Revision of Gap analysis and Action plan after Initial Assessment

We thank revivers for valuable comments and suggestions how to improve our Action plan and furthermore implementation process.

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
Revision after Initial Assessment: 15 Feb 2022

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:

	YES / NO / PARTLY	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 committment 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. **VRI Updates:** Pages of interest for the readers were published We added info including about C&C and HRS4R, Contact person, COP, and WG composition (incl. researchers level). We added a link for suggested internal documents. A dedicated page has been added to the HR Award section that describes how to prepare and implement the HRS4R strategy. We also added information on self-development opportunities in the Careers section. All items have also been translated into a bilingual version. The Documents section has been updated with the addition of internal material to complement and support our analysis for the Action Plan.
Have the Strategy and Action Plan been published in English?	Partly	See above. **VRI Updates:** All relevant documents were translated into English, including OTM-R document, comunication sessions, results of a gap analysis, R1-R4 categorization, etc. HR Award section was updated See above.

	YES / NO / PARTLY	Recommendations
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. **VRI Updates:** An new icon has now been placed on the main page linking to the HRS4R section, which links to the HR Award section which goes into detail there. There is also a new section HRS4R whit HR Strategy and Action Plan information. The search button for the keyword HRS4R process is working properly. A link to HRS4R - Human Resources has been added to the main page in the section „Useful links".
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? • Gap Analysis • HR Strategy and Action plan o Organisational information o Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice o Actions o Implementation	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 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 reponsibility 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 explianed 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 sollicitated.

YES / NO / PARTLY	Recommendations

VRI Updates: The information has been refined into a formal application that details the process and involvement of all groups. Information about the members involved in the groups has been published together with the extent of the involvement of individual researchers and other groups. A new Cooperation section has been added to the HR Award web section, which also describes missing information in the form of published information (The composition of the implementation group + level of researchers, how researchers are involved in the different structures).

About the gap analysis (GA) : We explained how we got other information from stakeholders involved in the process in which ranges of researchers (R1 to R4) were concerned and their views and needs. We didn't just rely on a survey. We establish equivalents between VRI categorization of the research positions and linked them to EU categorization R1-R4. This categorization is mentioned in a separate document published on the VRI web page (See section **Documents** on the **VRI Web page, About Us, HR Award section**). We try as much as possible that all levels of researchers are presented in WG and RCG, not only employees working in higher management (See section **Cooperation** on the **VRI Web page, About Us, HR Award section**). The narrative of gaps identification is based not only on the results of an internal survey. We considered other sources of information from researchers of all sections. We added supportive documentation which describes their views and needs (See VRI web section **Documents** – HR Commentary, RCG Commentary on the **VRI Web page, About Us, HR Award section**) We explained how we got other information from stakeholders involved in the process in which ranges of researchers (R1 to R4) were concerned and their views and needs. We didn't just rely on a survey

About the Action Plan (AP): We revisited the description of proposed actions and their responsible persons who can push the process. We have added a new event to the AP to support activities (action 10 Gender balance in leadership and decision-making, action 9 Improving conditions Work-life balance and organizational culture) in the field of Gender and Equality according to the current internal analysis of gender equality, which we attach (See section **Documents** on the **VRI web pages – About Us – HR Award**). We better-described explanation about priorities 19, 13, 6, 26 because there was some misunderstanding about that and we tried to consider your recommendation of missing priority number 19 at AP. Through the revisited and

	YES / NO / PARTLY	Recommendations
		updated Action Plan, which has been extended as recommended into the five-year planning period, we have also shown the objectives and targets that we want to achieve. We updated the AP timeline (+1y). We explained how Researchers were involved in the GA and AP approval. See the detailed composition of the working groups and how all stakeholder groups will be involved. - section **Cooperation** on the **VRI web pages – About Us – HR Award**).

Quality assessment

The quality assessment evaluates the level of ambition and the <u>quality of progress</u> 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:

	YES / NO / PARTLY	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 organization data (numbers do not fit) **VRI Updates:** We established equivalents between VRI categorization of the research positions and linked them to EU categorization R1-R4 for better description R&D structures and their involvement in the process. We also explained how we got other information from stakeholders involved in the process in which ranges of researchers (R1 to R4) were concerned and their views and needs. This categorization is mentioned in a separate document published on the VRI web page (See section **Documents** on the **VRI Web page, About Us, HR Award section**). We try as much as possible that all levels of researchers are presented in WG and RCG, not only employees working in higher management (See section **Cooperation on the VRI Web page, About Us, HR Award section**). The way of cooperation is mentioned in a new separate document published on the VRI web page. We added to AP additional information showing an engagement of R1-R4 categories in individual actions.
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	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

	YES / NO / PARTLY	Recommendations
guarantee the implementation of the HRS4R-process?		working and interact with the COP (meeting, frequency, decision-making, update researchers approval). **VRI Updates:** All categories (R1-R4) were taken into consideration in both WG and RCG, as well as all categories were mentioned in individual action. We shown how R1-R4 categories participated in a given part of the process. Information was added on how the working group cooperates with the coordination group, which is made up of expert researchers.
Has the research community been sufficiently involved in the process, with a representation of all levels of a research career?	Partly	- Researchers' participation in the WG should be permanent, so consider the integration of RCG in the WG, or explain why you decided to multiply the structures - Indicate the career level of researchers involved in COP, WG, and RCG (R1 to R4) **VRI Updates:** See section Documents on the VRI Web page, About Us, HR Award section - HRS4R Initial and Implementation Groups - methodology of cooperation). This working and monitoring group ensures the presence of researchers from all groups (R1-R4) during the preparation and implementation phases. The RCG comments on and suggests modifications to the implementation of the HRS4R strategy and also provides feedback on the opinions of the groups that will be primarily affected by these changes. The Committee Overseeing the Process COP is designed to monitor the progress of the individual steps in the entry phase and also for the implementation phase. COP is monitoring the activities of the WG and cooperation with the RCG. It manages any changes in the process or timetable in terms of outputs from both WGs. The function and activities of the COP are fulfilled by the permanent advisory organ of the VRI Director. The COP approves the final drafts of all strategic documents required for all phases of the process. In the table, we have provided a clear description of the way in which stakeholder groups were involved in the process and the format in which they were involved or contributed to the process.
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. **VRI Updates:** In the AP we completely revisited the description of proposed actions and their responsible pertinent persons who can push the process. We stated for every action leader of each activity and their supportive co-lead which is also involved. See the revisited AP.
Have adequate targets and indicators been provided in order to demonstrate when/how an action	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.

	YES / NO / PARTLY	Recommendations
will be/has been completed?		**VRI Updates:** All indicators and targets together with a proportion of R1-R4 categories in given action are listed in AP summarizing table. The sub-actions that are planned are also divided into short-term or long-term (strategic) objectives according to the length of their implementation See section **Documents** on the **VRI Web page, About Us, HR Award section**.
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. **VRI Updates:** We have rechecked the gaps that were identified in the OTM-R checklist. We have attempted to label them and add them to the AP through sub-activities for implementation. Our main areas for the development of recruitment activities and the selection process include: Establishment of an OTM-R policy and system for recruitment and selection, Creation of a system for the adaptation of new employees, The exchange and availability of information in the field of recruitment, Optimising processes to strengthen recruitment for better management - getting feedback from employees and applicants. Based on the recommendations of the Assessment Panel, the short-term and long-term objectives were balanced and spread over a five-year period according to the requirements of the implementation activities. Sub-activities have also been optimized or merged, mainly thanks to clearly defined indicators and targets to be achieved.

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.

    -

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. **VRI Updates See below**

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. **VRI Updates Resolved as recommended**

- Give the name and level of researchers involved in the different working group (COP, WG, WGs; RCG; Implementation WG) **VRI Updates Resolved as recommended**

- 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..

VRI Updates:

#24 Working conditions The area of working conditions was summarised in the questionnaire survey with general questions for the whole Working Conditions section. The focus on improving the working environment was mainly in the last section of the survey, where open-ended questions were asked to collect valuable suggestions for improvement. The area of working conditions is supported in the updated AP (see the actions Nr. 9, 10, 13, 16, 19) and we strive for continuous development according to the presented activities

#25 Stability of employment Our legal system prohibits employers from treating fixed-term employees less favorably than permanent employees solely because they have a fixed-term employment contract unless the difference in treatment can be justified on objective grounds. We are trying to improve the quality of fixed-term employment relationships by applying the principle of non-discrimination and preventing abuses resulting from the use of successive fixed-term contracts or employment relationships. The reason for the recurrence of fixed-term employment relationships is the fact that some of the employer's positions are financed exclusively from the European Union, structural funds, grant agencies and projects financed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, and these positions are established only within the framework of the respective project and only for the duration of the project. When a given project ends at the employer, the funding provided under the relevant project for the position in question will also end, and the employer cannot be fairly required to continue to employ the employee unless the employee is assigned to another project for which the employer will be provided with funding from the above sources.

The employment contract may be concluded for a maximum period of the duration of the project and may be indefinitely extended or repeated, provided that the employee is assigned to a project financed exclusively from the European Union, structural funds, funds from providers of special-purpose support (e.g. NAZV, GACR, TACR, AZV CR, MIT, etc.) and projects financed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic and other potential providers.

This regulation is valid in the collective agreement of the VRI. For this reason, this question was not further addressed in the questionnaire survey and was not subject to further improvement in the actual Action Plan.

Principle #35 - representation in decision-making bodies

On the comments you make on point 35, we have additionally carried out an internal analysis of the current state of equal opportunities at VRI and formulated four areas for further improvement within the updated Action Plan. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making is one of them (see updated action Nr 10 AP).

- HR Award is an item of the "O nas" (About us) menu. Clicking oh 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 Analyis 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 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)

VRI Updates: The HR Award web section, including all related sub-sections, has been updated with more detailed information on the process, how individual groups are involved. All content that was in the original version only (in Czech) is now available in the bilingual version (Czech/English). The news page has been translated into English version and will continue to be kept up to date. A new page on the HRS4R strategy, the CAREER page with basic information for our employees on self-learning and development opportunities have been created. The links section has been updated with interesting and useful links that relate to the HR process and support the strategy.

- Revise actions and provide operational descriptio/organisation :

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

　o 1 action 1 responsible for implementation

- Address gender issues

VRI Updates: In the AP we completely revisited the description of proposed actions and their responsible pertinent persons who can push the process. We stated for every action leader of each activity and their supportive co-lead which is also involved. **See the revisited AP**. All indicators and targets together with proportion of R1-R4 categories in given action are listed in summarizing table. Based on the recommendations of the Assessment Panel, the short-term and long-term objectives were balanced and spread over a five-year period according to the requirements of the implementation activities. Sub-activities have also been optimised or merged, mainly thanks to clearly defined indicators and targets to be achieved.

- OTM-R self-assessment report and Recruitment & Selection analysis are sometimes contradictories in terms of state of play and responsabilites. 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

 VRI Updates: We have rechecked the gaps that were identified in the OTM-R checklist. We have attempted to label them and add them to the AP through sub-activities for implementation. Our main areas for the development of recruitment activities and the selection process include: Establishment of an OTM-R policy and system for recruitment and selection, Creation of a system

for the adaptation of new employees, The exchange and availability of information in the field of recruitment, Optimising processes to strengthen recruitment for better management - getting feedback from employees and applicants.

All outputs and identified comments and recommendations were published to all employees during the process. There was continual feedback on sub-activities and information was passed through nominated staff to the various working and coordination groups. The suggestions were discussed and commented on across all research groups. Specific input to the Steering Committee meetings was prepared as output from the meetings and drafts were prepared for agreement. The summary notes of the Steering Group, including the agreed submissions, are shared with all VRI staff. Support for the activity is therefore communicated continuously and openly across the institution.

Other modifications *

- Add long-term actions with strategic impact to the action plan (long term goals and short term goals) **Completed See the revisited AP**

- 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), Mendelu - Mendel University (https://mendelu.cz/en/25141-science-and-research) is suggested to benefit of mutual experiences.

VRI Updates: During 2020 and 2021, there were held meetings for staff of research and scientific institutions to continuously learn about the experiences of HR Award winners. We participated in these meetings as a VRI and consulted on the actual phases of the implementation process. We have taken feedback from these meetings, especially in the preparation of the initial analysis and description of the process. As a public research institution, we operate in a different format and our mission and goals are different from those of the universities. On the other hand, the experiences during the process are largely portable and we will support such kinds of meetings. For the exchange of experience with the gradual implementation of the HRS4R strategy, the meetings are beneficial and help to adapt the way and method of optimizing HR processes.

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

VRI Updates: AP Activities nr. 20, 22 and 28 are focused on supporting on-the job learning methods in relation to training methods such as mentoring, coaching, development center, presentation skills, etc.

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

VRI Updates: In the first five-year cycle of AP implementation, the key activities for us are related to the development of core HR areas, support for communication, and cooperation. Based on the defined vision and strategic direction, (including the medium-term plan for the next period) we will consider recommendations concerning RRI.

- 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 slelction 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 .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.

VRI Updates: We revisited the description of proposed actions and their responsible persons who can push the process. We have added a new event to the AP to support activities (action 10 Gender balance in leadership and decision-making, action 9 Improving conditions Work-life balance and organizational culture). In the field of Gender and Equality, we prepared an Internal **Analysis of the actual equal opportunities on VRI**, which we attach (See section **Documents on the VRI web pages – About Us – HR Award**). The four recommended areas are discussed in separate sections below, containing summaries of the Activities that are planned for implementation in the HRS4R project. All planned activities are based on the actual needs of internal analysis.
Work-life balance and organizational culture
Gender balance in leadership and decision-making
Gender equality in recruitment and career progression
Measures against gender-based violence, including mobbing bossing ect.

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, unsufficient motivation... is appreciated.

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

Documentation shows VRI committment to HRS4R implementation.

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

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