions under way that may influence the action plan? (max. 500 words)

The forthcoming results of AVA3 accreditation and the VQR research evaluation are expected to play a significant role in confirming or reshaping the priorities of the HR Excellence in Research Action Plan 2026–2028. Their outcomes can provide a robust evidence base to inform institutional strategies aimed at improving researchers’ working conditions, recruitment practices, and career development pathways.

In particular, the VQR results may highlight strengths and weaknesses in terms of scientific productivity, international collaboration, and research impact. Such evidence can guide the Action Plan by identifying areas where additional support is required. Should the VQR reveal disparities across departments, disciplines, or career stages, the Action Plan may need to incorporate targeted measures, such as strengthened mentoring schemes, improved access to research infrastructure, and enhanced research support services.

Similarly, the evaluation carried out by the Commissione di Esperti della Valutazione (CEV) within the AVA3 framework typically provides recommendations on governance structures, administrative procedures, transparency, and internal monitoring systems in line with quality assurance principles. These recommendations can directly inform HR Excellence in Research actions by fostering improvements in institutional processes relevant to researchers, including administrative support for research activities, transparency in the allocation of strategic resources, and the effective communication of career development opportunities.

Overall, the integration of AVA3 and VQR outcomes into the Action Plan will strengthen its evidence-based approach and ensure closer alignment between quality assurance, research performance, and human resources strategies at the University of Palermo.

3. Actions

Please consult the list of all the actions you have submitted as part of your strategy for the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers. Please add to the overview the current status of these actions as well as the status of the indicators. If any actions have been revised or omitted, please provide a commentary for each action. You can also add new objectives.

Note: Choose one or more of the principles automatically retrieved from the gap analysis with their ratings.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 1				
Elaboration and wide dissemination of the Ethical Code in Research, an addendum to the Ethical Code that covers aspects like plagiarism, authorship, conflict interest, ethical and legal requirements, licenses, permissions and agreements, research data and records management, intellectual properties, health and safety, research misconduct	GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
	2. Ethical principles	Start/ends: Q2-Q3 Y2023	UniPa GOVERNANCE UO Prevention of corruption and transparency, University legislation, privacy and inspection service University Research Special Service	Approval by Senate and the Board of Directors of the revised Code of Ethics that includes the dimension of the Ethical Conduct in Research
	Current Status	Remarks		
	COMPLETED	After the drafting by the C&C WG, reviewing by the HRS4R Steering Committee and HRS4R ambassadors, reviewing and approval in its final draft by the Academic Senate (no. 156/2025 – protocol no. 59502 of 08.04.2025), the Ethical Code in Research was issued with Rectoral Decree registered under number 5814 of 2025 (protocol number 85163 of 23/05/2025) and published in the University's Official Register under no. 2235 of 23/05/2025 for wide dissemination. (https://www.unipa.it/Codice-Etico-per-le-attivita-di-ricerca/)		

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 2

Produce a
"Research
Integrity and
Good Research
Practice"
Checklist for
Supervisors of
Research
Students

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
2. Ethical principles	Start/end: Q4 Y2023	C&C WG	Approval by Senate and the Board of Directors of the Research Integrity and Good Research Practice Checklist for Supervisors of Research Students
7. Good practice in research			
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	Preliminary studies were carried out by the C&CWG through a national and international benchmarking activity aimed at the analysis of good practices and tools developed by other Italian and European institutions, including within projects funded by the European Commission. (https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearisorseumane/.content/documenti/hrs4r/Documenti/HRS4R_Benchmarking_Modellodiriferimento_Research-Integrity-and-Good-Research-Practice-Checklist-for-Supervisors-of-Research-Students_ENG.pdf) The results contributed to the definition of the Research Integrity and Good Research Practice Checklist for Supervisors of Research Students, based on the chosen reference model (Erasmus+ BRIDGE), adapted to the organizational and regulatory context of Unipa and consistent with the principles of the European Charter. (https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearisorseumane/.content/documenti/hrs4r/Documenti/HRS4R_PropostaModello_Research-Integrity-and-Good-Research-Practice-Checklist-for-Supervisors-of-Research-Students.pdf). The proposed checklist was approved by the Academic Senate on January 27th 2026. (https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearisorseumane/.content/documenti/hrs4r/Documenti/27-01-2026-05.02.pdf).		

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 3

Dissemination to all researchers of information regarding open or soon to be opened calls to support research.

GAP Principle(s)

2. Ethical principles

**Timing (at least
by year's
quarter/semester)**

Continued End:
Q3 Year 2025

**Responsible
Unit**

University
Research
Special
Service (UO-
Research
Promotion
and Results
Exploitation)

Indicator(s) / Target(s)

Full coverage of the European and MUR calls

Current Status

Remarks

COMPLETED

The action has been further strengthened through the establishment of a dedicated administrative unit within the Research and Innovation Area — the Promotion of Funding Opportunities and Research Events Organization Unit — aimed at streamlining and optimizing activities that were previously carried out by different administrative staff in a less coordinated manner.
(<https://www.unipa.it/servizi/promozioneeorganizzazioneeeventiperlaricerca/>) During the monitoring period 2023-2025, 90 email communications were circulated to inform the academic community about calls of strategic interest for the University, partner search opportunities, information days, and training workshops relevant to participation in competitive funding schemes. In addition, to support researchers in identifying suitable funding sources and submitting project proposals, the platform “Fare ricerca: Bandi & Opportunità” was developed.
(<https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearicerca/Fare-ricerca-Bandi--Opportunit-00001/>) –
(<https://unipa.sharepoint.com/sites/farericerca/SitePages/Home.aspx?ga=1>; access restricted to the academic community). The platform includes a database of funding opportunities, covering both active calls and forthcoming ones. In 2025, a total of 260 calls for proposals considered relevant to the University were uploaded to the database. This action is reposed with new timing, responsible unit, indicators and targets (see Action 31).

PROPOSED
ACTIONS

Action 4

Further development of the English version of the University's website. Complete mapping and regularly up-date of the section of the University's PURE.unipa.it web page which illustrates the most relevant research activities carried out in the University labs and research activities' output. Regularly up-date the researcher's personal Italian and English web pages.

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
8. Dissemination, exploitation of results	End: Q3 Year 2023	UniPa GOVERNANCE Heads of Department	Status of completion of the English Website:100% of the parts related to Research.
23. Research environment		University ICT Service U.O. Communication	
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	The full English version of the Unipa website has not yet been completed. A comprehensive plan to restructure and restyle the entire University website is currently under development. For this reason, this action has been temporarily put on hold until the launch of the new website. As part of the HRS4R process, the Strategic Plans for 2021–2023 (https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearisorseumane/.content/documenti/hrs4r/unipa_piano-strategico_21-23_inglese_web.pdf) and 2024–2027 (https://www.unipa.it/ateneo/.content/documenti/PS-2024-2027_ultima-versione_revisionato_pubblicato_ok2.pdf), as well as the Code of Ethics in Research (https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearisorseumane/.content/documenti/hrs4r/Documenti/codice-etico-per-le-attiviti-di-ricerca_eng.pdf) were translated and published in English. All future policy documents, guidelines, and supporting materials for events will be produced in both Italian and English. In addition, the website section of the newly established Doctoral School was created and is progressively being updated with information in both Italian and English (https://www.unipa.it/strutture/scuoladidottorato/en/home.html). The website section dedicated to recruitment procedures and calls for applications includes content in both Italian and English (https://www.unipa.it/amministrazione/arearisorseumane/settorereclutamentoeselezioni/Docenti/).		

PROPOSED
ACTIONS

Action 5

Produce, regularly update, and distribute the official presentation of Unipa that present mission, vision and values of Unipa as well as the “numbers” of Unipa for its research, education and third mission activities.

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year’s quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
2. Ethical principles	Start/end: Q1 Year 2023	UniPa GOVERNANCE	Availability of an official UniPa presentation (power point and video)
9. Public engagement			
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	Several communication materials—such as presentations and videos—highlighting various aspects of research, education, third-mission activities, and infrastructures at UNIPA are available. These materials were produced either by individual departments and interdepartmental research centres or centrally for specific events, and they reflect the University’s broader communication efforts. However, a concise and effective synthesis of Unipa’s education, research, and third-mission activities, easily accessible to researchers who wish to present the University in different contexts (such as visits, workshops, and meetings), has not yet been developed. To address this need, the composition of the responsible unit will be revised to include staff working in the Communication area. This action is reproposed with new timing, responsible unit, indicators and targets (see Action 32).		

Action 6

Create an internal guide setting out clear OTM-R procedures and practices for all types of positions and publication of this guide on the website

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year’s quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
12. Recruitment	Start/End: Q3 Y2023	C&C WG	Publication of the OTMR guide on the UniPa website
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	The OTM-R guide, in both Italian and English, was drafted, circulated among the HRS4R Ambassadors groups, revised by the Senate, and published in January 2024 on the HRS4R webpage. (https://www.unipa.it/amministrazione/arearisorseumane/settorereclutamentoeselezioni/Docenti/) Considering the recent changes introduced by new Italian legislation and Unipa’s internal regulations in Q4 2025 regarding short-term research contracts, the Guide is currently being updated. More generally, it will be periodically reviewed as part of the continuous process of analyzing Unipa’s recruitment and career progression procedures and practices to ensure their alignment with the principles of the European Charter and OTM-R policy and practices. This action is repropose with new timing, responsible unit, indicators and targets (Action n. 33)		

PROPOSED
ACTIONS

Action 7

Create an internal guide for those who would like to start or prosecute their research career inside UniPa

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
12. Recruitment	Starts/Ends: Q1 Y2024	C&C WG	Publication of the internal guide for researchers' career on the UniPa website.
22. Recognition of the profession			
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	The C&CWG subunit 5 drafted a Career Guide for Unipa researchers both in Italian and in English, which is published on the University website (https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearisorseumane/hr-excellence-in-research/le-guide-di-unipa/) The administrative staff involved in drafting and issuing the guidelines is also responsible for their periodic updating and further development over time and for continuing their dissemination through dedicated events.		

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 8

Encourage the Coordinators of the PhD programmes to advertise programmes and open calls on social media (Facebook, Instagram, twitter, etc) and professional web networks (Research gate/Linkedin).

GAP Principle(s)

12. Recruitment

**Timing (at least
by year's
quarter/semester)**

Start: Q4 Y2022
End: Q1 Y2023
Start: Q4 Y2023
End: Q1 Y2024

**Responsible
Unit**

C&C WG UO
Doctoral
Studies

Indicator(s) / Target(s)

Number of posts on social media/minimum 2 per PhD programme.

Current Status

Remarks

COMPLETED

The activity is now under the responsibility of the newly established Unipa Doctoral School and is monitored within the framework of the institutional Quality Assurance system. Within the monitoring time PhD calls for cycles 38, 39 and 40, were published in facebook, X (twitter) and linkedin sites, as well as to the institutional webpages of the University of Palermo and in EURAXESS. Cycle 38.
(<https://www.facebook.com/universitapalermo/photos/a.180307905710163/1305571499850459/>)
(https://twitter.com/unipa_it/status/1545040218771709952) (<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6950806198979842048/>) Cycle 39.
(https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02E1j17aveXavZTq7ZisyvZVVhRP3cPDu1S4jdD6VMYjxg4dgvSzsD3ViNGPCJCUjJI&id=100080529889055)
(https://twitter.com/unipa_it/status/1684531254673256449/) (<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7090297045458067456/>) Cycle 40.
(<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=504752745552384&set=a.196636709697324>) (https://x.com/unipa_it/status/1810608942373896606)
(<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:share:7216374167909089282/?actorCompanyId=2206524>)

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 9

Encourage the adoption of “open” selection procedures, widely publicized in English so as to permit the access to the research career (PhD programmes) also to foreign applicants. Publish the call for applications to the selection processes for external research/teaching positions on the Euraxess web platform.

GAP Principle(s)		Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
12. Recruitment			UniPa GOVERNANCE C&C WG	
Current Status	Remarks			
COMPLETED	All PhD calls are available in English. In general, each call reserves one scholarship for candidates holding a degree from a foreign university, while all other scholarships are open to all applicants without restrictions, including international candidates (with the exception of positions linked to specific bilateral international agreements). According to Law 240/2010, all fixed-term positions must be published on national and EU platforms, including EURAXESS. Vacancies are also listed in the national database managed by the Ministry of University and Research (MUR). Calls are advertised in both Italian and English.			

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 10

Dividing the resources for HR planning among career advancements and fixed-time researchers. Encourage the elaboration of stabilization policies. In particular, increase the number of high-quality, fixed-time researchers having access to the prosecution of the career.

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
12. Recruitment	Continued End: Q3 Year 2025	UniPa GOVERNANCE	Share of funds allocated to new hires
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	A share of recruitment and career progression funds is dedicated to fixed-term researchers. Calls for Type B (tenure-track) positions declined from 40 in 2023 to 35 in 2024 and 15 in 2025. With the introduction of the new Tenure Track Researcher (RTT) scheme in 2024, the University has progressively replaced Type B positions with RTT, activating 57 RTT posts in 2024 and 44 in 2025. Calls for Type A researchers (RTDa, non tenure-track) dropped from 165 in 2023 to 17 in both 2024 and 2025. The 2023 peak was driven by extraordinary Next Generation EU funding, while the subsequent decrease reflects the reform of Law 240/2010, which phases out Type A positions in favor of RTT. To support stabilization, Unipa allocates resources for the direct recruitment of principal investigators from competitive EU and national programmes (Marie Skłodowska-Curie GF, ERC, Rita Levi Montalcini). Since 2022, annual calls for expressions of interest have aimed to attract highly qualified international researchers and strengthen strategic research areas. This action is repropose with new timing, responsible unit, indicators and targets (Action n. 34).		

Action 11

Create a guide for the selection committees

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
12. Recruitment		UniPa GOVERNANCE	Call for recruitment and carrier progression set up clear general criteria that the committees must follow in their evaluations.
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	This action was already considered completed by 2022. Selection committees are provided with clear general guidelines for their evaluations.		

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 12

Improve basic research:
Increase the amount of internal resources for basic research activities (FFR funds)

GAP Principle(s)		Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
24. Working conditions		Continued Ends: Q3 Year 2025	UniPa GOVERNANCE	Percentage increase of the FFR budget per year
Current Status	Remarks			
COMPLETED	In agreement with Objective 1.1 of the Strategic Plan, Unipa supports basic research through the Basic Research Funding Program (FFR), allocating €4,022,214 for the period 2023–2025. (https://www.unipa.it/servizi/strategiericerca/incentivi-alla-ricerca/fondo-finalizzato-alla-ricerca-di-ateneo-ffr/) To strengthen Scientific-Disciplinary Sectors (SSDs) with lower performance indicators, targeted incentive measures were introduced: Measure A (€210,000), Measure B (€350,000), and Measure C (€400,000). These initiatives promote interdisciplinary collaboration and support publications in high-ranking journals, including open access. (https://www.unipa.it/servizi/resocontisedutesaecda/Cofinanziamento-spese-di-pubblicazione-di-prodotti-scientifici-Misura-C--Anni-2024-2026/) At the departmental level, additional resources were provided through the Departmental Strategic Budget, amounting to €1,000,000 for 2023–2024 and €500,000 for 2025. (https://www.unipa.it/Assegnazione-del-Budget-Strategico-Dipartimentale-per-il-2025/). To encourage participation in European funding programmes, the University launched the “Eurostart” call, with €260,500 allocated in 2024 and €566,654.50 in 2025. (https://www.unipa.it/servizi/strategiericerca/incentivi-alla-ricerca/Bando-EUROSTART/) Furthermore, Unipa co-finances up to 30% of the cost for recruiting tenure-track researchers in sectors demonstrating high-quality research output, reinforcing excellence and long-term research capacity. (https://www.unipa.it/amministrazione/arearisorseumane/settorereclutamentoeselezioni/Docenti/RicercatoriTD/) This action is repropoed with new timing, responsible unit, indicators and targets (Action n. 35)			

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 13

Improve laboratories, lecture halls and research areas in order to abide current norms and rules regarding work conditions and safety. Hire technicians for supporting research activities.

GAP Principle(s)		Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
24. Working conditions		Continued End: Q3 Year 2025	MUR UniPa GOVERNANCE Heads of Department	Monitor the effectiveness of the actions regarding research infrastructures and support by one survey in Q3 Y2022 and one survey in Q3 Y2024.
Current Status	Remarks			
COMPLETED	During 2023-2025 a monitoring activity was carried out on 233 departmental research laboratories. In particular, a census was carried out of the main equipment in use and the services provided. For 2026, the goal is to complete the census, covering 100% of the research laboratories (total n.355). Please, see (https://www.unipa.it/terzamissione/attrezzature-e-strumentazioni/) In 2025, to enhance infrastructure safety, a training course for technical staff entitled "Use and Maintenance of Electrical and Electronic Measuring Instruments" was organized. The course lasted 12 hours and was attended by 32 participants. To meet research personnel needs, the University of Palermo recruited 7 laboratory technicians in 2023, 4 in 2024, and 15 in 2025. For the next three-year period, in accordance with the available hiring capacity and the strategic plan approved by the University's governing bodies, the Administration plans to recruit additional staff (Fonte Area Organizzazione e Sviluppo delle Risorse umane). This action is reposed with new timing, responsible unit, indicators and targets (Action n. 37).			

PROPOSED
ACTIONS

Action 14

Increase transport through bus services which connect the town centre to the university structures, create nurseries. Invest in the increase of infrastructures to support physically challenged and women workers.

GAP Principle(s)		Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
24. Working conditions		Continued End: Q3 Year 2025	UniPa GOVERNANCE Municipality of Palermo	Monitor the effectiveness of the actions regarding mobility by one survey in Q3 Y2022 and one survey in Q3 Y2024. Monitor the effectiveness of the actions of GEP to specifically support early-carrier women researchers by one survey in Q3 Y2022 and one survey in Q3 Y2024.
Current Status		Remarks		
COMPLETED		This action is considered concluded because it is now under the responsibility of the Vice-Rectorate for Workplace Well-being and Quality of Life and "Vice-Rectorate for Inclusion, Equal Opportunities and Gender Policies. During the monitoring period, Unipa has promoted researchers' well-being and work-life balance through several initiatives. A free shuttle bus operates across the main campus, which is also served by a nearby metro station. Medical assistance is provided at the AMU (Ambulatorio Medico Universitario) to students, PhD candidates, and postdocs; the facility also hosts an anti-violence counselling service managed by the Counsellor of Trust. Childcare support includes a university nursery (0–3 years) open to staff, researchers, and PhD candidates, as well as a kindergarten service (3–6 years) inaugurated in 2025. Additional measures are currently under consideration, including the provision of subsidized after-school services for the children of Unipa employees.		

PROPOSED
ACTIONS

Action 15

Connect the entity of doctoral and post-doc grants to the quality and quantity of scientific research outputs obtained by each researcher. Establish economic reward systems for single researchers or groups of researchers whose scientific research outputs are of particular relevance at the national and international level.

GAP Principle(s)		Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
16. Judging merit (Code)		Continued End: Q3 Year 2025	MUR UniPa GOVERNANCE	Continue to introduce incentives for excellence in the distribution of financial resources to the Departments.
Current Status		Remarks		
COMPLETED		A share of government funding for PhD scholarships is allocated to Departments based on minimum publication outputs by PhD students (15% in 2023), encouraging supervisors to enhance the visibility and impact of doctoral research. While PhD scholarships are legally fixed and generally not combinable with other income sources, Unipa is trying to allocate some extra financial resources available for PhD students' research activities. Unipa incentivizes research excellence through recruitment policies that reward Departments successful in securing competitive funding (e.g., PRIN, Horizon Europe, MSCA, ERC) with additional hiring capacity. Performance-based resources amounted to 1.17 PO in 2024 and 1.60 in 2025 (1 PO= cost of a full-time permanent position as full professor). Targeted recruitment of international high profile researchers (n. 2 in 2023; n. 2 in 2024 and n. 1 in 2025) and departmental reward systems to research excellence have been funded. Additional measures assist underperforming sectors (SSDs), while Public Engagement initiatives promote knowledge transfer and societal impact. All actions are monitored within the Quality Assurance framework. This action is repropose with new timing, responsible unit, indicators and targets (Action n. 36).		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 16

Increase visibility of researchers through the establishment of an in-house editor and agreements with external editors

GAP Principle(s)

8. Dissemination, exploitation of results

Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)

UniPa
GOVERNANCE,
Digital library office
and C&C WG

Responsible Unit

Indicator(s) / Target(s)

Current Status

Remarks

COMPLETED

Unipa has continued its partnership with Springer started in 2013 (UnipaSpringer), enabling its scientific community to publish a wide range of works in English, including monographs, textbooks, conference proceedings, and research outputs derived from doctoral theses. The initiative is open to both Unipa scholars and their external collaborators. The University Library Services (SBA) provide editorial and technical support, managing submissions, peer review processes, and updating the book series information. (<https://www.unipa.it/strutture/springer/>) Information on all editorial initiatives is available through the University website in a dedicated "Editorial Projects" section, accessible in both Italian and English. (Italian version: (<https://www.unipa.it/biblioteche/collezioni/progetti-editoriali/>) English version: (<https://www.unipa.it/biblioteche/en/collezioni/iniziativa-editoriali-unipa/>) SBA promotes research visibility through structured editorial support to open access (Italian version: (<https://www.unipa.it/biblioteche/fare-ricerca/open-science/open-access/creare-gestire-rivista-oa/>) English version: (<https://www.unipa.it/biblioteche/en/open-access/creare-gestire-rivista-oa/index.html>), guidance on transformative agreements with publishers Italian version: (<https://www.unipa.it/biblioteche/fare-ricerca/open-science/open-access/pubblicare-open-in-unipa/>) English version: (<https://www.unipa.it/biblioteche/en/open-access/>) where the information pages relating to individual publishers and the numbers of published articles are constantly updated, and institutional repositories (IRIS) hosting publications and research outputs (including original data sets and drawings).

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 17

Raise
consciousness
about precious
role of senior
researchers
involving them in
teaching activities
after their
retirement.

GAP Principle(s)

18. Recognition of mobility
experience (Code)

**Timing (at least
by year's
quarter/semester)**

**Responsible
Unit**

UniPa
GOVERNANCE
& Vice Rector
for Teaching

Indicator(s) / Target(s)

Current Status

Remarks

COMPLETED

This action was no longer considered strategic by year 2022.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 18

1. Create an educational program for academic teaching (Teaching and Learning Center) - COMPLETED 2. Motivate and monitor research re-qualification and up-date at all stages of researchers' career. Setting out a plan about continuous education.

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
37. Supervision and managerial duties	Continued End: Q3 Year 2025	UniPa GOVERNANCE C&C WG	Define and implement the AA 2022/23 and AA 2023/24 plans of continuous education on soft skills. Organization of an Unipa Leadership Development programme.
39. Access to research training and continuous development			
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	At the beginning of 2024, the University of Palermo, with the support of the Training of Academic Staff administrative unit, launched a survey to assess the training needs of researchers, including PhD candidates, researchers, and professors. The results informed the design of targeted training activities. The participation to the events was lower than expected from the outcome of the survey (https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearisorseumane/.content/documenti/hrs4r/Documenti/sondaggio_risultati.pptx). The action will be reformulated (see new Actions n. 28 and n. 29) During 2024, two training events were organised: The Legal Status of Academic and Research Staff (30 participants) (https://www.unipa.it/11-giugno-2024---Lo-stato-giuridico-del-personale-docente-e-di-ricerca/) and From the University Statute to Research Funding (20 participants) (https://www.unipa.it/Dallo-Statuto-dellAteneo-ai-finanziamenti-per-la-ricerca/). In 2025, a training day was held featuring two workshops: Artificial Intelligence in Research: Promises, Challenges and Dilemmas (70 participants) (https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearisorseumane/.content/documenti/hrs4r/Documenti/Locandina-giornata-della-formazione-per-la-ricerca.pdf) Feedback in the Management of Research Teams (48 participants) (https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearisorseumane/.content/documenti/hrs4r/Documenti/Locandina-giornata-della-formazione-per-la-ricerca.pdf). The "ERC Grant Bootcamp – Your Path to Success in European Research" was organised in collaboration with FORTHEM was organised from February 25–27, 2025 (https://www.unipa.it/progetti/forthem/ERC-Grant-Boot-Camp-2025/). Additional initiatives were delivered by the University Library System, including seminars on Open Access and Open Science addressed to PhD candidates and early-career researchers. (https://www.unipa.it/strutture/scuoladidottorato/new-page-00001/seminari/)		

PROPOSED
ACTIONS

Action 19

Social security education for early-stage and professors to increase awareness of societal /individual rights and responsibilities.

GAP Principle(s)		Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
26. Funding and salaries		Start/End: Q2 Year 2023 Start/End: Q2 Year 2024	C&C WG	Organization of dissemination events for new recruits: 1 event/year
Current Status	Remarks			
COMPLETED	This action is considered completed because is under the responsibility of the Doctoral School for R1 and will also be included in the activities of the Researcher Training Academy for R2-R3-R4. In the monitoring period, Unipa has implemented a range of initiatives to support researchers' awareness of their rights, duties, and career development. In 2023, a Welcome Meeting for newly hired researchers, covering key topics such as career prospects, administrative procedures, leaves, social security, and research planning. Out of 225 invited researchers, 40 attended in person, with presentations and supporting information made available through the institutional portal. (https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearisorseumane/.content/documenti/hrs4r/Documenti/Programma-A4-Welcome-Meeting-Dei-Ricercatori.pdf) (https://www.unipa.it/servizi/carriereprofessoriericercatori/informazioni/modulistica.html) In 2024, the Unipa Doctoral School, organized a seminar on PhD students' rights and duties. (https://www.unipa.it/strutture/scuoladidottorato/new-page-00001/seminari/) On April 8, 2024, it organized an interdisciplinary seminar for PhD students regarding their rights and duties: (https://www.unipa.it/persone/docenti/m/chiara.masnata/.content/documenti/Diritti-e-doveri.pdf) In June 2024, the C&C Working Group delivered a training session on the legal status and career management of academic staff, inviting around 1,600 researchers, with 30 attending in person. (https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearisorseumane/content/documenti/hrs4r/Documenti/Incontro-formativo-11-giugno-2024.png) In 2025, the approach shifted towards more personalized support through one-to-one sessions, focusing on social security, welfare, and researchers' rights and duties. During the year, 171 newly hired researchers (100%) received dedicated guidance, and approximately 300 additional individual requests were addressed.			

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 20

Inform/train HR offices about OTM-R.

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
38. Continuing Professional Development	Start/End: Q1 Year 2023 Start/End: Q1 Year 2024	UniPa GOVERNANCE C&C WG	Organization of dissemination events for HR staff: 1 event/year

Current Status Remarks

COMPLETED This action has been implemented by appointing the Head of the HR Department as chair of the C&C Working Group and the Head of the Recruitment office as member of the C&C WG.

Action 21

Enhance the capacity of the patent office to increase the support offered to researchers for the protection of the IPRs they contribute to create.

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
31. Intellectual Property Rights	Continued End: Q3 Year 2025	UniPa GOVERNANCE UniPa Industrial Liaison Office (ILO) patent service support.	Patents from areas that have never filed a patent/n. 3

Current Status Remarks

COMPLETED Number of commercially exploitable patents: 2019: 11; 2020: 3; 2021: 7 Number of accredited spin-off companies: 9 in three years. From June 2025, Unipa has a newly reorganised Technology Transfer Office, aimed at strengthening the valorisation of research results, fostering collaborations with industry, and supporting innovation and entrepreneurship. <https://ut2c.unipa.it/homepage/>. This action will be taken over by UT2C.

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 22

Adoption of a
comprehensive
Research
Integrity
Framework

GAP Principle(s)

**Timing (at least
by year's
quarter/semester)**

**Responsible
Unit**

Indicator(s) / Target(s)

2. Ethical principles

Q1 2026 – Q4
2028

C&C WG
(Director of
the
Research
and
Innovation
Division)
Political
Reference:
Pro-Rector
for Research

Indicators 1. Number of policy updated (drafted, approved, published) 2. Number of training sessions based on the policy Targets: 1. One policy document (Ethical Code in Research) revised and approved by Q2 2027. 2. One training event delivered by Q3 2028 3. One monitoring action carried out by Q4 2028.

Current Status

Remarks

NEW

The University will develop and adopt a comprehensive Research Integrity Framework, integrating policies, training, and monitoring mechanisms to ensure the highest standards of ethical, transparent, and responsible research conduct across the entire research lifecycle. In particular, it will revise the Ethical Code in Research to include topics such as the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence tools and dual-use research.

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 23

Implementation of the "Research Integrity and Good Research Practice" Checklist for Supervisors of Research Students

GAP Principle(s)

**Timing (at least
by year's
quarter/semester)**

**Responsible
Unit**

Indicator(s) / Target(s)

34. Complains/ appeals

40. Supervision

Q1 2026 - Q4
2028

C&C WG
(Manager of
the
University
Library
System and
Historical
Archives) in
collaboration
with the
Quality
Assurance
Office
Political
Reference:
Pro-Rector
for Quality
Assurance
and
Departmental
Relations
and Rector's
Delegate for
the
University
Library
System

Indicators 1. Inclusion of the "Research Integrity and Good Research Practice" Checklist in official documentation of Master's and PhD programmes 2.Awareness and guidance provided to supervisors and research students 3.Use of the Checklist by supervisors Targets: 1.Checklist formally approved and integrated into institutional documentation flow by Q4 2026 2. At least 1 training / information session delivered by Q4 2027. 3. ≥ 50% of ongoing PhD/Master student supervisors have completed the checklist by Q4 2028.

Current Status

Remarks

NEW

In order to promote the wide adoption of the "Research Integrity and Good Research Practice" Checklist for Supervisors of Research Students, this document will be included in the documentation flow of Master's and PhD programmes, and its implementation will be monitored through the institutional quality assurance system (PQA). The purpose and objectives of the checklist will be presented during events dedicated to the UNIPA quality assurance system, as well as through targeted communications and dedicated info days for Master's and PhD Programme Coordinators and Heads of Department.

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 24

Development of a wide policy on data and research documentation management

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
7. Good practice in research	Q1 2026 - Q4 2028	C&C WG (Manager of the University Library System and Historical Archives) Political Reference: Pro-Rector for Quality Assurance and Departmental Relations and Rector's Delegate for the University Library System	Indicators Adoption and implementation of institutional data archiving policy (aligned with FAIR principles and GDPR) Targets 1. Policy formally approved and published by Q2 2027. 2. 100% of new research projects include a Data Management Plan (DMP) approved by the Department Council with the Project grant acceptance from year 2028.
Current Status	Remarks		
NEW	Data archiving is challenged by the need to balance long-term preservation, legal and ethical constraints, heterogeneous data types, and sustainable infrastructure, while ensuring usability, accessibility and compliance across the research lifecycle. This initiative will contribute to promoting consistent standards for the management, archiving and preservation of research data across departments by the adoption and implementation of an institutional data archiving policy (aligned with FAIR principles and GDPR) and by training activities on data management and archiving (see new action 27).		

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 25

Establishment of
an International
Researchers
Recruitment
contact point and
portal

GAP Principle(s)

**Timing (at least
by year's
quarter/semester)**

**Responsible
Unit**

Indicator(s) / Target(s)

10. Non discrimination

15. Transparency (Code)

18. Recognition of mobility
experience (Code)

Q1 2026 - Q4
2028

C&C WG
(Human
Resources
Organization
and
Development
Area)
Political
Reference:
Pro-Rector
for Quality
Assurance
and
Departmental
Relations

1. Indicator: Establishment of the recruitment contact point Target: Contact point and portal formally established and operational by Q2 2027 2. Indicator: Support services delivered to non-EU applicants and international committee members Target: Support provided in 100% of recruitment procedures involving non-EU applicants or non-Italian-speaking committee members by Q4 2028 3. Indicator: Availability and use of English templates for selection committee minutes Target: English templates developed and adopted in 100% of recruitment and career progression procedures by Q2 2027 4. Indicator: Participation of international applicants in recruitment procedures Target: Increase of ≥20% in applications from non-Italian candidates by Q4 2028

Current Status

Remarks

NEW

This action establishes a dedicated contact point (service/unit) and a portal to make recruitment processes more international, accessible, and transparent. It addresses three main barriers: Administrative barriers for non-EU applicants by support with procedures, documentation, and communication; Language barriers in selection committees by providing assistance to non-Italian-speaking members; lack of English documentation by producing standardized templates for committee minutes in English The overall goals are: increase international participation of foreign applicants and selection committee members; improve transparency and fairness (OTM-R principles); and strengthen institutional internationalization.

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 26

Establish synergies between the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers process and CoARA and foster collaboration with the HR Excellence in Research National Community of Practice

GAP Principle(s)

Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)

Responsible Unit

Indicator(s) / Target(s)

5. Contractual and legal obligations

11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems

22. Recognition of the profession

Q1 2026 – Q4 2028

C&C WG (Human Resources Organization and Development Area) HRS4R Steering Committee C&C WG (Director of Business Engagement and Knowledge Transfer) Political Reference: Pro-Rector for Quality Assurance and Departmental Relations Pro-Rector for Research

Indicators: 1. Periodic meetings between Unipa HRS4R SC and Unipa CoARA working group. 2. Meetings of the HRS4R National Community of Practice. Targets: 1. At least 1 joint CoARA/HRS4R action in 2026-2028. 2. At least 1 joint CoARA/HRS4R dissemination action per year 3. Participation of one Unipa representative to events and initiatives organised by the National Community of Practice

Current Status

Remarks

NEW

This activity will be implemented through the joint involvement of the individuals responsible for HR Excellence in Research and CoARA in both processes, and with the active participation of the Rector's Delegate for the implementation of the European Charter and Code and the Head of the C&C Working Group to the National Community of Practice activities. These individuals will also be responsible for disseminating the outcomes of these groups to the widest possible audience.

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 27

Developing
Transparent
Tenure-Track
Career
Roadmaps

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
13. Recruitment (Code)	Q1 2026 – Q4 2028	C&C WG (Human Resources Organization and Development Area)	Indicator Development of the Career Development Framework Targets 1. Career Development Framework benchmarking and position document by Q3 2027. 2. Career Development Framework for R1–R2 researchers formally developed, approved, and published by Q4 2028
15. Transparency (Code)		Political Reference:	
16. Judging merit (Code)		Pro-Rector for Quality Assurance and Departmental Relations	
Current Status	Remarks		
NEW	Strengthen the tenure-track system by developing clear roadmaps that define expectations and evaluation criteria, including aspects related to scientific productivity and research quality across different academic fields. To this end, the University intends to establish a structured Career Development Framework for early-stage researchers (R1–R2), aimed at enhancing transparency in career progression and supporting researchers in planning their professional development, while recognizing disciplinary differences and valuing non-linear career paths. The reflection on career development will draw on insights from the CoARA process and will inform the activities of the Researcher Training Academy.		

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 28

Establish a
UNIPA
Researcher
Training
Academy

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
37. Supervision and managerial duties	Q1 2026 – Q4 2028	HRS4R Steering Committee C&C WG (Director of Business Engagement and Knowledge Transfer) Political Reference: Pro-Rector for Campus Wellbeing and Third Mission. Rector's Delegate for Relations with Industry, University Consortia and Cultural Institutions. Coordinator of Spin-offs and Innovative Startups, and Public Engagement.	Indicators: 1. Establishment and coordination of the Academy training portfolio 2. Delivery and participation in training activities Targets: 1. Structured training portfolio developed, integrating activities from all relevant institutional actors, and published by Q4 2027. 2. At least 5 training activities per year delivered, with participation of at least 50% of early-stage researchers (R2) by Q4 2028
38. Continuing Professional Development			
39. Access to research training and continuous development			

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Current Status	Remarks
NEW	The Academy will develop and implement the most appropriate methodologies to support the continuous professional development of researchers throughout their careers. It will offer a structured portfolio of training activities covering key competencies such as grant writing, leadership, project and human resources management, public speaking, and Open Science, building on and coordinating the training already provided by different institutional actors (e.g. Research Area, Technology Transfer Office, Human Resources Area). These activities will be delivered through a diverse range of formats—including videos, podcasts, and both online and in-person seminars—to ensure flexibility, accessibility, and broad participation. Particular attention will be devoted to aligning training with researchers’ career stages and disciplinary needs, as well as to fostering transferable skills and supporting career progression within and beyond academia.

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 29

Institutionalising
Researcher
Career
Development
Initiatives

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
28. Career development	Q3 Y2026-Q4 Y2028	C&C WG (Director of the Human Resources Organization and Development Area) Political	Indicator Regular implementation and participation in Researcher Development Day(s) and related initiatives Target At least 1 institutional Researcher Development Day per year, with participation of ≥ 25% of target research staff (PhD candidates, researchers, professors) by 2028
38. Continuing Professional Development		Reference: Pro-Rector for Campus Wellbeing and Third Mission and Pro-Rector for Inclusion, Equal Opportunities and Gender Equality	
Current Status	Remarks		
NEW	Institutionalise initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue on research careers and professional development. In this context, Researcher Development Day(s) will be integrated into the official activities included in the University academic calendar, ensuring their regular organisation through a well-structured and widely promoted programme. The University of Palermo will encourage the widest possible participation by introducing appropriate incentive mechanisms.		

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 30

Career service for
PhDs placement

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
30. Access to career advice	Q1 2027 – Q4 2028	C&C WG (Director of Business Engagement and Knowledge Transfer) Political Reference: Pro-Rector for Research Director of Doctoral Studies	Indicator Development of a PhD placement strategy 1. Target: Vision document issued by end of Q2 Y2027 Number of events organised 2. Target One event in year 2027 and one event in year 2028
Current Status	Remarks		
NEW	The service will contribute to improving awareness of professional opportunities outside academia and to supporting doctoral candidates in exploring career paths in the public and private sectors. This initiative is expected to complement the activities of the Technology Transfer Center and other structures promoting innovation and knowledge transfer.		

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 31

Dissemination to all researchers of information regarding open or soon to be opened calls to support research

GAP Principle(s)

24. Working conditions

**Timing (at least
by year's
quarter/semester)**

Continued to the end: Q4 Y2028

**Responsible
Unit**

C&C WG
(Director of the Research and Innovation Area)
Political
Reference:
Pro-Rector for Research

Indicator(s) / Target(s)

1.Indicator: Coverage of the European and MUR calls Target: full coverage 2. Indicator: number of applicants to the in promoted EU-funding opportunities and events Baseline: average number of applicants in the last 3 years Target: At least +20% of the baseline within 3 years

Current Status

IN PROGRESS

Remarks

Former action n. 3 with new timing and indicators/targets.

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 32

Produce, regularly update, and distribute the official presentation of Unipa that presents mission, vision and values of Unipa as well as the "numbers" of Unipa for its research, education and third mission activities

GAP Principle(s)

- 1. Research freedom
- 2. Ethical principles
- 9. Public engagement

**Timing (at least
by year's
quarter/semester)**

Q4 Y2026
(presentation) Q3
Y2027 (video,
updated
presentation) Q3
Y2028 (updated
presentation)

**Responsible
Unit**

C&C WG
(Director of
the Research
and
Innovation
Area)
Political
Reference:
Pro-Rector
for Quality
Assurance
and
Departmental
Relations

Indicator(s) / Target(s)

Indicator: Availability of an official Unipa presentation (power point and video) Targets: 1. one power point updated yearly 2. one video during the monitoring period

Current Status

Remarks

EXTENDED

Former action n. 5 with new timing, responsible unit, indicators/targets.

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 33

Regularly revise and update the internal guide setting out clear OTM-R procedures and practices for all types of positions and publication of this guide on the website

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
13. Recruitment (Code)	Q3 Y2026 (I Update) Q3 Y2027 (II Update) Q3 Y2028 (III Update)	C&C WG (Director of Human Resources Organization and Development Area)	Publication of the updated OTMR guide on the Unipa website
14. Selection (Code)		Political Reference:	
15. Transparency (Code)		Pro-Rector for Quality Assurance and Departmental Relations	
Current Status	Remarks		
IN PROGRESS	Former action 6. with new timing and indicators/targets.		

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 34

Development and implementation of robust stabilization policies. Attraction of highly qualified international researchers to strengthen strategic research areas.

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
12. Recruitment	Continued to the End: Q4 Y2028	C&C WG (Director of the Research and Innovation Area) Political Reference: Pro-Rector for Research	As outlined in the new "Programmazione Triennale 2026–2028", to be approved by Q2 2026.
25. Stability and permanence of employment			
Current Status	Remarks		
IN PROGRESS	Former action 10 with new timing and indicators/targets.		

PROPOSED
ACTIONS

Action 35

Strengthen basic research by increasing the allocation of internal resources to fundamental research activities

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
23. Research environment	Continued to the end of Q4 Y2028	C&C WG (Director of the Research and Innovation Area) Political Reference: Pro-Rector for Research	1. Indicator: Resources (euros) allocated to the overall funding of research from university funds (including FFR) Baseline (average in 2023-2025): €1,340,00/year Target (average in 2026-2028): ≥+20% 2. Indicator: Resources allocated to the funding of interdisciplinary research projects, to support research activities in Scientific-Disciplinary Sectors (SSDs) with critical results in the latest available VQR and to publish in highly ranked journals. Baseline (average in 2023-2025): €330/year Target (average 2026-2028): ≥+20%
24. Working conditions			
Current Status	Remarks		
IN PROGRESS	Former action n. 12 with new timing and indicators/targets.		

**PROPOSED
ACTIONS**

Action 36

Provide financial support for doctoral education through dedicated allowances. Establish incentive schemes to reward individual researchers or research groups whose outputs achieve significant national and international impact.

GAP Principle(s)

11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems

24. Working conditions

Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)

Continued to the end: Q4 Y2028

Responsible Unit

C&C WG (Director of the Research and Innovation Area) Political Reference: Pro-Rector for Research and Director of Doctoral Studies

Indicator(s) / Target(s)

1.Indicator Average financial resources (euros) available for PhD students' research activities Baseline: INS VALUE Target: allowance of €2000 per PhD candidate/year 2. Indicator: Institutional resources allocated to research excellence (e.g., P.O., incentive funds, recruitment linked to performance) Baseline (average in 2023-2025): 0.92 Target: 3 in Y2027 (as in PSA ob 1.2)

Current Status

Remarks

IN PROGRESS

Former action n. 15 with new timing and indicators/targets.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 37

Improve laboratories, lecture halls and research areas in order to abide current norms and rules regarding work conditions and safety. Hire technicians for supporting research activities.

GAP Principle(s)

24. Working conditions

Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)

Continued to the end: Q4 Y2028

Responsible Unit

C&C WG (Director of the Research and Innovation Area) Political Reference: Pro-Rector for Research

Indicator(s) / Target(s)

1. Indicator: Percentage of laboratories for which no safety-related critical issues are identified in the Risk Assessment Document (DVR) Target: >70% and <90% by Q4 Y2028 2. Indicator Number of upgraded computer lab workstations and newly available workstations Target: 600 (+ 300) by Q4 Y2028 3. Indicator Number of technical staff units employed in research laboratories within the University Target: +80 by Q4 Y2028

Current Status

IN PROGRESS

Remarks

Former action n. 13 with new timing and indicators/targets.

Unselected principles:

3. Professional responsibility 4. Professional attitude 6. Accountability 17. Variations in the chronological order of CVs (Code) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code)

20. Seniority (Code) 21. Postdoctoral appointments (Code) 27. Gender balance 29. Value of mobility 32. Co-authorship 33. Teaching 35. Participation in decision-making bodies

36. Relation with supervisors

The extended version of the reviewed strategy for the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers in your organisation over the next three years, including the OTM-R policy, must be published on your organisation's website.

Please provide the link to the dedicated webpage(s) on your organisation's web site. Multiple links must be comma separated. *:

URL *:

<https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearisorseumane/en/hr-excellence-in-research/index.html> (<https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearisorseumane/en/hr-excellence-in-research/index.html>)

Please also indicate how your organisation is working towards / has developed an open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment policy (OTM-R). Although there may be some overlap with the range of actions listed above in the action plan (as they emerged from the gap analysis), please provide a short commentary demonstrating the progress made.

Comments on the implementation of the OTM-R principles (initial phase)

Comments on the implementation of the OTM-R principles (internal review for interim assessment)

Comments on the implementation of the OTM-R principles (internal review for award renewal)

The reform of access to academic careers in Italy (Law 79/2022) has introduced significant changes that will affect the implementation of Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment (OTM-R) principles in Italian universities. The reform aims to simplify recruitment procedures and increase institutional autonomy, but it also raises several challenges for ensuring transparency and fairness in academic hiring.

One of the most significant changes is the proposed abolition of the National Scientific Qualification (ASN) as a mandatory prerequisite for participating in competitions for associate and full professorships. Under the new system, the verification of scientific requirements will take place directly within the recruitment procedure managed by universities, based on national minimum criteria. This modification may have positive effects in terms of reducing bureaucratic complexity and shortening recruitment timelines, which have historically been perceived as lengthy and rigid. In principle, a more streamlined system may facilitate faster hiring processes and increase the responsiveness of universities to emerging research and teaching needs. At the same time, the removal of a centralized qualification step shifts greater responsibility to universities to ensure that recruitment processes remain transparent and merit-based. This change may lead to an increased heterogeneity in recruitment practices across institutions. To remain aligned with OTM-R principles, universities will need to strengthen internal procedures, including the clear definition of evaluation criteria in calls for applications, transparent documentation of selection processes, and robust monitoring mechanisms.

The reform also foresees modifications to the composition of evaluation committees, with a stronger role for external members drawn from national pools of professors. This measure aims to reduce risks of local favoritism and increase impartiality in the evaluation process. If effectively implemented, it could contribute positively to the principles of openness and fairness that underpin OTM-R. However, the effectiveness of this mechanism will depend on the transparency of the selection process and on the independence of the national pools from which evaluators are drawn.

The reform has streamlined the system by introducing the tenure-track researcher (RTT), replacing the previous fragmentation of fixed-term research positions (RTDa/RTDb).

However, several limitations remain.

First, the transition phase still allows old and new contracts to coexist, creating disparities and uncertainty.

Precariousness has not been fully resolved: the career path remains long and highly competitive, and the number of RTT positions is lower than the pool of candidates. In addition, time-based eligibility constraints (e.g., years since graduation or PhD completion) may disadvantage non-linear career paths.

A significant issue concerns “hybrid” roles such as research technologists, often recruited through extraordinary funding schemes but lacking a clear pathway to academic stabilization. More broadly, the system remains heavily dependent on available funding, raising concerns about the long-term sustainability of the positions created.

Differences across universities and disciplinary fields also persist in the implementation of the reform, reflecting variations in resources and institutional strategies. Finally, the criteria for career progression are not yet fully standardized, contributing to a framework that is still evolving.

Please be aware that your OTM-R policy should be embedded into the institutional strategy for the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers at the award renewal phase. The extended version of the reviewed strategy for the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers including the OTM-R policy and actions should be published on your organisation's website.

4. Implementation process

General overview of the implementation process (max. 1000 words)

The above Improved Action Plan has been seen and approved by the Academic Bodies (Academic Senate, in the session of 24 March 2026, and Board of Directors, in the session of 25 March 2026) and by the External Evaluation group (in the session of 24 March 2026), a group of internal and external Academics that verifies the correct use of resources, and the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of all University activities.

The implementation phase will be coordinated by the HR Excellence in Research Steering Committee, involving the Vice-Rectors and Rector's Delegates most actively engaged in strategic planning for research and human resources management, as well as by the C&C Working Group, whose composition will be partially modified compared to the past.

Responsibility for the individual actions outlined in the 2026/2028 Action Plan is assigned to specific Heads of Units (U.O.) within the Human Resources Organization and Development Area, the Research and Innovation Area, the Third Mission Area, and the General Administration, who form the C&C Working Group. Each person responsible for an individual action pursues the objectives in compliance with indicators, targets and timeline for the action's implementation. The proposed actions are included in the Administration's Performance Plan.

Should it be necessary to allocate a budget for the implementation of an action, a proposal for approval is submitted to the Board of Directors. To support the work of the Steering Committee and the C&C Working Group, a specific administrative unit has been established by decree of the Director General, reporting to the Human Resources Organization and Development Area.

A kickoff meeting is organized to start each new implementation phase involving the member of the C&C working group, the Steering Committee, the administrative staff of the UO involved in the implementation of the actions.

Periodic monitoring meeting is organized to follow the progress of the implementation plan, discuss eventual deviations from the plan, identify extra-measures to achieve the objectives within the timeframe set.

The 2026–2028 Action Plan features 16 New Actions, listed in Section 3 "Actions" (items 22 through 37), and they will follow the timeline indicated for each action; the achievement of the objectives and the verification of the indicators will be monitored according to the monitoring plan at the following link https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearisorseumane/.content/documenti/hrs4r/Documenti/monitoring-plan_2026.2029.pdf

Make sure you also cover all the aspects highlighted in the checklist, which you will need to describe in detail.

Note: Click on each question of the checklist to open the editor.

How have you prepared the internal review?*



Detailed description and justification (max. 500 words)

This internal review was coordinated by the Rector's Delegate for the implementation of the Charter & Code and by the Coordinator of the C&C Working Group, with the support of the staff in the C&C WG responsible for the implementation of each individual action and the HRS4R Steering Committee.

In particular, the 2023–2025 Action Plan monitoring was coordinated by the Teaching Staff Careers Office. Several administrative offices contributed by providing the information required for the gap analysis and the monitoring process. Valuable input was also received from current and former Vice-Rectors, members of the Board of Directors.

The 2026-2028 revised Action Plan was developed on the basis of the results of the national *Good Practice* benchmarking initiative, together with the documentation collected for the recent AVA3 national accreditation process. The *Good Practice* benchmarking initiative, coordinated by the Politecnico di Milano, gathers annual satisfaction surveys from researchers, PhD candidates, and academic staff at participating universities. Through this initiative, the University collects structured feedback on administrative and research support services, using the results to identify areas for improvement and to design targeted actions aimed at enhancing researchers' working conditions. The results of the surveys conducted over the last three years were taken into account to elaborate the present action plan. In addition, a comprehensive survey was carried out to identify priorities for training and lifelong learning programmes (567 participants; 189 R1; 178 R2; 130 R3; 70 R4).

This approach was particularly useful for identifying gaps with respect to the principles of the European Commission's European Charter for Researchers because it combined institutional self-assessment with systematic feedback from the research community. The *Good Practice* benchmarking initiative provided comparable and evidence-based information on the quality of administrative, organisational, and research support services experienced by researchers and academic staff. Since many principles of the Charter concern working conditions, professional support, career development, training opportunities, transparency, and institutional environment, the surveys offered concrete indicators of how these principles are perceived and implemented in practice.

At the same time, the documentation prepared for the AVA3 accreditation process allowed the University to analyse its governance structures, procedures, quality assurance mechanisms, and strategic actions in a structured way. By integrating these two sources of information, the University could: identify discrepancies between institutional policies and researchers' actual experiences; detect areas where support services or organisational practices do not fully align with Charter principles; prioritise corrective actions based on evidence and stakeholder feedback.

In addition, the dedicated survey on training and lifelong learning helped assess compliance with Charter principles related to professional development, employability, and continuous skills enhancement using the researchers' perspective.

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



Detailed description and justification (max. 500 words)

The Unipa **HRS4R Ambassadors** are members of the academic community who support the implementation of the **Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)** and the principles of the European Charter & Code. Their role is not formalised as a managerial position, but rather as a **facilitating and engagement function** within departments and research structures. They are two people of each carrier stage (R1-R2-R3-R4) from each of the 16 departments.

In practice, they:

- **Act as local contact points** for HRS4R, helping colleagues understand principles related to recruitment (OTM-R), working conditions, ethics, and career development.
- **Promote awareness and dissemination** of HRS4R initiatives, policies, and opportunities across the university.
- **Support feedback collection**, conveying needs, concerns, and suggestions from researchers to the central governance bodies (e.g., the C&C Working Group and Steering Committee).
- **Contribute to drafting and updating key documents**, such as the Code of Ethics for Research and OTM-R guidelines.
- **Encourage participation** in surveys, training activities, and institutional actions linked to the HR Excellence in Research process.

HRS4R Ambassadors function as a **bridge between central strategy and everyday research practice**, helping ensure that institutional policies are effectively communicated, understood, and informed by the research community.

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



Detailed description and justification (max. 500 words)

By Rector's Decree No. 5812 of September 5, 2023, the HRS4R Steering Committee was established. Coordinated by the Rector's Delegate for the implementation of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, the Committee is composed of the following members: the Vice-Rector for Livability and Occupational Well-being; the Vice-Rector for Quality, Development, and Relations with Departments; the Vice-Rector for Research, Technology Transfer, and Administrative Relations; and the Vice-Rector for Inclusion, Equal Opportunities, and Gender Policies.

It also includes a small number of professors at different career stages and from a range of disciplinary areas (e.g., sciences, humanities).

Progress is overseen by the Rector's Delegate with the support of selected members of the Steering Committee and by the Coordinator of the C&C Working Group with the supporting team comprising Dr. Tiziana Messina, Dr. Antonella Giammona, and Dr. Massimo Messina.

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?

*



Detailed description and justification (max. 500 words)

The Academic Senate and the Board of Directors are involved both in the implementation of selected actions and in the review and approval of the internal review and the updated Action Plan. The C&C Working Group is responsible for the execution of specific actions.

To monitor the level of implementation, a set of indicators and targets—aligned with the University's Strategic Plan—has been incorporated into the HRS4R Action Plan. Progress is overseen by the C&C Working Group through the systematic collection of supporting documentation and the organisation of stakeholder surveys.

The actions included in the Plan are also reflected in individual performance objectives and in the objectives assigned at the organisational unit level (Piano della Performance), ensuring coherence between strategic priorities and operational activities.

The flow chart below illustrates how the HR Excellence in Research process is embedded within the organisational structure of Unipa.

(<https://www.unipa.it/organigramma/arearisorseumane/en/hr-excellence-in-research/il-working-group-unipa/>)

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



Detailed description and justification (max. 500 words)

The alignment of organizational policies with the HRS4R, as described in the previous point, is a fundamental condition for ensuring the effective implementation of the proposed actions and is subject to constant updates.

This internal review was prepared by the Rector's Delegate for the implementation of the Charter & Code, in collaboration with a task force composed of professors, researchers, and technical-administrative staff. The document was shared with UniPa governance bodies and subsequently discussed and approved by the Academic Senate, the Board of Directors, and the University Evaluation Body (Nucleo di Valutazione, NV).

The Action Plan includes mid-term indicators and targets to monitor progress, with the aim of ensuring that the objectives are achieved within the established timelines.

The improved Action Plan presented to the Senate and the Board of Directors, anticipating the request of funding to support specific C&C WG initiatives (e.g., the organization of specialized training courses). Subsequently, it was submitted to the PQA (University Quality Assurance Board) and to the NV (Evaluation Board)—the University's internal and external evaluation units, respectively—to be validated from a methodological standpoint and to ensure that objectives and timelines are consistent with the University's strategic action plan.

For each action proposed in the Plan, the administrative units involved in its implementation were identified, and responsibility for the action was assigned to the managers of the relevant administrative units, in coordination with the Director General. The achievement of the HRS4R objectives has been integrated into the targets assigned to the technical-administrative staff and linked to both individual and organisational performance evaluation systems.

In addition, each action is supported by a designated institutional representative, such as a Pro-Rector or another member of the University governance bodies, in order to ensure strategic oversight, political commitment, and effective coordination between administrative and academic structures.

The official status of the Action Plan, together with the University's longstanding commitment to the principles of the Charter & Code, as reflected in many of its statutory and strategic documents, provides a strong framework and institutional guarantee for the effective implementation of the Action Plan.

How are you monitoring progress (timeline)?*



Detailed description and justification (max. 500 words)

As outlined above, the revised Action Plan has been designed as a dynamic process, structured around a series of verification milestones. Quarterly reviews will be scheduled through dedicated meetings of the C&C Working Group, i.e. the administrative units responsible for implementing the actions, and the Steering Committee. A shared cloud repository is established to store and exchange minutes, reports, survey results, and all relevant documentation. At each stage, progress in implementing the planned actions will be assessed, and adjustments will be introduced to ensure alignment with the University's strategic priorities and to incorporate feedback from stakeholders and the Steering Committee.

The main milestones and deadlines are as follows:

- **Revision and Appointment of the new C&C Working Group for the implementation of the 2026-2028 Action Plan and kick-off meeting:** by 15 September 2026
- **Presentation of the 2026-2028 Action Plan to the stakeholders:** by 30 September 2026
- **Interim internal monitoring report:** by October 2027
- **Approval of a revised Action Plan (if required):** by November 2027
- **Appointment of the new Rector's Delegate and HRS4R Steering Committee:** by March 2028
- **Final monitoring report:** by January 2029
- **Approval of the 2029-2031 Internal review and Action Plan:** by March 2029
- **Final presentation of actions and achievements:** by March 2029

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



Detailed description and justification (max. 500 words)

To measure progress effectively, we employ a dual-layer indicator system that balances quantitative outputs with qualitative outcomes. This ensures that the implementation of the Charter and Code is not merely a box-ticking exercise but a structural cultural shift.

Qualitative Impact Indicators: Progress will be gauged through specific surveys and targeted focus groups. Progressive Milestone Tracking: Each action in the Revised Action Plan is assigned a "Target Completion Rate." We use a traffic-light system (Red/Amber/Green) to monitor delays in real-time.

Justification: This methodology is chosen because it aligns with the European Commission's emphasis on continuous improvement. By combining hard data (KPIs) with researcher feedback (qualitative), we can justify the effectiveness of our actions or pivot our strategy if the data suggests that certain initiatives are not reaching the intended audience.

How do you expect to prepare for the external review?*



Detailed description and justification (max. 500 words)

Not applicable.

Additional remarks/comments about the proposed implementation process (max. 1000 words)

No additional remarks or comments.