

Interim Assessment: EC Consensus Report

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Case number

2020CZ548069

Name Organisation under assessment

Veterinary Research Institute

Organisation's contact details

Hudcova 296/70, Brno, 62100, Czech Republic

Submission date of the Interim Assessment Internal Review

29/11/2024

Submission date to the European Commission

24/02/2025

Quality assessment

The quality assessment evaluates the level of ambition and the quality of progress intended by the organisation.
If any statements have prompted a "no" or "partly" in the evaluation, please provide recommendations:

	YES / NO / PARTLY	Recommendations
Has the organisational information been sufficiently updated to understand the context in which the HR Strategy is implemented?	Yes	
Does the narrative provided list goals and objectives which clearly indicate the organisation's priorities in HR-management for researchers?	Yes	
Has the organisation published an updated HR Strategy and Action Plan been updated with the actions' current status, additions and/or modifications?	Yes	The HR Excellence in Research Award is well displayed in the homepage of the Institution and the web page related to the documents https://www.vri.cz/en/about-us/hr-award/documents/ provides full information and clear evidence of the actions that have been carried out. We recommend keeping on as you have done so far.
Is the implementation of the HR strategy and Action Plan sufficiently embedded within the organisation's management structure (e.g. steering committee, operational responsibilities) so as to guarantee a solid implementation?	Yes	
Has the organisation developed an OTM-R policy?	Yes	

Strengths and weaknesses

On the basis of the information submitted and taking into account the organisation's national research context, how would you as an assessor judge the HR Strategy's **strengths and weaknesses?** (maximum 1000 words)

Strengths:

The Veterinary Research Institute (VRI) has provided an honest and transparent account of its progress in implementing the HRS4R Action Plan. Many of the initially proposed actions have been either fully or partially completed, reflecting a strong commitment to improving human resources management and fostering a supportive research environment. Despite facing challenges, VRI has actively engaged in the HRS4R process, demonstrating a clear dedication to continuous enhancement.

At the moment, it is good to have extended some actions in order to allow their implementation; however, in view of the next evaluation stem, we recommend adding some new actions to be implemented.

A key strength of VRI's approach is its commitment to improvement, evident in the detailed description of the actions and tasks, and in the structured implementation of policies and initiatives aimed at aligning with European standards. The institute has taken concrete steps to refine its human resources recruitment and management, ensuring a more transparent and efficient system for researchers.

Additionally, regular updates and enhanced communication measures play a significant role in maintaining transparency. The institute's website is consistently updated, providing current information on its activities and initiatives, which enhances both public engagement and institutional visibility. Employees are also encouraged to contribute to content, fostering a sense of collaboration while ensuring centralized quality control.

VRI's ethical oversight further strengthens its research environment, reinforcing a culture of integrity and responsibility. This commitment is reflected in the institution's well-designed Open, Transparent, and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTMR) Policy, which aligns with the highest European standards, while also integrating national legislation. This structured approach to recruitment enhances fairness and excellence in hiring processes.

Moreover, VRI has gone beyond mandatory provisions in promoting visibility and participation in the HRS4R initiative. A dedicated webpage clearly outlines the process, progress, and relevant documentation, making the institution's efforts in research excellence and human resources development highly accessible.

Overall, VRI's structured and transparent approach to human resources and research management demonstrates its commitment to fostering a high-quality, ethical, and inclusive research environment.

Weaknesses:

While VRI has made commendable progress in implementing its Action Plan, certain challenges remain and may be tackled for the benefit of the full realization of its objectives. One key weakness lies in the lack of measurable indicators, which makes it difficult to objectively monitor progress and assess the impact of implemented actions. For instance, in Task T6.2, feedback on the adaptation process is collected through an e-questionnaire, yet there is no clear mechanism to quantify user satisfaction or track meaningful improvements. Without precise, data-driven indicators, evaluating the effectiveness of initiatives remains subjective and limits opportunities for continuous enhancement.

Another area for improvement is internal communication. While the institute has taken steps to enhance transparency through its website, there remains a need for more proactive internal engagement to ensure all staff members are well-informed and actively involved in ongoing initiatives. Strengthening communication channels would help bridge gaps and reinforce collective participation in the institute's development.

Additionally, resource constraints have significantly the execution of planned activities. These constraints are further compounded by external challenges, including shifts in funding priorities, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and geopolitical instability. Such factors have necessitated changes in the timing and scope of several actions, making long-term strategic planning more complex. This is something that goes beyond the direct control of VRI, that, nonetheless, has made several efforts to implement the initially proposed actions.

If relevant, please provide suggestions for modifications or revisions to the (updated) HR strategy: (maximum 2000 words)

A key recommendation is to establish clear, measurable indicators for each action, ensuring that progress can be objectively tracked. This includes setting numerical targets that can be regularly reviewed and adjusted in response to evolving institutional priorities. Without these metrics, assessing impact and identifying areas for improvement remains a challenge.

To mitigate financial constraints, VRI should actively explore additional funding opportunities, including external grants, partnerships, and collaborative projects. Diversifying financial resources would provide greater stability and enable the full implementation of key initiatives within the Action Plan. Given existing resource limitations, it is also crucial to prioritize activities that offer the most significant impact on the institute's strategic goals and researcher support, ensuring that essential programs receive the necessary attention and investment.

During the transition period special conditions apply:

Institutions having started the HR Excellence in Research implementation prior to the publication of the OTM-R toolkit and recommendations by the European Commission (2015) may not have prioritised actions implementing the OTM-R principles yet. In this case, they should not be penalised but strong recommendations should be made to address these principles appropriately.

At this point of the INTERIM assessment, the institution does not jeopardise maintaining the HR award. Nevertheless, the institution is advised to take into account the comments and recommendations of the assessors to meet all assessment criteria at the next assessment (in 36 months).

Recommendations

Which of the below situations describes the organisation's progress most accurately? Tick the right situation and add comments/general recommendations accordingly.

HR Excellence in Research embedded



HR Excellence in Research embedded, corrective actions needed



HR Excellence in Research embedded, strong corrective actions needed



Additional comments *

VRI has demonstrated a strong commitment to the HRS4R process, making significant progress in implementing initiatives for the benefit of its research community and fostering a supportive research environment. The implementation of key actions, such as enhancing ethical oversight, strengthening transparency through regular updates, and developing a well-structured OTMR policy, reflects a dedicated effort to align with the highest European standards. Despite internal and external challenges, the institute has remained proactive in adapting to changing circumstances and ensuring continuous improvement. The progress achieved so far is commendable, and with continued dedication and a structured, adaptable approach, VRI can further enhance its research environment and support its researchers more effectively.

Explanation

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

- **HR Excellence in Research 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 HR Excellence in Research is further embedded.**