

Initial Assessment - EC Consensus Report

Case number: 2020CZ548069

Name Organisation under assessment: Veterinary Research Institute

Submission date of initial GAP-Analysis, HR Strategy and Action Plan: 17/07/2021

This report was drafted by the Lead-Assessor in consensus with the members of the assessment team

Submission date: 09/12/2021

Eligibility assessment

Please rate the state of achievement ("yes", "no" or "partly"). If any statements have prompted a "no" or "partly" in the evaluation, please provide recommendations:

Have the Strategy and Action Plan been published on the organisation's website?	Partly	Documents are available in a minimalist format. It is expected to have dedicated webpages showing VRI's commitment and work on the project. Please publish pages of interest for the reader including info on C&C and HRS4R, Contact person, COP and WG composition (incl. researchers level), link to pertinent internal strategic documentation
Have the Strategy and Action Plan been published in English?	Partly	See above.
Have the Strategy and Action Plan been published in a visible place?	Partly	See above - The organisation's homepage doesn't give visibility to HR Strategy and Action Plan. Links are hard to find.
Have the following elements of the templates for the Gap Analysis and the HR Strategy and Action Plan been completed with sufficient details and quality? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gap Analysis</li><li>• HR Strategy and Action plan<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Organisational information</li><li>○ Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice</li><li>○ Actions</li></ul></li></ul>	Partly	An excellent description of the organisation is provided. The organisation describes the internal process for carrying out the Gap Analysis and Action Plan in terms of activities, people involved, agenda of the process, results. Communication seems to be one of the most important internal challenge. The process is extensively described but usefull information is sometimes missing. About the COP, working group(s), RCG, etc : - The name and level of researchers in the different working groups are to be mentionned. - The composition of the implementation group + level of researchers is missing - Not clear to understand how researchers are involved in the diffrent structures (how many groups, on what, which results) and in the implementation of the AP - Missing information on frequency of meeetings between the COP (strategical) and WG (operational). About the gap analysis (GA) : - Serious analysis - The narrative of gaps identification is based on the results of an internal survey and doesn't consider other sources of information from stakeholders involved in the process. - Documentation has to be enriched by identifying which ranges of researchers (R1 to R4) are concerned and

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their views and needs. About the Action Plan (AP): - The action plan is coherent with the gap analysis - The description of proposed actions and their responsible is too generic. To ensure quality and effectiveness of the action plan it is important to have carefully planned the process and to assign responsibility of actions to pertinent persons who can push the process and report on implementation. - Gender is not considered, whereas the organisation is clearly gender unbalanced. - Their level of internationalisation is also very low with no action for filling the gap. - It is not explained why priorities are not given to 19, 13, 6, 26 - It is not clear what is VRI view at 5 y. Should be stated. - Timeline should be updated (+1y) - Researchers must be involved in the GA and AP approval. Only the Heads of department seems to be solicited.

Quality assessment

The quality assessment evaluates the level of ambition and the quality of progress intended by the organisation.

Rate the state of achievement ("yes", "no" or "partly"). If any statements have prompted a "no" or "partly" in the evaluation, please provide recommendations:

Is the organisational information provided sufficient to understand the context in which the HR Strategy is designed?	Partly	- Describe R&D structures and their relation to external stakeholders should be appropriate - Please check your organisation data (numbers do not fit)
Is the Action Plan coherent with the Gap Analysis?	Yes	Describe the content of each action in order to be operational and provide evidence of their coherence with the gap analysis
Have a steering committee and working group been established to guarantee the implementation of the HRS4R-process?	Partly	- The narrative describes the Cop as the Director(s board, but not all its members are involved in the list provided. All composition and researcher levels must be added. - Provide info on how WG(s?) are working and interact with the COP (meeting, frequency, decision-making, update researchers approval)
Has the research community been sufficiently involved	Partly	- Researchers' participation in the WG should be permanent, so consider the integration of RCG in the WG, or explain why you

in the process, with a representation of all levels of a research career?		decided to multiply the structures - Indicate the career level of researchers involved in COP, WG and RCG (R1 to R4)
Are the relevant management departments sufficiently involved in the process so as to guarantee a solid implementation?	Partly	Membres from management departments are integrated. However there are too many responsible per action. Please appoint operational persons in charge of implementation for each action.
Have adequate targets and indicators been provided in order to demonstrate when/how an action will be/has been completed?	Partly	The action plan must increase the uptake of impact-relevant indicators with pertinent targets. This is strongly linked to the operational description of the scope of actions.
Is the organisation establishing an OTM-R policy?	Yes	There is an action for drafting the OTM-R policy.
Are the goals and ambitions sufficiently ambitious considering the context of the organization?	Partly	Some gaps identified in the OTM-R checklist cannot be found in the AP and thus should be added later in the process. The timeline covers just 2-3 years and there is no balance between short-term and long term actions. VRI should have objectives at 5y for having a better implementation of the AP.

#### General Assessment

#### **Accepted**

Pending **minor** modifications

Pending **major** revisions

#### **Explanation**

- **Accepted: This application meets the criteria and the HR award is granted.**  
The assessors might have commented on your file asking for future focus on a particular aspect/criterion, so please refer to the comments given above.

- Pending **minor** modifications: This application **broadly meets the criteria**, but the assessors have some concerns/questions about specific areas/criteria. Please reflect about the feedback given above and update your file before **re-submitting within 2 months**.
- Pending **major revisions**: This application does not meet the criteria; please make the appropriate changes taking into account the comments of the assessors before **re-submitting within 12 months**.

#### General Recommendations

If any of the above statements have prompted a "no" in the evaluation, please provide suggestions of modifications in the form below.

If the general assessment is:

- "pending minor modifications" the recommendations are split into:
  - Immediate mandatory modifications (to be implemented in order to obtain the award, resubmission within 2 months)
  - Other modifications (to be carried out during the implementation phase).
- "pending major revisions" the recommendations are split into:
  - Mandatory modifications (in order to obtain the award, resubmission within 12 months)
  - Other modifications.

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#### **Mandatory modifications \***

Researchers' opinion at large is central to the development of the HR quality process. They are a key actor and their participation in the working groups must be encouraged, stable, and permanent. This representation into the working groups should consider all levels of a research career and different areas and departments of research at the institution.

The institution must ensure institutional support, engagement and alignment with the internal strategy. The main recommendations and HRS4R actions should be integrated into the strategic plan, among other strategic issues for the institution.

- Give the name and level of researchers involved in the different working group (COP, WG, WGs; RCG; Implementation WG)

- Analyse survey's results according to the different stakeholders (level of researchers). Better explain the role of the working groups/focus groups/ etc. Staff survey does not include questions regarding principles #24 Working conditions, #25 Stability of employment, while endorsement letter says that "continuous enhancement of, amongst others, working conditions and career opportunities is one of the top priorities for VRI". These two situations arise some concerns. Principle #35 - representation in decision-making bodies is also missing, but it is crucial..

- HR Award is an item of the "O nas" (About us) menu. Clicking on HR Award we have access to five webpages in Czech, showing: work in progress, composition of working group WG and research coordination group RCG, documentation (Dokumenty), further links related to the process, and contact information. Only the "Dokumenty" page (<https://www.vri.cz/o-nas/hr-award/dokumenty/>) contains links to English versions of Questionnaire, Gap Analysis and Action Plan, which is positive.

However, a more comprehensive English version of all pages would be appreciated, especially with regards to foreign visitors. Extent of bilingual information should be carefully addressed. Action #29 foresees English translation of key internal regulations. => Create a communication webpage on HRS4R with information on the process, the COP & WG, the HR strategy and Action Plan, pertinent link to other internal plans (ie organisation plan)

- Revise actions and provide operational description/organisation :

- o 1 action, subactions, indicators/sub actions. Current AP is too "generic"

- o 1 action 1 responsible for implementation

- Address gender issues

- OTM-R self-assessment report and Recruitment & Selection analysis are sometimes contradictory in terms of state of play and responsibilities. OTM-R self-assessment report needs to be updated to better reflect the current situation and additional actions may be needed to address the gaps. Indicators for OTM-R needs to be defined.

- Provide evidence that researchers from all levels committed with the gap analysis and Action plan

### **Other modifications \***

- Add long-term actions with strategic impact to the action plan (long term goals and short term goals)

- Networking with other Czech organizations implementing the Charter and Code (e.g. MUNI - Masaryk University (<https://www.muni.cz/en/about-us/careers/why-work-at-mu>), Mendel - Mendel University (<https://mendelu.cz/en/25141-science-and-research>) is suggested to benefit of mutual experiences.

- Consider increasing the uptake of transversal skills training (lifelong learning, project management, mentoring, etc.), and promoting the career development, especially among early-stage researchers.

- Consider including Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) policies (e.g. Open Access) and practices in the organizational strategic development.

- The institution has an opportunity for aligning and integrating the HR activities into the Quality Assurance & Sustainability processes.

- The use of inclusive language (his/he,he/she) is highly recommended. Sentences like "everybody could find his reply and a comment but also could make himself a non-misrepresented picture based on the comments from his colleagues" or "Major criterion for a candidate selection is expertise, and his qualities" conveys the meaning of male only employees, which is not VRI case, and male only candidates. Please refer to the Toolkit on Gender-sensitive Communication issued by European Institute for Gender Equality for inspirational examples: [https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/20193925\\_mh0119609enn\\_pdf.pdf](https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/20193925_mh0119609enn_pdf.pdf). Moreover, considering that 66% of research staff are female researchers, VRI director and directors of the four departments are male, gender balance issues, such as, for example, career progression and representation in bodies and committees, not excluding work-life balance measures, should be taken into account more explicitly in the whole process.

If the organisation deserves to be commented on their ambition, their actions, evidence of good practice and/or their implementation process, please provide a commentary supporting this. (max. 2000 words)

All staff categories have been involved through a survey. Looking at provided figures, this employee opinion survey got a good response, with 50% of total staff, mainly researchers (93 respondents, 55%).

Gap Analysis mainly relies on survey results, which is positive.

Transparency used in describing weaknesses and critical issues such as level of empathy, sense of belonging, lack of internal communication, insufficient motivation... is appreciated.

Action Plan is ambitious, with a huge number of actions (32) that are to be detailed.

Documentation shows VRI commitment to HRS4R implementation.

The system however gives the impression of having too many structures (hierarchical) and missing representation in some strategic groups.

The overall judgment is positive, provided that suggested recommendations are implemented.