HR Excellence in Research award

Guidelines
(Final version to be uploaded on 26/11)

12/10/2024

Contents

Note on the transition to the implementation of the 2023 European Charter for Researchers.

On 18 December 2023 the Council Adopted the "Council Recommendation on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe"[1]. The new Charter for Researchers (Annex 2 to the Council Recommendation) replaces the old 2005 Charter & Code[2].

Those organisations that have endorsed the principles of the old Charter and Code for Researchers and have adhered to the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers, are considered as continuing to endorse the Charter for Researchers and to progress without interruption in its implementation process.

- **Until the launch** of the new HR Excellence in Research initiative e-tool, all organisations shall continue their work under the 2005 Charter & Code accessing the old e-Tool (e-tool under the "HR Excellence in Research award" tab).

- **After the launch** of the new HR Excellence in Research initiative e-tool:

  o The organisations having already started to work on their internal review in the context of a HR award phase, shall continue to refer to the 2005 Charter & Code until the end of the ongoing phase. After the successful completion of said phase, the organisation will undertake the work for the following phase under the new European Charter for Researchers.

  o the organisations starting their work for a new HR phase (Initial, implementation, or renewal) after the introduction of the HR award module of the Talent Platform, shall do this so solely under the new European Charter for Researchers.

  o In case an organisation, having already started to work on their internal review under the 2005 Charter & Code, wishes to do an additional exercise under the new European Charter for Researchers, can upload this as additional material to their internal review. This is done under the responsibility of the organisation, as any eventual encoding done under the old e-Tool will not be transferred to the new e-Tool.

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[1] Council Recommendation C/2023/1640 of 18 December 2023 a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1640/oj.
[2] Commission Recommendation 2005/251/EC of 11 March 2005 on the European Charter for Researchers and on a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2005/251/oj

- Suspending the HR Excellence in Research process in view of the future implementation of the new e-Tool will not be considered valid ground for requesting an extension of the deadline.

The phase out/phase in period will continue for three years (the duration of a full HR award renewal phase) from the launch of the new HR award module under the talent platform.

After 30/12/ 2027, all organisations are expected to have completed any pending activity in the old e-Tool, and no new internal review under the 2005 Charter & Code will be possible anymore. As 1 January 2028 the old HR award e-Too will not be accessible anymore for new submissions (eventual exceptions will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis).

Preliminary note on the transition to the European Charter for Researchers.

In 2005 the European Commission recommended the Member States to take duly into account and be guided by the general principles and requirements set out in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (Charter & Code)[3]

On 18 December 2023 the Council Adopted the "Council Recommendation on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe"[4]. The new European Charter for Researchers (Annex 2 to the Council Recommendation) replaces the old 2005 Charter & Code.

The European Charter for Researchers is a set of principles underpinning the development of attractive research careers to support excellence in research and innovation across Europe. The focus of the European Charter for Researchers is the rights and responsibilities of researchers, employers, funders, and policymakers.

The European Charter for Researchers is directed at all researchers, research performing sectors and respective umbrella organisations (stakeholders). This includes:

a) Researchers in all sectors – academia, public and private organisations performing research;

b) Employers of researchers in the public and private sector;

c) Funders of research and researchers in the public and private sector;

d) Policy makers concerned with policies relevant to the Charter.

It addresses researchers across all disciplines including Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) and Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH). It covers all types of research from frontier, targeted, strategic, applied, and close to market.

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[3] 2005/251/EC , OJ L 75, 22.3.2005, p. 67–77 – https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2005/251/oj

[4] Council Recommendation C/2023/1640 of 18 December 2023 a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1640/oj.

INTRODUCTION

The HR Excellence in Research e-Tool is the tool for the implementation of the European Charter for Researchers[5] and it is the sole mechanism to apply, obtain, and maintain the "HR Excellence in Research award" (hereafter HR award). No manual application will be accepted.

The HR award is granted to those research organisation that endorsed the European Charter for Researchers, committed to its implementation, and are making progress towards it. There are no geographic limitations in undertaking the process.

Enrolment to this process is voluntary and free of charges. The award is granted for a three-years period, after which it must be renewed. Applicant Organisations should be aware that this is a long-term commitment involving joint efforts and coordination with various internal and external stakeholder groups.

The HR award process (previously called Human Resources Strategy for Researchers, -HRS4R) is based on a structured and monitored auditing mechanism, centred on a three-years cycles continuous assessment based on gap-analysis and action plans for the grant of the "HR Excellence in Research Award. Once an organisation receives the award, this is automatically displayed on the job adverts of that organisations published on EURAXESS portal. Furthermore, the organisation can display the award on its website, publications, and promotional material.

These guidelines are an instrument in support to the organisations interested or already enrolled in the HR award process and provide the necessary information and the practical steps for the HR award process of implementation of the European Charter for Researchers.

Originally launched in 2008 as a manual based procedure, the HR award process migrated to an IT platform in 2018. Introduced on 15 May 2018, the e-Tool became the sole official platform for the management of the HR award process. The e-tool is an instrument developed and managed by EC/RTD, Unit A3 (R&I Actors and Research Careers). Every aspect of the HR award process (e.g. start of a new HR award case, internal reviews, assessments, management of deadlines, etc.) is managed exclusively via the e-tool. Those organisations that started the HR award process prior to its introduction, will be injected into the e-tool according to the provisions described in this document.

The Library of the HR award portal provides a collection of useful information and contains examples of a variety documents, either currently in use or that have been used in the past.

The official set of instructions is constituted by the version of the guidelines published on the HR award portal. Any manual template made available in the past, should not be used anymore: the only official forms to be used in the HR award process are contained in the on-line forms in the e-tool.

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[5] Council Recommendation C/2023/1640 of 18 December 2023 a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1640/oj.

Should you consider that these guidelines do not address your questions, or in case you need further advice please contact:

- For info and assistance on all <u>non-technical</u> issues and requests for help and support on the HR award process and the use of the e-Tool (e.g. questions on the process, extension of deadlines, clarifications on the HR award Guidelines, etc.): HR-award@euraxess.org

- For contacting the Helpdesk on all IT <u>technical</u> issues regarding the e-Tool: support@euraxess.org

- for contacting the RTD-CHARTER team at the EC on all <u>non-procedural and non-technical</u> issue (complaints, policy development, requests to attend to events, etc.): RTD-CHARTER@ec.europa.eu

Please, remember to always include in your correspondence the case number assigned to your file.

1. Getting started

Before starting the application process for the HR award, interested organisations should first analyse the 20 principles of the European Charter for Researchers and proceed to a first self-assessment in terms of how the organisation relates to them and what still need to be done to proceed towards their implementation (see also gap analysis).

Once the organisation decides to endorse the European Charter for Researchers and apply for the HR award, the first steps are:

- to secure access to the e-Tool
- to create an Organisation account
- To assign an HR award Admin

1.1. EU Login

Like other EU initiatives, the HR award e-Tool is accessible via EU Login. This is the European Commission's user authentication service, and it allows authorised users to access a wide range of Commission web services, using a single email address and password. To create a EU Login, register on the EU Login register page (https://ecas.ec.europa.eu/cas/login).
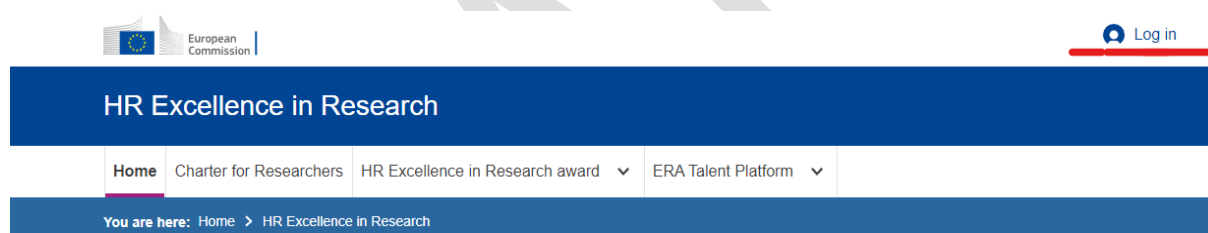
1.2. Your Organisation account

The EURAXESS and the HR award initiatives are tightly linked and integrated sharing the same database, statistical mechanism, and registration process. To start a new application and to access the HR award e-Tool, your organisation must have an account on EURAXESS. If this does not exist yet, such an "organisation account" can be created from an individual EURAXESS member account as described below. Registration and membership to EURAXESS are free of charge.

Below are described the three possible cases:

Join an existing organisation profile

If the URL of an existing organisation profile matches the domain of the email address you have used to register on the EURAXESS portal, you will be automatically invited to join as a member.

Navigate to your dashboard, located on MY EURAXESS in the main menu. The system will notify you about the organisation profile(s) that matches your e-mail domain. Select the organisation you represent by clicking on the "Join" button and confirm your selection.

Search for an organisation profile

If you are not notified about potential organisations you may belong to, you can search for an organisation by selecting "Search/Register" option on the right of the page.

Provide the "Organisation name" and the website URL starting with "http://" or "https://" and click "Search.

If a match is identified, you can ask the administrator to add you as a member, by selecting the "Contact the Organisation Admin" option.

Register a new organisation profile

If no match is found, you can proceed to register the new organisation profile by clicking on the "Register Organisation" button. As a rule, an "Organisation profile" should refer to the main organisation, not to a department, institute, or laboratory: the HR award process is in fact addressed to the whole organisation and not a subsidiary entity (which is referred to as a "unit"). Once the main organisation Obtains the HR award, all its "units" can display it as well.

Click the "Save the organisation" button to send the form to the Help Desk for validation. The Help Desk will check if the newly registered organisation's domain of activity is related to research and if there are duplicate registrations of the same organisation. Once the organisation account passes the administrative check performed by the Help Desk, you will be informed accordingly in a dedicated email (normally registration requests are treated within the same working day).

NB: once registered, the organisation name cannot be changed by the Organisation Admin or the HR award Admin. To change the registered name of the Organisation, please contact the Help Desk support@euraxess.org.

1.3. "Injections" – Residual manual cases and their transition to the e-tool

After the digitalization of the HR award process (formerly HRS4R) on 15 May 2018, every institution maintaining a manual case received multiple emails asking to transfer to the e-Tool, the only instrument for the management of the HR award process. In case an organisation is still managing a manual case successfully renewed after 15 May 2024, it can be "injected (this corresponds to the two full cycles allowed in case of a suspension).

All initial and interim phases, as well as organisations that renewed the award before 15 May 2024, shall start a new application.

If an organisation with a manual case is eligible for injection in the e-Tool, it shall proceed to the creation of a HR award case and to the selection of a HR award admin. Once this done, the EC will migrate all the relevant documents related to the history of the HR award process (injection).

N.B.: The RTD CHARTER team (RTD-CHARTER@ec.europe.eu) will assist you in the transition of your organisation's files from paper to digital.

The example at the picture below illustrates the example of the "injection" process for an organisation awarded prior to the introduction of the e-tool and needs to prepare its internal review for the 1st cycle of the renewal phase:

ENROLLING INSTITUTIONS IN THE HRS4R E-TOOL

Scenario for institutions in the Award Renewal Phase

REGISTER EURAXESS ORG. ACCOUNT

The institution registers an organisational account on EURAXESS if there isn't any. It must be an account of the top organisation (not a department/lab account of the top organisation).

GET HRS4R ADMIN ROLE

Once the registration of the EURAXESS organisation account is approved, you can ask for the HRS4R Admin role to secure access to the HRS4R E-tool. The domain of the email must be in the URL of the organisation. Only one person per organisation is granted this role.

CREATE A CASE IN THE HRS4R E-TOOL

The institution uploads the endorsement letter of the Charter & Code in the HRS4R E-tool, as if it were a newcomer to the process. The old version of the endorsement letter must be used, not a new one.

CONFIRMATION LETTER BY EC

The EC checks the endorsement letter and sends back to the institution the confirmation within 10 working days.

BUILD APPLICATION HISTORY IN THE HRS4R E-TOOL.

The EC uploads in the E-Tool all the application, reporting and assessment files which ensured the institution's progress from one phase to another. The files will be uploaded as pdfs.

INITIAL PHASE

The EC will upload:
- Gap –Analysis,
- OTM-R Checklist,
- Initial Action Plan,
- Consensus Report with the outcome of the Initial Assessment.
- Resubmissions, if any, will be also marked in the system.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

The EC will upload:
- Internal Review,
- OTM-R checklist if filled in at this stage, not initially.
- Consensus Report with the outcome of the Interim Assessment.
- Resubmissions, if any, will be also marked in the system.

PLACE THE INSTITUTION AT THE CORRESPONDING TASK IN THE HRS4R E-TOOL

The EC informs the institution via email that the institution has been placed at the corresponding phase and task in the HRS4R E-tool, together with the history of the application, reporting and assessment process.

AWARD RENEWAL PHASE

The Institution can fill in the Internal Review for the Award Renewal Assessment in the HRS4R E-Tool. From this moment on the reporting and assessment process will be handled online.

🏛 Institution   European Commission

1.4. HR award Admin role

Once you have become a member of an existing organisation profile, or have created a new organisation profile for your organisation, you need to select an "HR award Administrator" (HR award Admin) by following the next steps:

Login to the EURAXESS portal

From the HR Excellence in Research page click on "Willing to apply for the HR award?" button, then open the collapsible menus as shown below to expose the "HR award" organisation Admin" button.

Click the "HR award" organisation admin" button as shown below

HRS4R E-TOOL – ACCESS ELEMENTS   −

In order to access the HRS4R E-Tool, interested institution need an organisation account on EURAXESS. Registration and membership are free of charge.

Organisation has to assign a contact person to be granted the role of HRS4R Organisation Administrator (Admin). Only this designated person will have access to the HRS4R E-tool to upload data and to be the interface with the European Commission, on behalf of the institution, regarding the HRS4R process.

+   How to register an organisation account on EURAXESS

−   How to be granted the role of the HRS4R Organisation Administrator
Request the role of HRS4R Organisation Administrator using the button below:

HRS4R ORGANISATION ADMIN

Choose the organisation for which you wish to become the HR award Admin. You will be presented only with umbrella organisation(s) (i.e. without department), if the URL of the organisation profile matches the domain of your email address. For example, if your email is user@organisation.com, the URL of the registered organisation must be https://organisation.com.

Granting the 'HRS4R Organisation Administrator' role to hr_admin@umed.wroc.pl

The following rules apply for granting the role to a user for a specific organisation:

- The domain of your email (umed.wroc.pl) must be in the URL of the organisation.
- The organisation must be a top level one without department.
- Only one user per organisation can be granted the role.

Please choose the organisation for which you will be granted the HRS4R Organisation Administrator role. *

◯   Uniwersytet Medyczny we Wrocławiu, Dziekanat Wydziału Lekarsko-Stomatologicznego (http://www.stomatologia.umed.wroc.pl)

◯   Wroclaw Medical University (http://www.umed.wroc.pl/)

If none of the above suits you, please register your own top level organisation and come back to be granted the role. Alternatively, you can also contact the support team to grant you the role.

Please check the above before confirming.

CONFIRM   Cancel

You can choose only one umbrella organisation, even if multiple profiles are displayed in the form.

If none of the displayed organisations matches your organisation, you can proceed with registering a new profile, or contact the Help Desk (support@euraxess.org) using the email link presented under the form.

N.B.: You may change the contact person appointed as HR award Admin at any time. Send an email to the Help Desk (support@euraxess.org) indicating the name, email address (as

registered in the portal), function and contact details of the person that should be granted the HR award Admin role.

Please, note that this role is granted only to one person per organisation, and it is responsibility of the organisation to always ensure a HR award Admin with a valid email. Remember that only the HR award Admin will be the contact point of the organisation on HR award matters and will receive the e-Tool automatic communications

1.5. Management of HR award dashboard for HR award Admins

Once you have been granted the HR award Admin role, you will gain access to the HR award e-Tool to access your organisation case. Simply click on "Log in" on the upper-right side (see picture below) and enter your EU Login and password.
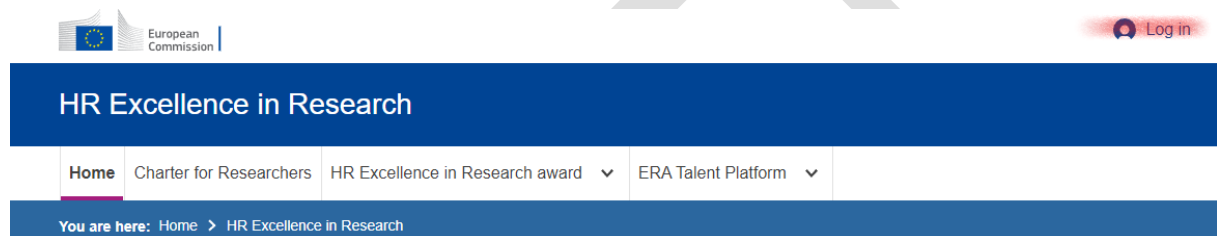

Remember: To access your HR award case, you must log as HR award Admin using the credentials of your individual account, not your organisation's ones.

Once logged in, the HR award website menu include an additional line called **HR award e-Tool** (see picture below). This is where the HR award Admin will manage the organisation's case.
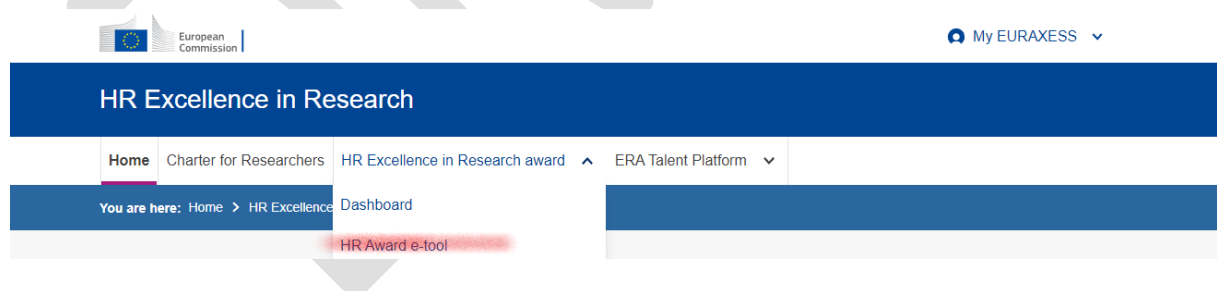
Finally, after login the Log In link will be substituted by th "My Euraxess" one See picture below) where you can manage your account and directly access EURAXESS functionalities.
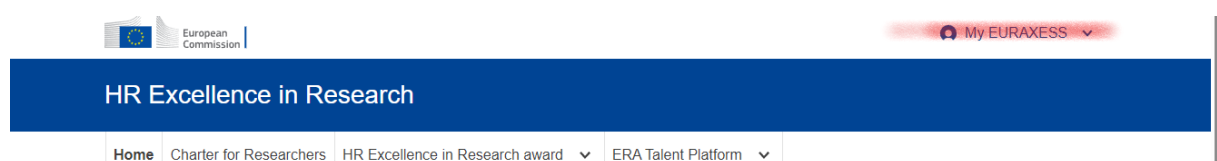
NB: The European Commission is committed to personal data protection. Any personal data is processed in line with the Regulation (EC) 2018/1725. All personal information processed by the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation is treated accordingly.

User data is retained as long as the user continues to use EURAXESS. Accounts are removed after five (5) years of inactivity. After one year, an email is sent to the data subject to offer the possibility to delete or update his/her account.

You can easily have access to your personal data and even export it for analysis. You can also delete your account any time, without having to contact the Help Desk. In order to do that you should access your MY EURAXESS dashboard, the "User profile" section.

Please note that when an account is deleted, all related data are deleted with it.

You can read our Privacy Statement on the EURAXESS portal, for more details on how we protect and respect your privacy.

2. The HR award process

The HR award Process is the implementation mechanism of the European Charter for Researchers. It is a voluntary, structured, and monitored auditing mechanism, centred on a continuous assessment in three-years cycles and based on a sequence of assessments, centred on gap-analysis and action plans for the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers.

2.1. General description

The HR award process comprises three distinct phases:

1. The initial phase, leading to the granting of the HR Excellence in Research award.

2. The interim phase, which is an intermediate phase between initial and renewal phase and is meant to provide guidance in the first stages of the HR award process.

3. The renewal phases for the renewal of the HR award. The renewal phases are based on a three-year cycle alternating site visits and remote assessments.

The Initial phase

- Registration in the e-tool

- submission of the **application** for the "HR Excellence in Research Award" by uploading the "**Letter of endorsement and commitment**");

- Within a year from the of the registration of the letter in the e-Tool, the organisation shall complete the four forms **Process Description**, **Gap Analysis**, **Action Plan**, and **OTM-R checklist**;

- Initial granting of the HR award.

When in this phase, only the "Initial Phase" tab will show at the timeline
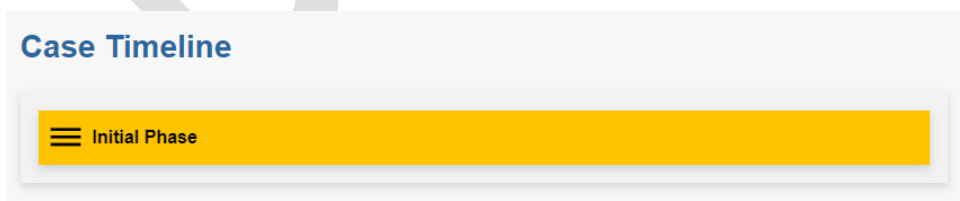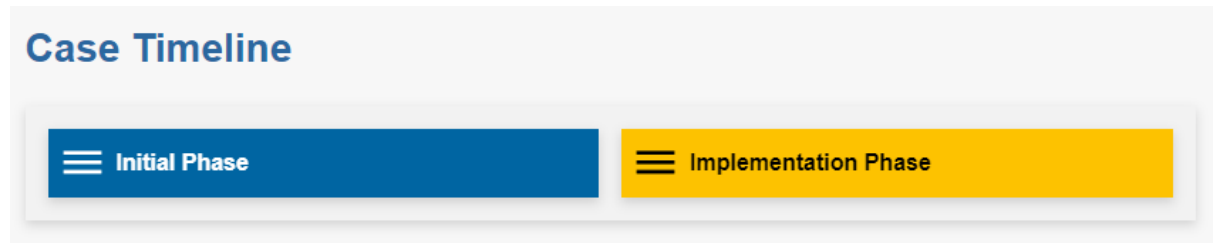

The Interim phase

Two years (24 months) after the initial granting of the HR award:

- Assessment of implementation of th**e Initial Action Plan** published at initial phase;

- Publication and assessment of the **Revised Action Plan**, which will cover the upcoming three years (36 months).

When at this phase, both the "Initial Phase" and the "Interim Phase" tabs will show at the timeline:

Case Timeline

| ☰ Initial Phase	☰ Implementation Phase

The Renewal phase(s)

Three years (36 months) after the interim assessment:

- Assessment of the implementation of the **Revised Action Plan** published at interim phase;

- publication and assessment of the **Improved Action Plan**, which will cover the upcoming three years (36 months);

- the first Renewal Phase will also include a **Site Visit** on the premises of the organisation;

- all the subsequent Renewal Phases will keep implementing **Improved Action Plan** alternating every three years (every 36 months) a Renewal with site visit and a Renewal without site visit (i.e. 1st renewal with site visit, 2nd renewal without site visit, 3rd renewal with site visit, 4th renewal without site visit and so on....)

When in this phase, the three tabs for the "Initial Phase", the "Interim Phase", and the "Renewal Phase" will show at the timeline.

Case Timeline

☰ Initial Phase	☰ Implementation Phase	☰ Renewal Phase
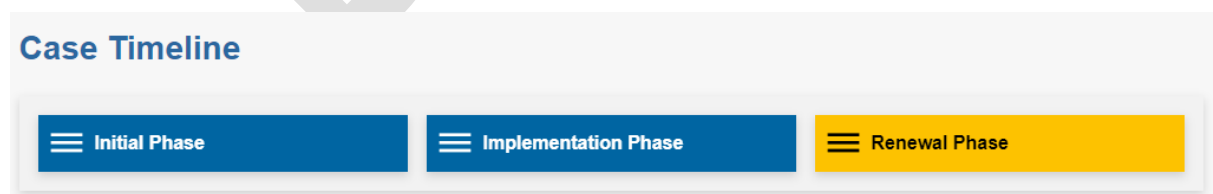
Below is a synoptic graphic representation illustrating the different phases of the process:
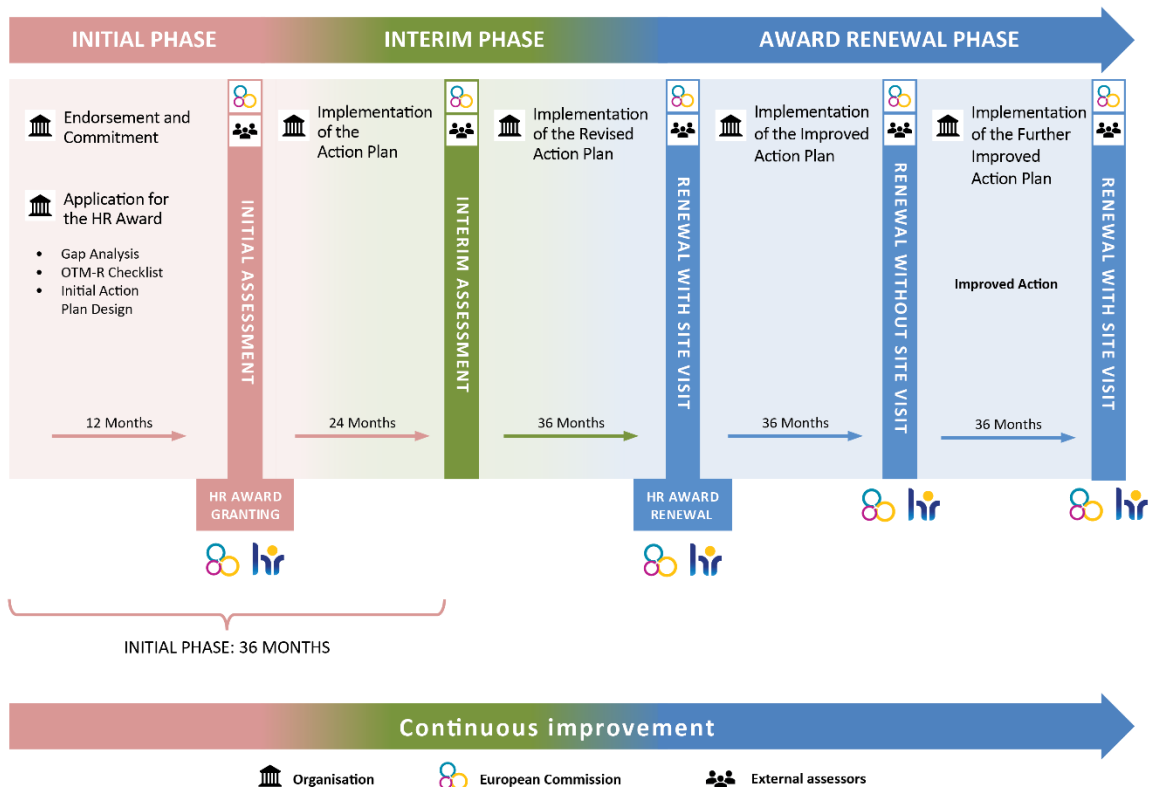
2.2. Deadline extension request

At any phase, in case the organisation needs more time for submitting its Internal Review, it can **request an extension of the deadline.**

The request is submitted **via the e-tool only** using the "request extension" button (see image below), which **is activated one month before the deadline**.

The standard extension of this request is **one additional month** from the previously set deadline. In case the organisation wishes to ask for a longer extension (of two to five months) this request must be detailed and duly justified in the "justification field".

Longer extensions (up to 8 months) are considered exceptional, and 8-10 months are granted on extremely particular cases.

As a rule, requests for extension beyond 10 months, are not accepted, and an administrative suspension of the case should be envisaged. Please contact RTD-CHARTER@ec.europa.eu

NB organisation at Initial Phase should not require extensions beyond six months. If more time is needed, the organisation should consider restarting the process.

The extension of the deadline via the e-tool can be requested only once (i.e. the "request extension link can be used only once). Upon exceptional circumstances, additional extensions may be granted on a case-by-case base. To do this, write a request to RTD-CHARTER@ec.europa.eu

🏛 **Gap Analysis, OTMR & Action Plan: Design**

Date: Fri, 13/04/2018 - 16:28

❓ Request Extension

Pending

⏳ **Deadline: 13/04/2019**

2.3. The "Administrative eligibility check"

Independently from the phase of the HR award process before a submission in the e-Tool is sent for assessment it will be screened for "administrative eligibility". This check has the purpose to validate an application in terms of its formal compliance with the application procedure described in these guidelines and will only verify that all the forms are duly completed in the E-tool, and they contain sufficient information to enable the assessors to proceed to their assessment.

The organisation will be informed of the result of this check within **approximately one month after the submission** via an automatic notification from the e-tool. The check can have one of the following results:

- in case the eligibility check is positive, the application will proceed further and will be sent for assessment.

- in case the administrative eligibility check is negative, the submission will be reverted to "draft" so that the organisation can edit it and implement all the required modifications **within two months from the check.** This is an administrative action and will not impact in any way the assessment of your organisation by the HR award assessors.

2.4. The forms

The following list is the ensemble of the existing forms that an organisation is requested to submit via the e-Tool at each phase. The organisation will be assessed on the base of the information provided, its strategic coherence, and ambition. The specific description of each phase will describe the specific combination of forms to be submitted.

2.4.1. "Process Description"

At Initial phase, in the form "Process Description" the organisation will describe and explain how the process of consultation and other type of involvement of internal and external stakeholder groups for the design of the Gap Analysis. Typically, all the management departments directly or indirectly responsible for researchers HR related issues should be included (i.e. the Vice-Rector for Research, the Head of Personnel, other administrative staff members, etc.).

In addition, the organisation must consult and involve a representative community of researchers ranging from R1 to R4, appoint a committee overseeing the process, and a Working Group responsible for the implementation of the process.

The organisation can choose its own channels and tools to consult and involve stakeholders (i.e. surveys, workshops, etc.), but it should describe the chosen methodology on the Process Description form.

2.4.2. "Gap Analysis"

What is it:

The Gap Analysis seeks to answer the questions "where are we?" (current state) and "where do we want to be?" (target state) as an organisation, with regard to the 40 principles of the European Charter for Researchers.

Why it is important:

The Gap Analysis is a fundamental instrument not only in the frame of the HR award process, but for the management of the organisation itself. A GAP analysis provides an organisation with a clear picture of its own weaknesses, of the developments needed, and helps it setting its own planning strategy. Once the gaps are identified, it becomes easier to prioritise the corresponding actions, and establish the needed resources and work effort to address them.

Key elements to consider:

It is of the utmost importance that the Gap Analysis is always clearly and systematically linked to the Action Plan.

The Gap Analysis should not be the outcome of a unilateral approach, but of a participative, collaborative, and cumulative feedback. This should comprise the overall views and needs of the stakeholders involved in working groups and committees.

Gap Analysis Overview:

The Gap Analysis compares how the organisation rates its performance towards the 20 principles of the European Charter for Researchers, identifying the existing gaps and barriers to their resolution.

The 20 principles are listed under the four thematic headings of the European Charter for Researchers:

1. Ethics, integrity, gender, and open science
2. Researchers' assessment, recruitment, and progression
3. Working conditions and practices
4. Research careers and talent development.

The Gap Analysis form, has four options to rate the level of achievement in terms of the implementation of the 20 principles of the European Charter for Researchers:

```
++ fully implemented

+/- almost but not fully implemented

-/+ partially implemented

-- insufficiently implemented
```

Fully implemented: when the principle is already implemented in full.
In this case, the organisation is required to provide evidence of the specific case (i.e. examples of programmes, policy in practice, etc.)

The descriptors "almost but not fully implemented", "partially implemented" or "insufficiently implemented", should be accompanied by the description of the gap, as well as by details about the measures the organisation will undertake in order to adress the gap.

Comments should be also added on whether aspects of the national or local legislative environment support or constrain the implementation of a specific principle.

The "Save" button, will save the form and allow any eventual later review. This will not finalize the application or send the Gap analysis to the EC for review.

The "Submit" button will be enabled only once all the forms will be completed and saved.

2.4.3. "OTM-R Checklist"

What it is

It is a specific self-assessment checklist provided to report on the status of achievement in terms of the implementation of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) policies and practices, which aims at making research careers more attractive, while facilitating mobility and equal opportunities for all candidates.

Why it is important

The OTM-R Checklist builds on the European Charter for Researchers principles related to the Recruitment of Researchers. Coupled with the Gap Analysis, it will further provide to organisations a clearer picture of their development needs, which will be prioritised and addressed with concrete actions, part of the Action Plan to be implemented in the upcoming years.

Key elements to consider

The OTM-R checklist consists in a list of questions covering the various steps of the recruitment process, from job advertising through to the appointment phase.

Each specific question mentioned in the OTM-R Checklist should be considered in the self-reflection exercise of the organisation. The state of achievement in terms of each issue will be rated, as below, in the column dedicated to "Answer". For each situation, there should be details included on the indicators to measure performance, either those used or to be further used, at later stages, if applicable.

	Open	Transparent	Meritbased	Answer:	Suggested indicators (or form of measurement)
OTM-R system					
Have we published a version of our OTM-R policy online (in the national language and in English)?	x	x	x	++ Yes completely	web link
Do we have an internal guide setting out clear OTM-R procedures and practices for all types of positions?	x	x	x	+/- Yes substantially	
Is everyone involved in the process sufficiently trained in the area of OTM-R?	x	x	x	-/+ Yes partially	
Do we make (sufficient) use of e-recruitment tools?	x	x		-- No	

OTM-R Checklist Overview

The "Open", "Transparent" and "Merit-based" checkboxes are indicative of the type of policies and practices the questions refer to, as detailed in the European Charter for Researchers. They are pre-set in the E-tool and cannot be changed. No action is needed from organisations in their respect.

The difference between the ratings "+/- Yes substantially" and "-/+ Yes partially" is that in the first case the volume of the remaining work to be done until completion is little as compared to the effort that has been put so far in that direction. In the case of "-/+ Yes partially", the remaining work is either the same in volume or more than what has been achieved.

For the "Suggested indicators" column, whenever the mouse is hovered on the row dedicated to each question, a small text box will pop up, indicating options of potential indicators to use. However, each organisation should identify their own measurements of the effectiveness of its OTM-R policy, which should be further reviewed and adapted.

If the organisation has a recruitment strategy which implements the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment, it is mandatory to publish it on the organisation's website in a visible place. The web link will be provided part of the Action Plan form.

A step-by-step guide to OTM-R practices, as well as examples of good practice can be found in the Annex.

The "Save" button, will save the form and allow any eventual later review. This will not finalize the application or send the OTM-R checklist to the EC for review.

The "Submit" button will be enabled only once all the forms will be completed and saved.

2.4.4. "Action Plan"

What it is

Following the gaps individuated in the GAP Analysis and in the OTM-R checklist, the Action Plan is the set of activities that the organisation will put in place to advance toward the implementation of the 20 principles of the European Charter for Researchers.

Why it is important

The Action Plan establishes the foundation of the organisation's HR award management. Rooted in the Gap Analysis and the OTM-R Checklist, it is the organisation's strategic vision in terms of the priority areas and implementation steps to be undertaken in the next two years (i.e. until the interim phase, when the organisation will submit the new action plan).

Key elements to consider

The Action Plan form to be used for reporting in the E-tool comprises four separate parts:

1. Organisational information:
   This section is intended to illustrate the larger context in which the organisation performs, its structure, its impact upon the communities it serves, as well as the resources leveraged.
   In this context, there are two **categories** of data required:

   - Staff indicators to be presented as full-time positions (FTEs) at the moment of reporting in the E-tool, and

   - Budget and funding, if applicable, to be expressed as amounts in euro. For countries using other currencies than euro, official currency conversion tools should be used, such as currency conversion calculators of national banks.

2. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice:
   In this section, the organisation must provide an overview of its current state and practice under the four thematic headings of the European Charter for Researchers (Ethics, integrity, gender and open science; Researchers' assessment, recruitment and progression; Working conditions and practices; Research careers and talent development). Information on current practices related to OTM-R should be also included here.

   Although this section presents only one text block for the two headings, we strongly recommend elaborating on both strengths and weaknesses as they will highlight the organisation's rationale for setting actions as priorities in the Action Plan.

3. Actions
   In order to help connect actions to improvement needs easier, all principles with their implementation ratings will be retrieved automatically from the Gap Analysis into the Action Plan. The proposed actions can address either individual or multiple principles and a list of GAP principles not selected in any action is provided.

   We propose an approach based on **SMART** Action Planning, which incorporates five characteristics of a goal: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based.

   More specifically, the Action Plan should:

- ✓ include tasks tackling existing/emerging gaps, as identified in the Gap Analysis and the OTM-R Checklist in a specific way,

- ✓ state the task ownership and detail the responsibilities (i.e. assigned to a specific department, specific person/role within the organisation),

- ✓ have a clear and measurable timeframe for implementation,

- ✓ indicate how the state of achievement will be measured by means of precise and quantifiable key performance indicators (KPIs).

- ✓ The timeline should cover at least two years (up to the interim phase Internal Review). Timing should be indicated in quarters of a year.

- ✓ The actions should reflect a balance between short-term interventions (i.e. such as organising a workshop) and long-term systemic actions (i.e. fostering policy and culture change).

- ✓ The organisation can customise planning based on its own priorities and creativity. There is the possibility to add as many new fields as needed to include the desired volume of actions.

No	Proposed ACTIONS	GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
🗑 1		Select principle ▼			
		Add another row +			

The Action Plan also includes a dedicated section to OTM-R policy and practices.

The establishment of an Open Recruitment Policy is a key element in the HR award strategy. The applicant organisation must also indicate how the Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment Toolkit will be used and how the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment will be implemented. Although there may be some overlap with a range of the actions already planned as emerged from the Gap Analysis, the organisation must provide a short commentary demonstrating this implementation. **The organisation will have to make the link between the OTM-R Checklist and the overall Action Plan in a free text section.**

If the organisation already has a recruitment strategy that implements the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment, it must provide the web link where this strategy can be found on the organisation's website.

4. Implementation of the HR award process:

This section will include information on how the HR award process will be coordinated and embedded by the organisation (through working groups, alignment with HR policies or internal mechanisms, etc.)

In addition to a free text to describe the actions, there is also a list of mandatory questions. Each answer should be maximum of 500 words in length.

How will the implementation committee and/or steering group regularly oversee progress?*	⌄
How do you intend to involve the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?*	⌄
How do you proceed with the alignment of organisational policies with the HRS4R? Make sure the HRS4R is recognized in the organisation's research strategy, * as the overarching HR policy.	⌄
How will you ensure that the proposed actions are implemented?*	⌄
How will you monitor progress (timeline)?*	⌄
How will you measure progress (indicators) in view of the next assessment?*	⌄

In case the same answer is applicable to more than one question, please clearly state this instead of merely duplicating replies.

Important: The Action Plan and the OTM-R must be published in visible and easily accessible location of the organisation's website. The URL to the must be included in the URL field in the e-tool, starting with "https://" or "http://". Ideally, only one URL should be shared. In case multiple emails need to be shared, they should be comma separated and each should be introduced as an autonomous address, (starting with "https://" or http://).

The "Save" button, will save the form, and allow any eventual later review. This will not finalize the application or send the Action Plan to the EC for review.

The "Submit" button will be enabled only once all the forms will be completed and saved and will send your application to the EC. After submission, the organisation will no longer be able to update the files and the action cannot be undone.

2.4.5. "Internal Review"

In the interim and the Renewal phases, the internal review is the form where the organisation indicates it has embedded into its policies and practices the actions set in the Action Plans of the previous phase and proposes new actions for the next three years.

The organisation must **publish the revised version of the Action Plan and the OTM-R** on the organisation's website and provide the corresponding URL in a dedicated field of the Internal Review form.

It is important to keep in mind that organisations, will find that information has been automatically imported in the new phase, and that some of the fields in the Internal Review form are **prefilled** with information retrieved from the previous phase.

The Internal Review forms are very similar in structure to the Action Plan form provided in the Initial Phase. Those organisations that used the e-tool in their application will see some text blocks automatically filled in with information retrieved from the Action Plan filled in at the Initial Phase.

a. Organisation information

There are two categories of data required:

- ✓ Staff indicators to be presented as full-time positions (FTEs), and

- ✓ Budget and funding, if applicable, to be expressed as amounts in euro.

The dedicated table for filling in the data will already contain the organisational information provided at the Initial Phase, if available, with the possibility to update it for the current situation.

b. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice

In this section, the organisation must provide an overview of its current state and practice under the four thematic headings of the European Charter, as already done for the Initial Phase.

The information regarding the "Strengths and weaknesses" expressed at the Initial Phase will be retrieved automatically from the system if the organisation has filled in the initial Action Plan in the e-tool. We strongly recommend elaborating on both strengths and weaknesses, as they will highlight the organisation's rationale for setting actions as priorities in the Action Plan.

If the organisation is willing to provide more information about the way the strengths and weaknesses context evolved or changed from the Initial to the Implementation phase, there is a "Remarks" section within each of the tabs corresponding to the four headings of the European Charter that can be used for this purpose.

The organisation is also required to provide answers to specific questions regarding the way te it has operated after the acknowledgement of the HR award. A text block is offered for the following questions, with the indication to elaborate the reply in maximum 500 words for each of them.

c. Actions

In this section, the organisation must report on the status of achievement for each of the actions planned in the Initial Phase, alter actions or timing of actions if necessary, and add new actions to be implemented in the next 36 months.

1. <u>Establish the status of achievement of the actions already planned at the previous phase.</u>
   The organisations that filled in the Action Plan in e-tool at the previous phase will find that some information in the has been automatically retrieved. This notably

includes the list of planned actions, the gaps and the principles they address, the timing, the indicators, and the responsible unit.
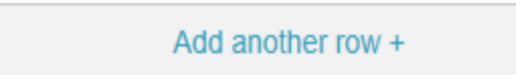
NB: the imported actions can be modified ONLY in their status of achievement and in the "Remarks".

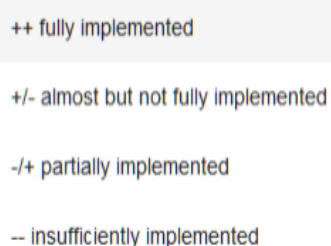2. <u>Add new actions to the Action Plan for the next 36 months.</u>
   The organisation can customise its planning based on its own priorities and creativity. Always keep in mind the importance of the link between the gaps identified in the Gap Analysis and the actions planned in such a way so as to make sure all gaps are addressed throughout the HR award process, based on the organisation's own priorities and tactics.

   It is possible to add as many new actions as needed by clicking on "Add another row". This will create a new field in the form for the addition of a new action.

   It is possible to add as many new actions as needed. The click on "Add another row" will create a new field in the form for the addition of a new action, the Gap principle it addresses, the timing of implementation, the responsible unit and the KPI(s). For the new actions, the "Current Status" will be "New".

Add another row +

The principle of planning new actions at the Internal Review is the same already used at the Initial Phase. The proposed actions can address either individual or multiple principles. To ensure that all the gap principles are addressed by the organisation based on own priorities, the list of those Gap principles which were not yet selected in any action will be provided for reference. The selected gap will be automatically accompanied by the rating already set in the Gap Analysis:

++ fully implemented

+/- almost but not fully implemented

-/+ partially implemented

-- insufficiently implemented

The Actions timeline should cover at least 36 months up to the following cycle of Award Renewal. Timing should be indicated in quarters of a year.

The actions should reflect a balance between short-term interventions (i.e. such as organising a workshop) and long-term systemic actions that bring about culture change.

The **status of achievement** ("Current State") of any action must be selected, in a dropdown menu, among the four options below:

- NEW: new action that was not included previously

- IN PROGRESS: an on-going action evolving as planned

- COMPLETED: an action reported as COMPLETED in one phase does not need to be mentioned again in the following phase. This can also be used for an abandoned action. In this case a full explanation for the abandoning of the action shall be provided.

- EXTENDED: If a planned action is taking longer than initially foreseen

If the status is IN PROGRESS or EXTENDED, the organisation shall also update timing of achievement. Details can be included for each action and corresponding status of achievement in the column for "Remarks".

NB: The actions, as well as the remarks on the status of achievement should be concise but detailed enough for the assessors to evaluate the level of ambition, engagement, and progress of the organisation. The organisation should strive to provide a detailed plan, not only an enumeration of actions, and provide clear, measurable, and punctual indicators.

Although there may be some overlap with a range of the actions already planned as emerged from the Gap Analysis, the organisation must provide a short commentary demonstrating the implementation of the OTM-R policies and practices, since the acknowledgement of the HR Award to the moment of the Internal Review. The organisation will have to make the link between the OTM-R Checklist and the overall Action Plan in a free text section.

2.5. The submission

Once **ALL** the mandatory forms have been duly completed and saved, they will appear as "valid" and the button "Submit" becomes active. If this is not the case, please review the status of each form and fix the possible errors:

- **Pending**: The form is either empty or needs to be revised because the EC has requested corrections after its submission.

- **Draft - Invalid**: The form is saved as a draft version. Not all required fields are provided.

- **Valid - Not Submitted**: The form is duly filled and ready for submission. **Must click "Submit" button** to send it to the next task.

- **Submitted**: The form has been finalized and submitted to the next task- it is no longer possible to edit it.

NB: after the Initial phase (i.e. at the Interim and Renewal phases), as the modification of the GAP analysis and the OTM-R checklist is not compulsory, the "Submit" button will be visible independently from their revision.

In case you need to **upload additional documents**, this can be done before the submission: once all the mandatory forms are marked "valid", the option to **upload additional documents** becomes available. It is recommended to use this option only to upload

sensitive documents or information that cannot be oterwise published on your organisation's website.

Please, note that the upload function allows the upload of only one document: multiple files can be uploaded compressing them into a single zipped folder.

Choose a file

Choose File   No file chosen   **Upload**

Upload only supportive documents to the application (i.e. surveys, reports, etc.) but not the application templates (Gap-Analysis, OTMR or Action plan).
Allowed extensions: pdf doc docx zip
Maximum allowed size: 10MB

After the successful submission, the organisation moves to the next level of the process, which consists of two separate steps: the **administrative eligibility check** and, if successful, the **assessment** of the submission. The HR award admin of the organisation will be able to follow all the subsequent steps on the e-Tool and will receive an automatic notification communicating the result of the assessment.

3. Assessors and assessment process

The assessment process is a cornerstone of the HR award process. The assessors have the responsibility of performing the remote or onsite audit of a case, examining and assessing the submissions of the research organisations, and of providing them with the necessary advice and guidance to progress in the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers via the HR award process.

The assessors are selected by the EC in a transparent process based on the following criteria:

1. Personal competence and experience in the HR award field or any similar HR strategy development and implementation.

2. Geographic distribution over EU-27.

3. Organisational spread (i.e. research organisations, universities, research funders etc.)

3.1. Selection of the assessing teams

Except for the assessment of the interim phase, which involves only one assessor, an assessing team comprises three assessors. In exceptional are cases (limited availability, unforeseen events etc.) an assessing team for the initial or the renewal phase may be formed by two assessors only.

Ideally, at interim and at renewal phases, the team is formed by one or more of the assessors who were part the assessing team of the previous phase. However, this is highly subject to assessors' availability and cannot always be ensured.

An assessing team is normally composed by assessors from a different Country of the applicant organisation. However, in specia cases, (e.g. because of local specificities, local regulations, national laws etc.) the assessing team may include an assessor from the same Country of the assessed organisation.

Prior to their involvement the assessment process, the assessors receive appropriate training on all issues and requirements. Also, prior to any assessment, the assessors sign a declaration of confidentiality covering issues such as performance or obligation of impartiality. These confidentiality obligations are binding on the assessor unless the confidential information becomes public through disclosure of the confidential information by the organisation or the Commission services.

Finally, the assessors must have no conflict of interest with the assigned case.

3.2. The assessment process

The assessment process can only be initiated after an application has passed the administrative eligibility check. In the Initial phase and in the Renewal phases, one of the

three assessors forming the assessing team receives the role of "lead assessor". At interim phase, instead, the assessing team will be constituted by the lead assessor only..

The assessing team that will examine the internal review of a case and will specifically be interested in finding:

- ✓ Clear information on the context overview in which the HR Strategy is designed (assets and barriers).

- ✓ Strong and clear coherence between Gap Analysis and Action Plan.

- ✓ Concrete actions for the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers, with clear, measurable, and punctual indicators (KPIs) and timelines.

- ✓ Clear and concrete examples of how the organisation consulted and involved the required internal and external stakeholder groups in their HR award process.

- ✓ The HR award strategy published on the organisation's website in English, in a visible place.

The lead assessor will be responsible for producing the final report in consensus with the other two assessors. The final consensus report is validated by the EC and will contain the official outcome of the assessment including, if needed, a set of recommendations.

The organisation will have access to the consensus report within three or four months after the organisation's submission has received the positive administrative eligibility check.

The new internal review submission at the following phase shall carefully and punctually tackle the recommendations provided by the assessors and address them via tailored actions. This will ensure the completion of a cycle and the transition to the next stage in the implementation process.

3.3. EC Consensus Report

The EC Consensus Report is the final validation that the EC will give to the Consensus report produced by the assessing team assigned to the case and will contain the assessment outcome. The EC Consensus report is officially announced via an automated message sent via email to the HR award Admin of the organisation.

As the **Interim Phase** constitutes a particular case in the HR award process, the EC Consensus report for that phase will be described later in the specific context of the Interim phase. What follows is the description of the EC Consensus report for the Initial and the Renewal phases.

The EC Consensus report will include the result of the general assessment and a set of customised comments and recommendations to the organisation in terms of its ambition towards the principles of the Charter & Code, and their implementation via the HR award process. If relevant, the report will also contain "immediate mandatory modifications" (which need to be implemented in order to obtain/retain the award), and "other recommendations" that can be addressed at a later stage (but before the next phase).

The "General Assessment" represents the outcome of the consensus report and will have one of the following three outcomes:

a. Accepted

The application meets the required criteria, and the **HR award is granted** (awarded or retained) and the organisation will move to the next phase of the HR award process.

Please, note that while acknowledging that the submission meets the criteria for the granting/renewal of the HR award, the assessors may still provide comments, advice, and guidance on the HR award process (e.g. asking to increase the focus on a particular topic, to address a specific issue etc.). These comments should be addressed by the following phase.

b. Pending modifications

The organisation broadly meets the criteria for being granted the HR award, but the assessors have some concerns, questions, or need clarifications on specific areas of the application.

In case of a request for modifications, the organisation is rolled back in the HR award process flow resuming its "draft" status. The organisation will be able to update/amend/modify the documentation in the e-tool and to resubmit the application for review **within two months** from the reception of the request modifications. If the organisation has difficulties in meeting the deadline, it can **request an extension of the deadline**.

After its submission and an administrative eligibility check, the documents will be examined by the original lead assessor only, who will not review the whole application, but only how the organisation has followed up on the previous consensus feedback. It is strongly recommended to act upon the specific recommendations and detail the actions in the revised application as clearly as possible. The organisation is reminded of the importance of paying attention in the consideration of **all** the "Mandatory Recommendations".

Important: Special attention should be paid when resubmitting the revised application as only **ONE** resubmission is allowed at this stage. In case after resubmission the organisation did not tackle the mandatory recommendations, the case will be suspended.

c. Pending modifications with extended deadline

The organisation does not seem to meet the criteria to be awarded the HR award and is required to make the appropriate changes considering the recommendations of the assessors. the organisation is rolled back in the HR award process flow resuming its "draft" status.

The organisation will be able to update/amend/modify the documentation in the e-tool and to resubmit the application for review **within 12 months** from the reception of the request modifications. If the organisation has difficulties in meeting the deadline, it can **request an extension of the deadline**.

After submission and a successful administrative eligibility check, the documents will be examined by a full assessing team (three assessors). If possible, the same team that did the original assessment), who will not review the whole application, but only how the organisation has followed up on the previous consensus feedback. It is strongly recommended to act upon the specific recommendations and detail the actions in the revised application as clearly as possible. The organisation is reminded of the importance of paying attention in the consideration of **all** the "Mandatory Recommendations".

Important: Special attention should be paid when resubmitting the revised application

- o In case after resubmission the organisation did not tackle the mandatory recommendations and the assessment outcome of the resubmission is again "request for modifications with extended deadline", the organisation is "Suspended"

- o In case after the resubmission the assessors still have some concerns, questions, or need clarifications on specific areas of the application a "request for modifications" will be issued.

If the organisation has difficulties in meeting the deadline, it can **request an extension of the deadline**.

3.4. Granting/renewal of the "HR Excellence in Research Award"

After the Consensus Report with a General Assessment in position "**Accepted**" is validated, the organisation is authorized to display the "HR Excellence in Research award" logo on the organisation's website, on social media, on marketing materials or other publications of the organisation. The HR award Admin can download the "HR award" logo in different formats along its graphic guidelines at any moment from the HR Excellence in Research portal:

HR Excelence Graphic Guidelines
You can download here the **award icon** available in different formats together with the graphic guidelines.
HRS4R Graphics (2.7 MB)

Starting from the first award, the HR award logo will automatically be appended to the organisation name on the EURAXESS portal and to every vacancy that the organisation will publish in EURAXESS increasing the organisation visibility and attractiveness.
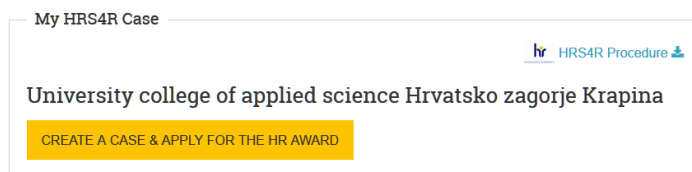
An awarded organisation will be also listed on the **list of Awarded organisations** page publicly available on the HR Excellence in Research portal. The listed organisations will be linked to the HR award Strategy page published on their website.

4. The Phases of the process

4.1.   Before the Initial phase

4.1.1. Creation of a case in the HR award e-Tool

Before an organisation apply for the HR award, its HR award Admin shall create a "case" in the e-Tool. This will be the space in the e-Tool where all the actions in the HR award process will be taken. To create a case, the HR award admin must access the HR award e-Tool and click on on the yellow button, "Create a case & apply for the HR award".
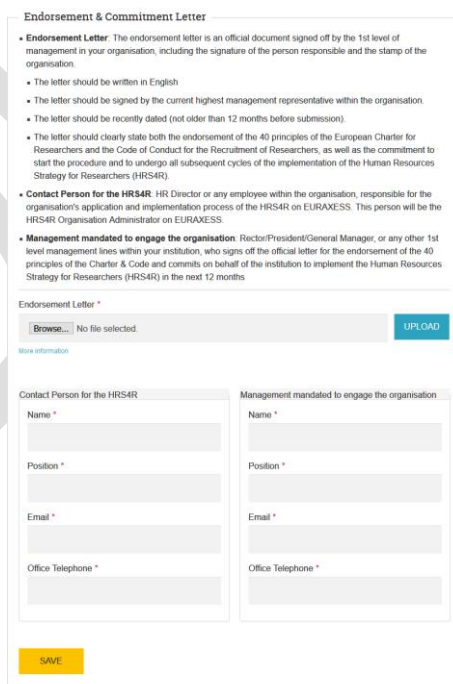

4.1.2. Endorsement of the European Charter and commitment to its implementation

This is the first actual step for the application for the HR award. When the organisation is ready to get involved in the process, the HR award admin will upload a "Letter of Endorsement and Commitment" to the e-Tool and complete the contact fields for the HR award Admin and for the management mandated to engage the organisation (see the form below).

The organisations can use their own text and format to draft the commitment letter, however the below elements are mandatory requirements:

a. The letter must be in English.

b. The letter must be signed by the current highest management representative within the organisation such as Rector, President, other senior level position (e.g. Vice-President for Research), or another person representing the legal body and authorised to make a commitment on behalf of the organisation.

c. The letter must not older than 12 months before its submission.

d. The letter should clearly state both the endorsement of the 20 principles of the European Charter for Researchers, and the commitment to its implementation via the various phases of the HR award procedure.

Examples of endorsement letters are published at the Annex of this document.

Clicking on the "Save" button saves the provided information and still allows the information to be edited before it is submitted. The status of the application will be changed into "Pending" as below:

After clicking on "Submit", the application cannot be edited anymore, and the action cannot be undone. The status of the application will change into "**Submitted**".

Once submitted, the application reaches the EC, which will check its compliance with the requirements. The organisation will be informed whether the application is accepted or within **10 working days**.

The HR award dashboard will highlight the phase of the application, as well as the current task and the deadline, as shown below:

The approval of the endorsement letter by the EC will change the status of the "European Charter Endorsement: Confirmation of Endorsement Letter" task from "Pending" to "Accepted". Once this stage is completed, the organisation will be able to move to the next task of the initial phase of the HR award process.

Once the Endorsement Letter is approved, the EC will allocate a case number to the application. An application that has not been confirmed will have a "Pending" status.

Important: The case code number allocated to the organisation will be an essential element in all future interactions with the EC Services in the frame of the HR award process: do not forget to include it in <u>all</u> your correspondence.

If the application is "**Accepted**", the HR award dashboard of the organisation will highlight the case number and the deadline of the next task: Gap Analysis, OTM-R, Action Plan

35

Design, with a deadline for their submission calculated after **12 months** from the approval of the endorsement letter.

The progress of the organisations in the sequence of the HR award process is displayed as a vertical timeline flow:
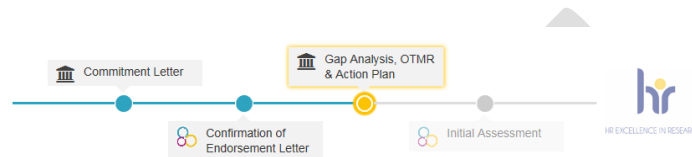
In case the letter is "**Declined**", a notification will appear in the organisation's dashboard.

The "Show more" feature will show the rationale for its administrative rejection:

The organisation will have to **resubmit the application** within **one month**. The resubmission must carefully consider the recommendations provided by the EC in the assessment of the original application.

4.2.   Initial phase

To constitute the application for the HR award, the here are four **mandatory** forms to be completed at initial phase.

1. Process Description,

2. Gap Analysis,

3. OTM-R Checklist,

4. Action Plan (covering the actions to be implemented until the interim phase)

The submission of these four forms constitutes the application for the "HR Excellence in Research Award". The four documents must be submitted **within 12 months** from the confirmation of the endorsement letter.

Once **ALL** the mandatory forms have been duly completed and saved, they will appear as "valid, and the option to **upload additional documents** becomes available. It is recommended to use this option only to submit sensitive documents that cannot be published on your organisation's website.

Please, note that this function allows the upload of only one document: multiple files can be uploaded compressing them into a single zipped folder.

Choose a file

| Choose File | No file chosen | **Upload** |

Upload only supportive documents to the application (i.e. surveys, reports, etc.) but not the application templates (Gap-Analysis, OTMR or Action plan).
Allowed extensions: pdf doc docx zip
Maximum allowed size: 10MB

The button "Submit" is now be visible, If this is not the case, please review the status of each form and fix the possible errors:

- **Pending**: The form is either empty or needs to be revised because the EC has requested corrections after its submission.

- **Draft - Invalid**: The form is saved as a draft version. Not all required fields are provided.

- **Valid - Not Submitted**: The form is duly filled and ready for submission. **Must click "Submit" button** to send it to the next task.

- **Submitted**: The form has been finalized and submitted to the next task- it is no longer possible to edit it.

After the successful submission of the HR award application, the organisation moves to the next level of the process, which consists of two separate steps: the **administrative eligibility check** and, if successful, the **assessment** of the application. The HR award admin of the organisation will be able to follow all the subsequent steps on the e-Tool and at the end of the assessment process will receive an automatic notification communicating the result of the assessment. Which will be detailed in the e-Tool in the EC Consensus report.
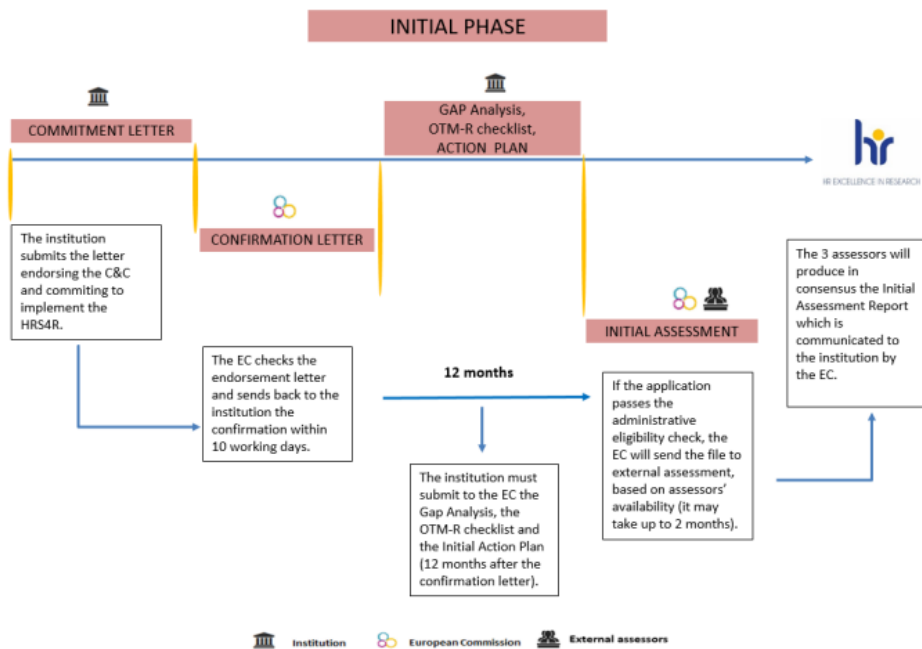
4.3. The interim phase

After being granted the HR award at the end of the initial phase, an organisation has **24 months** to implement the actions outlined in the Action Plan and to report its progress in the "Interim phase".

NB: at the Interim phase the organisation is not in jeopardy of losing the HR award.

The purpose of the interim phase is not to renew the award but to assist the newly awarded organisation in steering the HR award process. The role of the assessor in this phase is to investigate the progress and quality of the actions and accompanying measures and provide to the organisation advice and recommendations on how to continue the implementation of the revised Action Plan for the next 36 months.

At this phase, there is one compulsory form to be submitted: the **"Internal Review"**. The "GAP analysis" and the "OTM-R checklist" are also present for submission but are not compulsory: they will automatically import the content submitted at the previous phase and can be revised in case of major modifications.

The Action Plan is to be updated as needed ad filled covering the actions to be implemented until the following phase (1rst renewal).

Reminder: once **the internal review** has been duly completed and saved, it will appear as "valid, and the option to **upload additional documents** becomes available. It is recommended to use this option only to submit sensitive documents that cannot be published on your organisation's website.

Also, the button "Submit" is now be visible If this is not the case, please review the status of each form and fix the possible errors:

After the successful submission the organisation moves to the next level of the process, which consists of two separate steps: the **administrative eligibility check** and, if successful, the **assessment** of the application. The HR award admin of the organisation will be able to follow all the subsequent steps on the e-Tool and at the end of the assessment process will receive an automatic notification communicating the result of the assessment.

4.3.1. EC Consensus report for the Interim phase

As the at Interim phase the goal of the assessment to assist the newly awarded organisation in steering the HR award process, the consensus report will differ from the initial and the renewal phase ones. The report will display:

- Quality (of progress): Here the assessor assesses the level of ambition and the quality of progress intended and obtained by the organisation.

- Strengths and weaknesses of the HR strategy: On the basis of the information submitted and taking into account the organisation's national research context, the assessor will weigh/judge the HR strategy's strengths and weaknesses.

- Recommendations will be provided referring to the state of the art of organisation's OTM-R policy, with regard to progress and quality of actions and their evidence etc.

The Consensus report will have three possible outcomes:

- **HRS4R embedded:** The organisation is progressing with appropriate and quality actions as described in its Action Plan. **There is evidence that the HRS4R is further embedded.**

- **HRS4R embedded, corrective actions needed:** The organisation is, for the most part, progressing with appropriate and quality actions as described in its Action Plan, but could benefit from alterations as advised through the Assessment process. **There is some evidence that the HRS4R is further embedded.**

- **HRS4R embedded, strong corrective actions needed:** The organisation is not deemed to be implementing appropriate and quality actions and this raises some concern for the future efforts to implement actions closely aligned to the Charter and Code. **There is a lack of evidence that the HRS4R is further embedded.**

In all three cases (successful outcome or need for corrective actions), no resubmissions are needed, and the organisation can progress to the next phase (renewal). It is to be noted that, while after its assessment the Implementation Phase is concluded, any eventual warning from the assessors must be taken in careful consideration when preparing the internal review submission for the following renewal phase. Failure to do so may have a negative impact on the renewal assessment.

4.4. Renewal Phase

The Award Renewal is the third, recurrent phase of the HR award procedure. The first renewal phase takes place three years after the Interim Assessment, which means five years after the initial granting of the HR award (or 36 years from the initial application).

The assessment process for the first cycle of Renewal inand every other cycle afterwards will involve the organisation of a site-visit on the premises of the organisation (see dedicated section below).

At Renewal phase, there is one compulsory form to be submitted: the **"Internal Review"**. The "GAP analysis" and the "OTM-R checklist" are also present for submission but are not compulsory: they will automatically import the content submitted at the previous phase and can be revised by the organisation in case of major modifications.

The Action Plan is to be updated as needed ad filled covering the actions to be implemented until the following renewal phase.

Reminder: once **the internal review** has been duly completed and saved, it will appear as "valid, and the option to **upload additional documents** becomes available. It is recommended to use this option only to submit sensitive documents that cannot be published on your organisation's website.

Also, the button "Submit" is now be visible If this is not the case, please review the status of each form and fix the possible errors:

- **Pending**: The form is either empty or needs to be revised because the EC has requested corrections after its submission.

- **Draft - Invalid**: The form is saved as a draft version. Not all required fields are provided.

- **Valid - Not Submitted**: The form is duly filled and ready for submission. **Must click "Submit" button** to send it to the next task.

- **Submitted**: The form has been finalized and submitted to the next task- it is no longer possible to edit it.

After the successful submission the organisation moves to the next level of the process, which consists of two separate steps: the **administrative eligibility check** and, if successful, the **assessment** of the application. The HR award admin of the organisation will be able to follow all the subsequent steps on the e-Tool and at the end of the assessment process will receive an automatic notification communicating the result of the assessment

If the renewal cycle includes a site visit, the organisation will receive the consensus report **within one month after the site visit**. If, instead, the renewal cycle is without site visit, the organisation will receive the notification of the consensus report **within one month from the assignment for assessment** (delays are indicative and subject to expert's availability).

4.4.1. Renewal phase with Site Visit

The assessment process for the first cycle of Award Renewal involves the organisation of a site-visit on the premises of the organisation.

The following assessments cycles will take place alternating renewals with site visits and renewals without site visit (remote). Odd-numbered cycles (1, 3, 5 etc) take place with site visit, even-numbered cycles (2, 4, 6 etc) take place without site visit.

NB: site visits are limited to organisations based in the European Union. Organisations from other Countries, regardless of their renewal cycle, will be assessed remotely (the platform to be used will be decided in agreement between the lead assessor and the organisation).

The aim of the site visit is **the renewal** of the HR award three years after the interim assessment. and in every subsequent odd cycle (1, 3, 5, …). Site visits are limited to organisations based in the European Union and are an opportunity for organisations to display their work and receive a direct, informed, and professional feedback from external assessors, including suggestions for change and improvement. Moreover, the site visit contributes to raise the degree of awareness of HR award within the organisation and to strengthen the engagement of the whole community in this continuous improvement process. The success of the award renewal carries the recognition of the EC of your organisation efforts in implementing the principles of the European Charter for Researchers via the HR award.

The purpose of the site visit is multiple: it allows to reflect and to document progress, to alter actions or timing of actions, if necessary, it also allows to create new actions for the upcoming period. Finally, it provides the opportunity for an in-depth discussion and for a stronger engagement on the work that has been undertaken.

During the site visit, the team of three external assessors will meet all key stakeholders, including researchers, management and practitioners. This is the occasion to confidentially discuss the issues and questions that might have arisen in the analysis of the Internal Review.

During the site visits, assessors need to:
- ✓ be able to confirm the impression they gained during their desk based assessment;
- ✓ identify benefits the organisation receives from implementing the HR strategy ;
- ✓ assess the level of ambition of the organisation with regard to the HR strategy for researchers, taking into account the initial state of play;

- ✓ assess the organisation's efforts to ensure the European Charter for Researchers principles regarding ethical and professional aspects; working conditions, development and training.

- ✓ highlight the organisation's effort in implementing an OTM-R policy;

- ✓ assess whether the European Charter for Researchers principles are being implemented.

After the discussions on site or remotely, the external assessors organise a debriefing session to reflect upon and to discuss the site visit in order to produce a Consensus Report.

This report will also contain:

- ✓ elements of good practice that the assessors would recommend to other organisations

- ✓ examples of difficulties the organisation encountered during set-up or implementation.

Finally, based on the information obtained from the Internal Review and the site visit, and taking into account the national research context of the organisation, the assessors will assess the HR strategy strengths and weaknesses. If relevant, they will provide suggestions for alteration or revisions to the HR strategy of the organisation.

Organizing a Site visit

What follows is a step-by-step checklist of the actions for the organisation of the site visit.

a. Scheduling the Site Visit

Upon reception of the administrative eligibility for the internal review in request for the renewal of the HR award, the organisation shall proactively schedule an **indicative time window for the site visit. This date shall be swiftly communicated to the EC** at RTD-CHARTER@ec.europa.eu.

It is important to keep in mind that the bigger the time window proposed, the easier will be to individuate available assessors. In case the proposal consists of precise dates, they may not match the availability of the assessors.

Also, the proposed time window for the site visit should be comprised between two and four months from the moment this is communicated to the Commission. Delays depending on exceptional circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case base.

Within one month from the reception of the calendar proposal, and depending on the availability of the assessors, the EC will constitute a team of three independent assessors and initiate the communication between the **HR award Admin of the organisation and the lead assessor to finalise the calendar and the agenda for the site visit**. The timing for the formation of the assessing team depends highly on a variety of parameters such as the availability of the assessors, complexity of travel arrangements, etc.

Once the date is finalised and agreed between the organisation and the assessors, the lead assessor officially communicates it to the EC. The EC will register the date in the e-tool.

The organisation will proceed to block out time on the senior leaders' schedule and of the people involved in the management of the HR award process within the organisation. Typically, the senior leaders will need to be available for up to a one-hour opening meeting (inclusive of half-hour presentation) on the day of the site visit and a one-hour long wrap-up discussion at the end of the site visit.

NB: After the date for the site visit has been finalized with the assessors and communicated to the European Commission, in case the site visit is cancelled or rescheduled upon the organisation request, the organisation will be responsible of any reimbursement of the non-reimbursable costs incurred by the assessors.

b. Preparation of the site visit

- Senior management involvement
  The organisation should ensure that the **senior management is aware** of the effort and investment in the HR award process throughout the years, what the HR strategy is, the difference it made to the organisation and the impact it has, as well as the need to continue to guarantee their full support. **The senior management must be present in the opening and closing meetings**.

- Communicate with your colleagues and hierarchy.
  The organisation staff should be fully aware of what to expect from the site visit: it is very important that the HR award Admin develop a good communication plan in view of the site visit. Usual topics include the site visit calendar and agenda, clarify the reason why external assessors are visiting the organisation, the expected benefit for the organisation, what individual researchers and other staff groups can expect during the site visit. Specific communication (and training) activities should be planned to address different target groups.

- Getting ready for the site visit
  Start **assembling the information** needed for the meeting.
  The **site visit will have a duration of one day and will take place in English**. If the organisation needs to use an interpreter, this will be included in the organisation's costs. The use of an interpreter is never considered negatively, but a favourable point in support of better communication and wider involvement.

- Additional information to provide to the assessing team
  In due time, the HR award Admin should provide the assessors with organisational information including:

  ✓ The current organisational Strategic Plan (if one exists, in English).
  ✓ A current detailed organisation chart.

- ✓ Information on the demographics of research employees in the organisation (i.e. numbers, role title, etc.) should also be provided at this stage if not done yet
- ✓ A list of the key stakeholders - people, leaders, committee members, and others - who have been involved with and have contributed to the HR award process of self-assessment submitted to the European Commission.
- ✓ Any other information that the organisation may consider important for the assessors should also be shared at this stage.

- Logistics

✓ The assessing team should be also provided in advance of a map showing the location(s) of the meetings and the email address and telephone number of a point of contact in the organisation should be provided.

✓ When organising an onsite visit, the organisation should secure a private meeting room for the exclusive use of the assessment team for the duration of the whole visit. If the assessors visit more than one site, a meeting room at each site is desirable.

✓ The meeting room for the opening and closing sessions shall be equipped with a projector and a screen. Additional meeting spaces for interviews can also be helpful, (i.e. additional interview spaces might be needed for individual or group interviews). If the organisation's premises require the visitors to be escorted to the different meetings, make sure someone is available.

✓ The assessors should also be provided with beverages, snacks and meals, and access to internet, Wi-Fi, copiers, printers, and telephones.

✓ Before the assessing team arrives on site, it is a good practice to review the detailed schedule with the lead assessor.

- The agenda

At least one month before the meeting, the organisation shall finalise the draft agenda **in synergy with the lead assessor**.

The final agenda of the site visit should be agreed between the organisation and the assessors **three weeks** prior to the visit. In preparing the agenda, remember that the assessors will require **15 minutes for private discussion after each meeting**.

During the closing meeting, the assessors will relay their findings verbally to the organisation. The formal consensus report will follow and will be transmitted via the e-tool normally within the next three to four weeks.

At the Annex, you can find for inspiration a sample schedule for the site visit.

c. The day of the site visit

- At the beginning of the visit, the organisation should provide the assessors team with a printed copy of all documents and reports mentioned in the Internal Review

narrative. There is no need to duplicate the documents if the assessors visit more than one site.

- At the opening meeting, the HR award Admin will provide a **half-hour presentation** to the assessors. This first part of the visit should be used for presenting the organisation (who you are and what you do), the reasons it participates in the HR award process, progress so far under Ethical and Professional Aspects, OTM-R, Working Conditions and Training and Development. Explain how your organisation hopes to improve and evolve its service to researchers from continuing with the HR award process.

  The presentation should also include information related to **indicators for progress and quality**, highlighting elements such as quality of progress and quality of achievements. The breath, depth and integration of HR award within the organisation should be evidenced through indicators such as the level of ambition, the level of embedding and the quality of progress. It is recommended that the presentation is kept as short and to the point as possible and does not repeat every detail from the revised HR award Action Plan.

  It is important to identify the staff members that will have face-to-face interviews with the assessors (i.e. people involved in the management of the HR award process, staff responsible for implementing actions, researchers representing the different research positions at different level R1 to R4). External stakeholders should also be involved if relevant.

5. Suspension/Closure of a case

As the HR award is granted in three-year cycles, an organisation that does not renew its award beyond that period (plus any eventual extension of the deadline and request for modification), cannot continue displaying the award.

Initial and interim case cannot be suspended (see "closure of a case").

5.1. Suspension of a case

The "Suspension" of a case within the HR award process is a **temporary** measure and it is applicable only to organisations in the Renewal Phase.

After the suspension of the Excellence in Research award, the suspended organisation temporarily loses the award and is removed from the list of Awarded Organisations published on the HR award portal. and the HR award icon will not be appended anymore to the EURAXESS postings of the organisation. Also, the HR award icon shall be removed from the Organisation website, e-publications, and publicity material.

The organisation, however, is allowed to retain its current position (phase) within the HR award process and is allowed to one more resubmission of its Internal review, which will be reassessed by a HR award team.

In case during the suspension period the organisation will proceed to submit an internal review, this will have to be accompanied with a description of the reasons for the suspension, and the action plan will have to include the actions that took place during the period of suspension, as well as the actions for the following three years (like for a regular submission).

If the assessors in charge of this extra assessment will issue a positive evaluation, the logo will be re-established, and the organisation name will be listed again among the Awarded Organisation and will continue its normal progress in the HR award process.

A "Suspended" status cannot be extended beyond two full renewal cycles (i.e. for a total six years). After this period, the case will be "Closed".

A "Suspension" applies in the following cases:

   a. *If the maximum number of non "Accepted" resubmissions is reached*

      i. after two resubmissions in case of "request for modifications"

      ii. after one resubmission in case of "request for modifications with extended deadline"

   b. *If an organisation is unresponsive*

      In case an organisation does not take any action in the e-Tool, or interrupts communication with the EC, it is considered "unresponsive".
      Six months after the formal deadline in the HR award e-Tool, the EC will start sending to the organisation a reminder per month. In case the EC does not receive

any reply, or no action is taken in the E-tool within one month after the 3rd reminder, the organisation will be "Suspended".

In case the organisation does not react within the maximum extent of the "suspension" (i.e. two years), the "suspended" case will be closed.

c. Technical suspension

In some exceptional circumstances, and upon due and circumstantiated justification, an organisation may ask to temporarily suspend the HR award process. In this case the organisation did not reach the deadline for the new submission, it can retain the HR award until the expiration of the deadline. After this, it will continue as under point a) above.

The technical suspension is not automatic and is granted on a case-by-case approach.

5.2. Closure of a case

This is a **permanent** measure: once a case is closed, the Organisation loses the award and will be removed from the list of Awarded Organisations published on the HR award portal. Also, the HR award icon will not be appended anymore to the EURAXESS postings of the organisation. Finally, the HR award icon must be removed from the Organisation website, e-publications, and publicity material.

After closure, a case cannot continue within the same process. If the organisation wishes to re-enter the HR award process, a new case must be opened. This option is it is applicable to the following scenarios:

- Organisations failing to renew the award within the limits of the suspension as described above.

- Initial and Interim cases: as the history of the HR award process for a case in one of these phases is not sufficiently developed, an organisation cannot be suspended but must be closed.

- Suspended organisation after six years (two renewal cycles) from the last award renewal

- Organisation deciding to permanently abandon the HR Process.

6. Special cases

Organisations should submit their HR award application when they represent all the other units within its hierarchical composition. When the organisation is awarded, all its departments and institutes can display the HR award logo.

As the implementation of the European Charter for Researchers foresees the active involvement of the HR department and the HR policies of the organisations, the existence of an HR department and an HR policy constitutes a main element for entering the HR award process.

However, the special cases listed below will be discussed on a case-by-case base: please contact us at RTD-CHARTER@ec.europa.eu

6.1. Organisations without an HR department

In case an organisation considers to be a particular case (e.g an organisation without direct application of HR policies or without a centralized HR department such as an alliance or a research centre using a mixed HR policy), an exception to enter the HR award process can be requested.

6.2. Organisations belonging to a group, alliance, or conglomerate.

Individual application

Organisations can individually apply for the HR award when they are part of a bigger group, provided they represent a separate entity and have separate HR and organisational set of practices, distinct and differentiated from the group or the larger organisation to which they belong.

Group application

Multiple organisations can apply for the HR award at group level when they have harmonised or worked towards the harmonisation of their HR and organisational set of practices. In this case, their application can be treated as per the merged scenarios described above.

N.B.: Depending on the size of the larger group, EC Services may consider useful to engage the same team of assessors for consistency purposes.

6.3. Application of an organisation's sub-unit

If the subunit (department, institute etc.) provides sufficient justification such as the intention to apply functioning as pilot for the future application of the main organisation, or because the HR and organisational rules differ from the main organisation ones, the EC Services can decide to accept the application on a case-by-case base.

If accepted, the field for the organisation profile name in the e-tool will include the name of the main organisation in addition to the unit's name. (i.e. Name – main Organisation name).

6.4. Mergers of organisations

In case of a merger of two or more organisations, there are several possible scenarios, depending on the enrolment status in the HR award process of the merged organisations. Possible scenarios are described below.

No merged organisation is awarded yet

If none of the merged organisations has been granted the award yet, the EC services will close all the existing individual applications and will clearly indicate the re-application under a merged organisation profile.

One merged organisations is awarded

The organisation that holds the HR award should be encouraged to retain it, even in case the merger involves one or more organisations not implementing the European Charter for Researchers principles in their HR practices. In this case, the EC Services will extend the deadline for the next Internal Review of the newly merged organisation up to three years. This is to allow the awarded organisation to align with the merged organisation(s) in the HR award process.

At the next assessment cycle, the newly formed organisation will be assessed on the base of the updated Action Plan, which will include all the relevant information on how the new organisation has embedded the HR award process. The team of assessors assessing the merged organisation will then determine whether the application has a positive outcome or the organisation needs to reinitiate the process.

Two or more merged organisations are awarded

If two or more organisations participating in the merger have been already awarded individually, only one case will remain open in the e-tool while the others will be closed. The HR award Admin of the merged organisation will be asked to decide which case should be kept open in the E-tool. Within up to the three years following the merger, the newly formed organisation should combine the existing Action Plans of the merged organisations. The Internal Review that will be produced for the assessment of the new organisations shall include the relevant information about the merger process and on how the HR policies were reorganised. The team of assessors assessing the merged organisation will decide whether their application can proceed further, or if the process needs to be reinitiated.

ANNEX

Basic example of Agenda for the Site Visit

TIME	WHO AND WHAT?	WHY?	WHERE?
09:00 – 09:30	Introduction by the lead expert Presentation delivered by the organisation	Inform on how the HR award is embedded in the organisation and highlight progress and quality in implementing the principles of the European Charter for Researchers Discuss challenges faced by the organisation in implementing the European Charter for Researchers principles due to external constraints (e.g. national context and legislation) The most important purpose is to introduce the external assessors to the invited stakeholders and participants of the site visit and vice versa. However, it is also an opportunity to present your organisation to the external assessors.	
09:30 – 09:45	Meeting with ………	Get an overview of the organisation	
09:45 – 10:00	**Assessors private meeting/ reserved discussion**	To assess the information provided	To occur after each meeting
	Meeting with …		
	Meeting with …		
17:30	Debriefing meeting Assessment Team alone	Exchange of impressions, discuss if further information/clarification are needed.	
18:00	Meeting with organisation leadership	A short presentation by lead assessor with some feedback, thank everybody for the cooperation and fruitful discussions Collect feed-back and recommendations for the future	

Abbreviations and glossary

Assessor: An assessor is the person who performs the remote or onsite audit of a research organisation's case and provides advice and guidance to the organisations towards the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers via the HR award process.

Charter & Code: The 2005 Charter & Code is replaced by the European Charter for Researchers

E-TOOL: The e-Tool is a component of the HR award initiative under the ERA Talent Platform. It is the IT interface that manages the entire HR award process: all new applications, HR award cases and assessors, and is vital for the monitoring of tasks.

European Charter for Researchers: On 18 December 2023 the Council Adopted the "Council Recommendation on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe"[6]. The new Charter for Researchers (Annex 2 to the Council Recommendation) replaces the old 2005 Charter & Code[7] and contains a set of 20 principles underpinning the development of attractive research careers to support excellence in research and innovation across Europe. The focus of the European Charter for Researchers is the rights and responsibilities of researchers, employers, funders, and policymakers.

HR Award Admin: this is the person in charge of the administrative management of the HR award e-tool for the organisation and is the contact point of the organisation on all HR award matters. This role is granted only to one person per organisation, and it is responsibility of the organisation to always ensure a HR award Admin with a valid email.

HR award e-Tool: The e-Tool is a component of the HR award initiative under the ERA Talent Platform. It is the IT interface that manages all new applications, the HR award cases in all their phases, the assessors' activities, and it is vital for the monitoring of the HR award process tasks.

HR award process: previously called HRS4R, this is the process to obtain and maintain the HR Excellence in Research award. The process is based on a structured and monitored auditing mechanism, centred on a three-years cycles continuous assessment based on gap-analysis and action plans.

HR Award: see HR Excellence in Research Award.

HR Excellence in Research Award: The HR award is granted by the European Commission to those research organisations that endorsed the European Charter for Researchers,

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[6] Council Recommendation C/2023/1640 of 18 December 2023 a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1640/oj.
[7] Commission Recommendation 2005/251/EC of 11 March 2005 on the European Charter for Researchers and on a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2005/251/oj

committed to its implementation via the HR Award process, and are making progress towards it.

HRS4R: **"Human Resources Strategy for Researchers":** is the former name of the initiative that was renamed "HR Excellence in Research process" in 2024 (see HR award process).

Initial Phase: This is the first phase of the HR Award process, and it comprises the registration in the e-Tool, the submission of a letter of "Endorsement and Commitment", the submission of the relevant documentation, and its assessment by a team of assessors. After successful assessment and validation, the HR award is officially granted.

Interim Phase: This phase starts 2 years after the award is granted. This phase is to provide advice and guidance to the organisation and, at this stage, the award is not in jeopardy.

IT Helpdesk: The IT helpdesk (support@euraxess.org) is managed by the same IT contractor developing and maintaining the e-Tool platform. The IT helpdesk deals with all the technical issues linked to the use of the e-Tool.

Reassessment: In case the outcome of an assessment of an Initial or a Renewal phase result in a request for modification, the Organisation must tackle the recommendations of the assessors and resubmit for reassessment (which is performed by the Lead Assessor, only): within two months in case of simple "Request for Modifications", or within a year in case of "Request for Modifications with extended deadline

Renewal Phase: The renewal phases are based on a three-year cycle alternating site visits and remote assessments. The first Renewal Phase takes place three years after the submission of the outcome of the Interim and will include a Site Visit on the premises of the organisation. All the subsequent Renewal Phases will alternate a Renewal with site visit and a Renewal without site visit (i.e. 1st renewal with site visit, 2nd renewal without site visit, 3rd renewal with site visit, 4th renewal without site visit and so on….). The positive assessment of the Renewal Phase lead s to the renewal of the award.

Site Visit: a site visit is an assessment performed on the premises of the research organisation and incurs travel and accommodation costs.