



HR Excellence in Research – Action Plan

Case number	2025RO360536
Name Organisation under review	Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului
Organisation's contact details	Calea 13 Septembrie nr. 13, Casa Academiei, et. 1, aripa de est, Bucharest, București – Ilfov, 050711, Romania

1. Organisational Information

Please provide a limited number of key figures for your organisation. Fields marked with * are compulsory.

Staff and students (Full-Time Equivalent – FTE)

Category	Value
Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, doctoral candidates either full-time or part-time involved in research *	13
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality) *	0
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation) *	2
Of whom are women *	8
Of whom are R3 or R4 = established or leading researchers with a large degree of autonomy (e.g. holding the status of principal investigator or professor) *	8.5
Of whom are R2 = recognised researcher (e.g. postdoctoral researcher, junior researcher) *	4
Of whom are R1 = first stage researcher (e.g. doctoral candidate, research apprentice) *	0.5
Total number of students (if relevant) *	0
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching, and research staff) *	19



Research funding (figures for the most recent fiscal year) €

Total annual organisational budget	423,915
Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)	410,915
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)	13,000
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	0

Organisational profile (a very brief description of your organisation, max. 100 words)

The National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism (hereafter NIST), part of the Romanian Academy, is a public research organisation dedicated to the study of totalitarian regimes and their political, social, cultural and institutional legacies. Its work combines archival research, historical analysis, oral history and interdisciplinary approaches, with a strong focus on Romania and Central and Eastern Europe. NIST contributes to scholarly knowledge through research projects, publications, conferences and academic cooperation, while also supporting public understanding of recent history. The Institute aims to foster an ethical, collaborative and increasingly open research environment for researchers at different career stages.

2. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice

Please provide an overview of the organisation in terms of the current strengths and weaknesses of the current practice under the four thematic headings of the European Charter for Researchers at your organisation.

Ethics, integrity, gender, and open science

Strengths

There is a strong culture regarding research ethics and integrity. Researchers have a positive view of ethical behaviour: 76.9 per cent said that they either agreed or strongly agreed NIST researchers adhere to the principles of honesty, objectivity and impartiality, the average score being 4.50 out of 5. There were no negative answers. This shows that ethical behaviour is part of the research culture and represents a significant institutional strength.



Research freedom is usually well protected. The extent to which research freedom is recognised and communicated received a score of 4.31 out of 5, with 84.6 per cent of respondents giving a positive answer and there being no disagreement. This point is especially important for NIST since the research it carries out involves topics that are both politically and historically sensitive. The findings show that researchers usually regard their intellectual independence and the limits set by legal or budgetary constraints as being fairly clear.

There is a strong commitment to ensuring FAIR access to research results. The digitised archival collections and research databases were given a rating of 4.42 out of 5, 84.6 per cent of the respondents being positive. It is a major advantage for a historical research institute which carries out work involving archival collections, databases, and documentary resources.

There is a strong culture that does not discriminate. Q9 achieved one of the highest scores in the whole survey, with a score of 4.73 out of 5; 76.9 per cent of the respondents gave a positive answer and there were no negative ones. This shows that there is a clear sense of an inclusive institutional environment.

Researchers are considered to be professionals. Researchers at all levels were recognised as professionals with 84.6 per cent of respondents giving a positive reply and the score being 4.15 out of 5.

The most prominent finding in the whole survey relates to the way in which research findings are communicated to the public: 4.75 out of 5, with 84.6 per cent of responses being positive. This is particularly valuable to NIST since research into communism, fascism, repression, memory and totalitarianism has broad public relevance.

Weaknesses

Gender equality has not yet been adequately incorporated into institutional structures. 53.8 per cent of the respondents believed that NIST promotes gender balance in research teams and in decision-making bodies, while 38.5 per cent chose the neutral/partial response. The open-ended responses make it specifically clear that there should be a higher representation of women in the decision-making bodies of NIST. This indicates that although the overall institutional atmosphere is seen as non-discriminatory, gender equality has not yet been reflected in adequate visible structural measures, especially as decision-making is concerned.

The plans for gender equality and the relevant measures should have greater visibility and be more formally defined. 53.8 per cent of the responses to Q8 were positive, but 23.1 per cent of the respondents chose NR/NA. The relatively high rate of NR/NA could be a sign that the researchers are not adequately familiar with the existing measures or do not clearly regard them as an institutional Gender Equality Plan. This point is important in that the survey does not prove that



such measures are missing, but it does show that their existence and implementation are not adequately visible.

It is necessary to clarify and raise awareness of unconscious bias. 46.2% of responses to Q10 were NR/NA, making it difficult to determine how systematically unconscious bias is addressed in recruitment and assessment. It should therefore be regarded as indicating both a possible gap in the procedures and a lack of awareness. Training for selection and evaluation committees might be especially useful.

Open Science incentives seem underdeveloped. 38.5 per cent of the respondents stated that NIST does offer specific frameworks or incentives for Open Access publication and for the sharing of research data. The average score was 3.64 out of 5, and 30.8 per cent of the responses were neutral or partial. The open-ended comments point to the need to better use Anelis Plus opportunities for Open Access publishing and to increase the visibility of research results. The survey clearly points out the need for training in the proper use of AI in research. For HRS4R, this could be linked to research integrity, authorship, originality, data protection, and responsible research practices.

Researchers assessment, recruitment, and progression

The survey shows a mixed result for Assessment, Recruitment, and Progression; the area has an overall weighted average of 3.74 out of 5, 50 per cent of the responses being positive, 16.3 per cent neutral or partial, 10.6 per cent disagreeing, and a relatively high proportion of 23.1 per cent marking NR/NA.

Strengths

The most notable point is recruitment. 76.9 per cent of the respondents believe that NIST's recruitment procedures are open, transparent and based on merit, the average rating being 4.00 out of 5. The job advertisements are also well regarded: 76.9 per cent of the respondents think that they fully describe the conditions, benefits and career opportunities, the average score in this case being 4.18 out of 5. This shows that NIST currently has a fairly solid basis for transparent recruitment and can build on this in relation to the OTM-R requirements.

Candidates also give positive feedback. The average rating given by candidates when they are told about their strengths and weaknesses after being selected is 4.22 out of 5, and there are no negative responses. Yet 30.8% of the respondents selected NR/NA, which indicates that a significant number of researchers may not come into contact with this practice.

There is likewise evidence to show that researchers are aware of the strategic and financial background to historical research. The degree of familiarity with strategic objectives and the



appropriate funding mechanisms was 4.09 out of 5, with no disagreements. This constitutes a good foundation for enhancing researchers' ability to produce projects and funding applications.

Weaknesses

At the same time, the results reveal weaknesses concerning how researchers are assessed and how different forms of research contribution are recognized. The question about assessment relying primarily on qualitative judgment rather than quantitative indicators received only 30.8% positive responses, while 53.8% considered implementation neutral or partial. The average score was 3.50/5. This suggests that assessment criteria may not yet be sufficiently explicit or consistently communicated, particularly regarding the qualitative dimensions of research excellence.

A major weakness lies in the recognition of various types of research output. Just 23.1% of the respondents gave a positive evaluation of the recognition of outputs such as datasets, digital archives and mentoring; the average score was only 3.00 out of 5. This point is particularly pertinent to NIST since its research profile goes beyond traditional academic publications to include archival resources, digitization, documentary work and other kinds of scholarly contribution.

The make-up of the selection committees also needs to be looked at more closely. Although 46.2% expressed a positive view of the inclusion of diverse expertise and gender balance, 23.1% were neutral and 30.8% chose NR/NA. The fact that there is no disagreement is encouraging, but the high proportion of NR/NA indicates that this practice is not sufficiently visible to all researchers.

Mobility is another significant weakness. Only 53.8% positively assessed whether appraisal recognizes geographical, sectoral, and inter-organizational mobility, while 30.8% disagreed; the average was only 3.36/5. More broadly, promotion of geographical, inter-sectoral and virtual mobility received only 3.18/5, with 30.8% disagreement.

Career progression also seems poorly structured: only 38.5% believed a 'tenure-track-like' system was in place, while 38.5% chose NR/NA; this suggests the routes and criteria for progression may not be clear or visible.

This open-ended feedback also indicates a need for more researcher positions, suggesting that limited availability affects promotion opportunities.

NIST's recruitment process is a clear advantage, especially in transparency, merit, and the quality of job information. The main weaknesses, however, concern the evaluation of research, the recognition of a variety of outputs, and mobility and career advancement. The survey indicates a need for more specific and transparent assessment criteria, as well as clearer career routes, although it acknowledges that some limitations (especially the number of research positions available) may stem from factors outside NIST's control.



Working conditions and practices

Working Conditions and Practices is a relatively strong aspect of current NIST practice, having a weighted average score of 3.94 out of 5 and 62.5 per cent positive responses; 14.4 per cent of the responses were negative.

Strengths

The main advantage lies in the stability and predictability of the working conditions. In Q26, 84.6 per cent of respondents gave positive replies and the average score was 4.08 out of 5, showing that researchers usually regard their employment environment as being stable. This kind of stability is especially pertinent to NIST's research profile, as this involves long-term historical and archival research projects.

The survey shows a high degree of awareness of intellectual-property rights and data protection. The respondents' knowledge of the relevant regulations scored 4.67 out of 5, which is one of the highest scores in the whole survey. No one gave a disagreement answer. The availability of the relevant documentation and regulations in English also received a high score of 4.36 out of 5, but there is still some scope for improvement when it comes to international accessibility and transparency.

A further advantage is that NIST promotes the public dissemination of research, a practice which achieved the highest rating in the survey, 4.75 out of 5. This shows that engagement with wider audiences and the dissemination of research are incorporated into the way research is carried out.

Flexible working arrangements are offered, with 53.8% of the respondents giving positive answers and an average score of 3.62 out of 5; this indicates that the necessary institutional foundation is in place, but the way in which they are implemented is not yet seen as fully satisfactory.

Weaknesses

The pillar's greatest weakness is the research infrastructure. Only 30.8% of respondents thought researchers have access to sufficient institutional research infrastructure, while 38.5% disagreed; the average score of 2.83 out of 5 shows this question is among the lowest in the survey. This indicates a significant institutional gap. The survey does not specify which infrastructure elements are problematic, so the issue should be framed more generally as a need to review the resources and facilities available to researchers.

Remuneration is also an issue. Although the question on fair remuneration and social-security arrangements produced a fairly positive outcome, the free comments specifically request that research salaries be raised to levels similar to those in education. This suggests a gap between meeting social-protection requirements and perceptions of salary competitiveness.



The survey also points out concerns about equitable flexible working conditions. Although flexible working arrangements are available, respondents specifically asked for non-discriminatory conditions for work-from-home arrangements, suggesting that having the option of working from home does not mean it will be implemented consistently or equitably.

Another drawback concerns institutional backing for training and mobility while employed. Respondents advocated for training in digital humanities and for institutional allowances that would enable researchers to pursue mobility without penalties. This connects working conditions directly with professional development and mobility.

The survey thus shows that the working conditions are fairly stable, although it also points out the need to improve the resources that support research.

NIST's key advantages are its job stability, its awareness of legal and data-protection requirements, its public communication, and its flexible working arrangements. The greatest disadvantage is its research infrastructure, along with concerns about remuneration, the consistent application of remote working, and the level of institutional support for training and mobility. Indeed, some of these problems, especially those concerning remuneration, stem in part from the broader framework of the Romanian Academy and must therefore be separated from issues directly under NIST's control.

Research careers and talent development

The institution should focus most on the Research Careers and Talent Development Pillar, as it has the lowest overall mark of the four areas, scoring 3.33 out of 5, with only 40.4% of respondents giving positive answers and 26.9% expressing disagreement.

Strengths

Even so, the survey points to an important institutional asset: the experience and expertise of senior researchers. 53.8% of the respondents gave a positive answer to questions about the roles of senior researchers in supervision, mentoring, project coordination, and knowledge transfer, the average score being 3.73 out of 5. This indicates that mentoring and knowledge transfer are already taking place and therefore could form the basis for a more systematic institutional approach.

There is also some evidence of career guidance, although it is not consistently available. For question Q36, 46.2% of respondents gave positive answers, with an average score of 3.23 out of 5, but 30.8% disagreed. This shows that some form of career assistance is available but is not yet sufficiently systematic or equally accessible.

The situation regarding encouraging researcher mobility is also mixed: 53.8% of respondents rated NIST's encouragement of various types of mobility as positive, but 38.5% disagreed, with an



average score of 3.38 out of 5. This finding aligns with the weaknesses noted in Pillar 2 and indicates that mobility should be part of a comprehensive career-development strategy rather than treated as a separate activity.

Weaknesses

The most obvious weakness is the lack of a sufficiently well-developed career-development strategy. Just 23.1% of the respondents said that they regarded NIST as having a career-development strategy which includes individual plans for researchers at all stages, 38.5% disagreed, and the average score was only 2.83 out of 5, one of the lowest scores in the whole survey.

This finding indicates that at present career advancement relies more on individual initiative, on informal arrangements or on the assistance of more senior colleagues than on having a steady institutional framework; the survey thus shows that there is a need for the institution to provide greater clarity with regard to career aims, professional-development requirements and opportunities for progression.

There is also a significant lack of formal training. Just 23.1% of the respondents said that they regarded the availability of regular opportunities to update their skills through formal training or workshops as positive, 38.5% disagreed and an additional 38.5% thought the implementation was only partial. The average score was 2.85 out of 5.

Open-ended feedback offers useful insights into the skills the researchers regard as important. Respondents mention the need for training in digital humanities, individual research assistance, and opportunities to take part in professional development abroad. They also request programs to improve skills in English, German, and French, or that the institution provide permanent proofreading support, to enhance the international aspect of NIST publications and projects.

A further weakness is the lack of preparation of early-career researchers for careers in fields other than academia. A positive evaluation of the measures designed to make early-career researchers aware of opportunities outside academia was given by only 38.5 per cent, 23.1 per cent disagreed and 30.8 per cent thought the implementation was only partial. This shows that career development is still mainly seen as belonging to the academic research route.

Leadership skills also need improvement: although 53.8% believed senior researchers were trained to manage teams fairly and without discrimination, 30.8% disagreed. This suggests that management and supervisory duties could benefit from more systematic preparation and training.

In the end, the open-ended comments show how important it is to have international exposure, to carry out creative work and to carry out individual research initiatives, as well as to provide support for individual projects which help researchers to develop their particular expertise. They make it



clear that researchers regard professional development not merely as general training but as a mix of individual research support, internationalization, language skills and opportunities for mobility.

NIST benefits from a strong human resource base because of the expertise of its senior researchers and its current informal mentoring and knowledge-transfer arrangements. Nevertheless, career development has not yet been adequately institutionalized. The most significant shortcomings are in individual career-development planning, providing regular formal training, offering systematic career guidance, providing opportunities outside the academic environment, leadership development, and internationalization support. Individual career development therefore should be a high priority in the HRS4R Action Plan.

3. Actions

The Action Plan and HR Excellence in Research strategy must be published in an easily accessible location of the organisation's website.

Please fill in the list of all individual actions to be undertaken in your organisation's HR Excellence in Research strategy to address the weaknesses or strengths identified in the gap analysis. It is recommended that the listed actions are concise but detailed enough for the assessors to determine the level of ambition, engagement, and planning for the implementation process. Please ensure that you provide a detailed plan, with precise and quantifiable KPIs, not just an enumeration of the institution's action.

Action 1

Proposed action	The ethics commission will organize regular training sessions with the research staff, in order to discuss and clarify the new ethics principles, as presented in the NIST Code of Ethics in Research, the Commission of Ethics Regulations, as well as the Rules for Internal Conduct. The ethics commission will synthesize the clarifications derived from these discussions and will upload them, together with other relevant information, in a dedicated section of the NIST website.
GAP Principle(s)	(+/-) 1. ETHICS AND RESEARCH INTEGRITY
Timing	Q4/2026, Q1-2/2027
Responsible Unit	Scientific Council; Ethics Commission; IT Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of new or updated documents/year. Number of users/year. Number of training sessions organized/year. Number of participants to the training sessions/year.



Action 2

Proposed action	Creating and updating the section dedicated to information on ethical principles application and Commission of Ethics activity on the institute's website dedicated section (Etica si practica cercetarii // Research Ethics and Practice).
GAP Principle(s)	(+/-) 1. ETHICS AND RESEARCH INTEGRITY
Timing	Q3-4/2026, Q1-2/2027
Responsible Unit	Ethics Commission; IT Department; Scientific Council.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of new or updated documents/year. Number of users per year.

Action 3

Proposed action	Research practices should be documented and disseminated through a specific procedure. Drafting PS – System Procedure – Research process & practice and posting it on the institute's website, in the dedicated section (Etica si practica cercetarii // Research Ethics and Practice).
GAP Principle(s)	(+/-) 2. FREEDOM OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH (--) 8. SUSTAINABILITY OF RESEARCH
Timing	Q1-2/2027
Responsible Unit	Internal Control Management System Committee; Scientific Council; Head of Research Department; IT Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of documents available within the dedicated web section. Number of users per year / target 100 users per year.

Action 4

Proposed action	Supporting researchers to perform research activities in research projects other than the NIST research programs they were assigned to (identifying legal solutions to allow researchers to work outside their designated research programs).
GAP Principle(s)	(+/-) 2. FREEDOM OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH



	(-/+) 6. THE RESEARCHER (-/+) 7. FREE CIRCULATION OF RESEARCHERS (-/+) 19. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Timing	Q1-2/2027
Responsible Unit	Research Council; Head of Research Department; HR Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of researchers involved in research activities not specific to their research program / per year. Number of external research projects involving NIST researchers/year.

Action 5

Proposed action	Providing training sessions on data confidentiality and protection of intellectual property rights. Uploading documents derived from these sessions to the NIST website dedicated section (Etica si practica cercetarii // Research Ethics and Practice).
GAP Principle(s)	(+/-) 1. ETHICS AND RESEARCH INTEGRITY (+/-) 3. OPEN SCIENCE (-/+) 13. WORKING CONDITIONS, FUNDING AND SALARIES (+/-) 15. CONTRACTUAL AND LEGAL OBLIGATIONS
Timing	Q1-4/2027
Responsible Unit	Scientific Council; Ethics Commission; IT Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of new or updated documents/year. Number of users/year. Number of training sessions organized/year. Number of participants to the training sessions/year.

Action 6

Proposed action	Organizing training sessions on various grant schemes, grant applications, and grant budget configuration.
GAP Principle(s)	(+/-) 1. ETHICS AND RESEARCH INTEGRITY (+/-) 2. FREEDOM OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH (-/+) 6. THE RESEARCHER (-/+) 7. FREE CIRCULATION OF RESEARCHERS (-/+) 13. WORKING CONDITIONS, FUNDING AND SALARIES



	(+/-) 15. CONTRACTUAL AND LEGAL OBLIGATIONS (-/+) 17. VALUING DIVERSE RESEARCH CAREERS (-/+) 19. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (-/+) 20. SUPERVISION AND MENTORING
Timing	Q1-4/2027
Responsible Unit	Scientific Council; Financial Department; HR Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of training sessions organized/year. Number of participants to the training sessions/year. Number of grant applications/year.

Action 7

Proposed action	Making the journal edited by NIST, Totalitarianism Archives, available in Open Access on the digital platform „e-Totalitarism”.
GAP Principle(s)	(+/-) 3. OPEN SCIENCE (+/-) 16. DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION OF RESULTS
Timing	Q3-4/2027
Responsible Unit	Editorial Committee of Totalitarianism Archives; Scientific Council; Financial Department; IT Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of visitors/year; number of downloaded articles/year.

Action 8

Proposed action	Continuing the digitization program of NIST publications, and enriching the educational materials section dedicated to high school students (Resurse educationale // Educational Resources), and its integration into the „e-Totalitarism” digital platform.
GAP Principle(s)	(+/-) 3. OPEN SCIENCE (+/-) 16. DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION OF RESULTS
Timing	Q3-4/2026, Q1-4/2027
Responsible Unit	NIST Management; NIST Publishing House; IT Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of visitors/year; number of downloaded articles/year; number of accessible & searchable items/year.



Action 9

Proposed action	Training sessions on the GEP (Gender Equality Plan) to familiarize NIST researchers and administrative staff with its principles and to identify practical measures to improve work-life balance.
GAP Principle(s)	(+/-) 4. GENDER EQUALITY (+/-) 5. EMBRACING DIVERSITY (-/+) 6. THE RESEARCHER
Timing	Q3-4/2027
Responsible Unit	Administrative Council; HR Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of training sessions.

Action 10

Proposed action	Revision of internal procedures for recruitment and promotion in order to identify and combat possible unconscious biases at NIST.
GAP Principle(s)	(+/-) 5. EMBRACING DIVERSITY (-/+) 6. THE RESEARCHER (+/-) 10. RECRUITMENT (+/-) 11. SELECTION (-/+) 12. CAREER PROGRESSION
Timing	Q3-4/2027
Responsible Unit	Internal Control Management System Committee; Scientific Council; HR Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of documents revised.

Action 11

Proposed action	Hiring new researchers (on non-permanent positions) by attracting additional funding, with open research positions. Involving PhD students enrolled at the NIST PhD School in the research programs developed by NIST.
GAP Principle(s)	(+/-) 5. EMBRACING DIVERSITY



	(+/-) 10. RECRUITMENT (+/-) 11. SELECTION (-/+) 12. CAREER PROGRESSION
Timing	On a permanent basis, depending on the opened calls.
Responsible Unit	Scientific Council; Head of Research Department; HR Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of attracted grants/year; number of attracted researchers on temporary positions; number of PhD students involved in NIST research programs/year.

Action 12

Proposed action	Supporting the free circulation of researchers by improving the internal regulations regarding flexible working conditions (part-time work, remote work, hybrid work, project-based work) for research activities, in accordance with national and European legislation.
GAP Principle(s)	(-/+) 7. FREE CIRCULATION OF RESEARCHERS (--) 9. RESEARCHERS' ASSESSMENT (-/+) 12. CAREER PROGRESSION (-/+) 13. WORKING CONDITIONS, FUNDING AND SALARIES (+/-) 16. DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION OF RESULTS (-/+) 17. VALUING DIVERSE RESEARCH CAREERS (-/+) 19. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Timing	Q1-2/2027
Responsible Unit	Scientific Council; Administrative Council; Head of Research Department; HR Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of improved internal regulations on remote working for research activities; number of researchers benefiting from flexible working conditions.

Action 13

Proposed action	Creation of the digital platform „e-Totalitarianism”, offering a digital library with advanced research functions (using AI tools for text recognition – OCR) for NIST publications.
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GAP Principle(s)	(+/-) 3. OPEN SCIENCE (-) 8. SUSTAINABILITY OF RESEARCH (+/-) 16. DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION OF RESULTS
Timing	Q3-4/2028
Responsible Unit	Scientific Council; IT Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of visitors/year; number of digital queries/year.

Action 14

Proposed action	Creation of searchable databases, populated with content derived from the research undertaken within the NIST research programs, integrated into the digital platform „e-Totalitarism”.
GAP Principle(s)	(+/-) 3. OPEN SCIENCE (+/-) 16. DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION OF RESULTS (-/+) 19. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Timing	Q3-4/2028
Responsible Unit	Scientific Council; Scientific Secretary; IT Department; Coordinators of the research programs.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of databases/year; number of unique visitors; number of digital queries.

Action 15

Proposed action	Further development of international partnerships, for the development of common research projects and collaborative grant applications.
GAP Principle(s)	(-/+) 6. THE RESEARCHER (-/+) 7. FREE CIRCULATION OF RESEARCHERS (-/+) 18. CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND ADVICE (-/+) 19. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Timing	On a permanent basis. Q4/2026, 2027, 2028, 2029.
Responsible Unit	Scientific Council; HR Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of international partnerships/year; number of common grant applications/year.



Action 16

Proposed action	Offering training sessions to improve the digital skills of NIST research personnel, in order to familiarize them with the creation and use of databases and with AI-assisted research.
GAP Principle(s)	(+/-) 1. ETHICS AND RESEARCH INTEGRITY (+/-) 3. OPEN SCIENCE (+/-) 16. DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION OF RESULTS (-/+) 19. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Timing	Q3-4/2028
Responsible Unit	Scientific Council; Head of Research Department; HR Department; IT Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of training sessions/year; number of participants/year.

Action 17

Proposed action	Offering training sessions to explain in detail the new regulations implemented at NIST for the evaluation of researchers' performance, in accordance with the latest national legislation, in order to facilitate a better understanding of the possibilities for career progression at NIST. To support these training sessions, clearer internal guidance will be prepared, explaining research grades, promotion pathways, eligibility conditions, assessment criteria and procedural steps, so as to clarify the connections between performance evaluation, promotion exams and the availability of approved research positions.
GAP Principle(s)	(-/+) 6. THE RESEARCHER (--) 9. RESEARCHERS' ASSESSMENT (-/+) 12. CAREER PROGRESSION (-/+) 13. WORKING CONDITIONS, FUNDING AND SALARIES (++) 14. STABILITY OF EMPLOYMENT (+/-) 15. CONTRACTUAL AND LEGAL OBLIGATIONS (-/+) 17. VALUING DIVERSE RESEARCH CAREERS (-/+) 18. CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND ADVICE



Timing	Q1-4/2027
Responsible Unit	Scientific Council; Head of Research Department; HR Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of training sessions/year; number of participants/year; number of support documents/year.

Action 18

Proposed action	In order to improve supervision and mentoring practices, NIST will better document existing practices by identifying mentors/contact persons for early-career researchers, encouraging periodic mentoring discussions, and preparing short internal guidance on supervision, feedback and fair team management, within existing resources.
GAP Principle(s)	(-/+) 13. WORKING CONDITIONS, FUNDING AND SALARIES (-/+) 18. CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND ADVICE (-/+) 19. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (-/+) 20. SUPERVISION AND MENTORING
Timing	Q3-4/2028
Responsible Unit	Scientific Council; HR Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of mentoring discussions/year; number of support documents/year; number of participants in the training sessions.

Action 19

Proposed action	Creation of a PhD School at NIST (within the broader framework of the Doctoral School of the Romanian Academy), in order to train young researchers with the specific skills needed for NIST's general research programs and goals.
GAP Principle(s)	(-/+) 18. CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND ADVICE (-/+) 20. SUPERVISION AND MENTORING
Timing	Q3-4/2030
Responsible Unit	Scientific Council.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of PhD students/year; number of PhD mentors/year.



Action 20

Proposed action	Development of a monthly internal newsletter on training, conference and mobility opportunities, encouraging knowledge-sharing after participation in events and supporting access to external grants, partnerships and free digital learning resources.
GAP Principle(s)	(+/-) 3. OPEN SCIENCE (-/+) 7. FREE CIRCULATION OF RESEARCHERS (-/+) 12. CAREER PROGRESSION (-/+) 13. WORKING CONDITIONS, FUNDING AND SALARIES (+/-) 16. DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION OF RESULTS (-/+) 17. VALUING DIVERSE RESEARCH CAREERS (-/+) 18. CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND ADVICE (-/+) 19. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Timing	Q1-2/2028
Responsible Unit	Scientific Council; Head of Research Department; HR Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Number of newsletters/year; number of participants in external training opportunities/year.

Action 21

Proposed action	Conduct a research infrastructure needs assessment by distributing a brief annual questionnaire to researchers, asking them to identify deficiencies in hardware, software, databases, digitization facilities, archival resources, and digital research tools. Needs will be classified as essential, desirable, or long-term.
GAP Principle(s)	(+/-) 3. OPEN SCIENCE (-/+) 6. THE RESEARCHER (-/+) 13. WORKING CONDITIONS, FUNDING AND SALARIES
Timing	Q4/2026; on an annual basis thereafter.
Responsible Unit	NIST Management; Financial Department; HRS4R Working Group.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Annual Infrastructure Needs Report; ≥80% of researchers invited to provide input.



Action 22

Proposed action	Developing a prioritized research infrastructure improvement plan. Based on the needs assessment, NIST will prepare a prioritized list of infrastructure investments, identifying which needs can be addressed through the NIST/Romanian Academy budget and which require external funding.
GAP Principle(s)	(-/+) 6. THE RESEARCHER (-/+) 13. WORKING CONDITIONS, FUNDING AND SALARIES
Timing	Q1-2/2027
Responsible Unit	NIST Management; Financial Department; Romanian Academy, where relevant.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Prioritised investment list approved; progress against priorities reviewed annually.

Action 23

Proposed action	Standardize candidate feedback by introducing a standard post-selection communication template, described in an Operational Procedure on Feedback. Where appropriate and allowed by the rules, candidates should receive information on the outcome and on the general strengths and areas for improvement identified during assessment.
GAP Principle(s)	(+/-) 10. RECRUITMENT (+/-) 11. SELECTION
Timing	Q3-4/2027
Responsible Unit	NIST Management; Internal Control Management System Committee; HR Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	The Operational Procedure on Feedback during the selection process adopted.

Action 24

Proposed action	Introduce an annual training-needs survey. Each year, NIST's researchers will be asked to identify 3–5 priority skills they would like
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	to develop. The results will be used to prepare the annual training program.
GAP Principle(s)	(-/+) 6. THE RESEARCHER (-/+) 12. CAREER PROGRESSION (-/+) 13. WORKING CONDITIONS, FUNDING AND SALARIES (-/+) 18. CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND ADVICE (-/+) 19. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Timing	Q3-4/2027
Responsible Unit	NIST Management; Internal Control Management System Committee; Scientific Council; Financial Department; HR Department; Head of Research Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Annual training-needs survey applied; $\geq 70\%$ researcher participation.

Action 25

Proposed action	Introduce Individual Development Plans (IDPs). A one- or two-page Individual Development Plan template will be developed, covering research objectives, publications, skills to develop, training needs, mobility, networking and career objectives. Each researcher will be invited to review the plan annually with their supervisor/mentor.
GAP Principle(s)	(+/-) 2. FREEDOM OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH (-/+) 6. THE RESEARCHER (-/+) 12. CAREER PROGRESSION (++) 14. STABILITY OF EMPLOYMENT (-/+) 18. CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND ADVICE (-/+) 19. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (-/+) 20. SUPERVISION AND MENTORING
Timing	Q3-4/2027
Responsible Unit	NIST Management; Scientific Council; Head of Research Department; HR Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	IDP template approved; $\geq 60\%$ of researchers have an IDP by end-2028; annual review thereafter.



Action 26

Proposed action	A low-cost Sustainability and Sustainable Research Framework will be developed and implemented to promote the responsible use of paper, electricity, and other office resources. The framework will encourage increased adoption of digital documents and workflows, sustainable management of research materials and archives, and greater awareness of the connections between NIST's research activities and the UN 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. Where relevant and feasible, sustainability considerations will be integrated into research planning and institutional decision-making.
GAP Principle(s)	(--) 8. SUSTAINABILITY OF RESEARCH
Timing	Q3-4/2027, Q1-2/2028
Responsible Unit	NIST Management; the Administrative Council; HRS4R Working Group; Head of Research Department; Financial Department.
Indicator(s) / Target(s)	Sustainability Framework adopted; practical guidance made available to staff and published on the NIST website; at least one awareness-raising activity organised annually; sustainability considerations included in relevant research planning/decision-making processes; annual review of measures implemented.

Unselected principles – link to OTM-R

The establishment of an open recruitment policy is a key element in the strategy for the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers.

The process of recruitment and selection of academic staff at NIST follows the principles of open, transparent and merit-based recruitment, as established by national and European regulations, with certain limitations. The analysis of the existing OTM-R practices and regulations governing the recruitment and evaluation process of the RDI personnel at NIST highlighted various aspects that can be improved in accordance with the European Charter for Researchers. The OTM-R checklist underlined that improvements are needed in the area of digitalizing the entire advertising and recruitment process (including the use of EURAXESS tools), in order to reduce the bureaucratic burden for candidates and to encourage foreign researchers to apply. This analysis also indicated the need to improve the working conditions and environment. In addition, the Action Plan undertook measures to improve various aspects derived from the GAP Analysis pertaining to better working conditions (non-discriminatory practices in assuring flexible working conditions), formal



training and improvement of the digital skills of the RDI personnel, other training formats, mobility of the researchers, and career-development support. For all these aspects, please see actions no. 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 in the Action Plan.

If your organisation already has a recruitment strategy which implements the principles of OTM-R, please provide the web link where this strategy can be found on your organisation's website.

URL	https://totalitarism.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/INST_Regulament-concurs_examen_2025_FINAL.pdf
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4. Implementation

General overview of the expected overall implementation process of the action plan

The National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism (NIST), part of the Romanian Academy, will implement the HRS4R Action Plan through a phased, participatory, and monitored process covering 26 actions. These actions address the main areas identified through the internal gap analysis, focusing on research ethics and integrity, Open Science, gender equality and diversity, sustainability of research, recruitment and career progression, working conditions and research infrastructure, professional development, mobility, supervision, and mentoring.

NIST management will coordinate implementation with the Scientific Council, the HRS4R Working Group, and relevant administrative and research units, including the Internal Control Management System Committee, HR, Financial, and IT functions. When actions depend on decisions or resources outside NIST's direct competence, especially those involving the Romanian Academy, the Institute will prepare and communicate documented proposals and follow their implementation through the appropriate institutional channels. The HRS4R Working Group and NIST management will periodically review implementation against the agreed timetable and indicators. Progress will be documented annually, and any delays, low participation, or implementation difficulties will be identified and addressed through corrective measures. The Action Plan will be treated as a living management instrument rather than a static list of commitments.

Implementation will follow a participatory approach. Researchers and research-related staff will be involved through consultations, surveys, training-needs assessments, and feedback mechanisms. Their input is important for identifying infrastructure and training needs, assessing the impact of new procedures, and reviewing career-development measures. The Action Plan establishes researcher participation in the annual infrastructure assessment and aims to invite at least 80% of researchers to provide input.



The HRS4R principles will be progressively integrated into NIST's internal policies, procedures, and research-management practices. NIST will ensure the Action Plan's sustainability by integrating successful measures into regular institutional practice. New or revised procedures on ethics, recruitment, selection, assessment, career progression, flexible working, professional development, and supervision will be reviewed against relevant HRS4R principles. Particular attention will ensure the HRS4R approach is consistent with national legislation and the Romanian Academy's institutional framework.

The principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) will be supported through reviewing recruitment and promotion procedures, measures addressing unconscious bias, transparent selection practices, and standardized candidate feedback. The Action Plan provides for adopting an operational procedure for feedback during the selection process in 2027.

The implementation will be based on well-defined responsibilities, specific timelines, measurable indicators, and continuous monitoring. The 26 actions will be allocated to the appropriate NIST departments and carried out in phases. The HRS4R Working Group will monitor progress, record results, and address delays or risks through corrective action to ensure the overall HRS4R objectives are achieved.

The Action Plan will be implemented progressively, according to the timelines established for each action.

The initial phase (2026–2027) will focus mainly on establishing the institutional and procedural foundations for the HRS4R strategy. This includes strengthening the dissemination of research ethics and integrity principles, documenting research practices, providing training on data confidentiality and intellectual property, improving access to Open Science resources, continuing digitization activities, conducting the first annual assessment of research infrastructure needs, and reviewing internal procedures concerning recruitment, promotion, flexible working arrangements and candidate feedback. This phase will also introduce training on grant opportunities and research funding, as well as measures supporting gender equality and work-life balance. The annual training-needs survey and the development of Individual Development Plans (IDPs) will provide an important basis for the subsequent career-development measures. The Action Plan specifically establishes the first infrastructure needs assessment for Q4 2026 and annual repetition thereafter.

The second phase (2028) will consolidate these measures and strengthen the digital, professional-development, and international dimensions of the strategy. Planned activities include developing the e-Totalitarianism digital platform, creating searchable research databases, training in digital skills and AI-assisted research, introducing a regular internal newsletter covering training, conferences, and mobility opportunities, and formalizing supervision and mentoring practices. These actions will create a more structured research environment and increase visibility, accessibility, and



international use of NIST research outputs. The Action Plan also foresees the ongoing development of international partnerships and collaborative grant applications.

The longer-term phase will include developing a PhD School at NIST within the broader framework of the Romanian Academy Doctoral School. This action is planned for 2030 and is intended to provide young researchers with skills relevant to NIST's research programs and priorities.

Progress will be monitored through the indicators and targets defined for each action. These include the number of training sessions and participants, revised or newly adopted procedures and documents, the number of researchers benefiting from specific measures, participation in mobility and training opportunities, the number of international partnerships and grant applications, use of digital resources, and uptake of Individual Development Plans. For example, the IDP action sets a target that at least 60% of researchers will have an IDP by the end of 2028, followed by annual review. Annual monitoring, researcher feedback, and periodic assessment will identify which actions need continuation, adaptation, or further development. Implementation will provide evidence for the next HRS4R assessment and future action plan updates.

Overall, the implementation process aims to progressively transform identified gaps into sustainable institutional practices while building on NIST's strengths in research ethics, research freedom, public dissemination, research stability, and senior researchers' expertise. The process will combine institutional responsibility, researcher participation, measurable targets, and continuous review to establish and maintain a supportive, transparent, and sustainable research environment aligned with the European Charter for Researchers.

How will the implementation committee and/or steering group regularly oversee progress?

NIST management will oversee the implementation of the HRS4R Action Plan in cooperation with the Scientific Council and NIST's HRS4R Working Group. The Working Group will coordinate implementation, while the institutional units responsible for individual actions will provide the information and evidence needed for monitoring.

Progress will be reviewed at least annually and more frequently when actions require coordination between units or have specific deadlines. Each unit will report on its actions, completed activities, outputs, indicators achieved, and any difficulties.

Monitoring will cover individual actions and the coherence of the Action Plan as a whole. Particular attention will be given to actions with recurring or long-term components, including the annual infrastructure needs assessment, training-needs assessment, international partnerships, professional-development activities, and Individual Development Plans. The infrastructure action explicitly provides for an annual assessment and review of progress against priorities.



NIST's HRS4R Working Group will maintain an implementation overview using a simple status system: completed, in progress, delayed, or requiring corrective action. If an action is delayed or an indicator is not achieved, NIST will analyze the reasons and propose corrective measures.

When implementation depends on the Romanian Academy or another authority, NIST will clearly distinguish between matters within its responsibility and those requiring higher-level action. NIST will submit proposals, requests, or documented needs through appropriate channels.

NIST will document monitoring results and use them to inform subsequent implementation decisions, revisions to the Action Plan, and preparation for the next HRS4R assessment.

How do you intend to involve the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?

NIST researchers will be actively engaged throughout the HRS4R Action Plan's implementation. NIST will use consultations, surveys, training, feedback, and direct discussions to ensure the plan addresses actual research and career development needs. Researchers will contribute to initiatives related to research infrastructure, professional development, working conditions, recognition of diverse research careers, and career development. This approach ensures researchers are active participants in developing, implementing, and evaluating HRS4R measures, not just recipients.

Annual needs assessments will allow researchers to identify priorities and evaluate implemented measures. For infrastructure, researchers will be invited to highlight needs related to hardware, software, databases, digitization, archival resources, and digital research tools, with at least 80% participation targeted. A similar process will apply to professional development. The annual training-needs survey will ask researchers to select three to five priority skills, aiming for at least 70% participation. Survey results will directly inform the annual training program. Researchers will also engage through training sessions, mentoring, and feedback on procedures, guidance, and grant-related activities. Individual Development Plans will provide a structured way for researchers and supervisors or mentors to discuss research objectives, skills, training needs, mobility, networking, and career goals.

The Scientific Council, NIST management, HR, financial, and IT departments, the research programme coordinator, and other relevant bodies will contribute within their areas of responsibility. The Romanian Academy and external partners will be involved when broader cooperation, external funding, or decisions beyond NIST's authority are required.



How do you proceed with the alignment of organisational policies with the HR Excellence in Research award process? (To be recognised in the organisation's research strategy as the overarching HR policy.)

NIST will progressively incorporate HRS4R principles into its policies, procedures, and research management practices. The Action Plan will provide a structured framework for implementing the European Charter for Researchers through targeted measures in ethics, Open Science, research sustainability, recruitment, career progression, working conditions, professional development, mobility, supervision, and mentoring.

Alignment will primarily be achieved through the development, review, and dissemination of internal procedures and guidance. The Action Plan currently addresses research practices and ethics, sustainability, recruitment and promotion, flexible working arrangements, candidate feedback, professional development, and career progression. For instance, NIST will implement a procedure to provide candidate feedback during the selection process.

New or revised procedures will be assessed for compliance with relevant HRS4R principles and national legislation. NIST will also consider the institutional framework of the Romanian Academy. If an issue falls outside NIST's authority, the Institute will identify the appropriate governing body and communicate documented proposals or requirements as necessary.

The HRS4R process will not be managed as an independent project. Instead, its principles will be embedded within ongoing activities such as recruitment, research management, training, infrastructure planning, career development, Open Science, and supervision. Monitoring outcomes and collecting researcher feedback will identify policies and practices requiring improvement. NIST will systematically incorporate effective measures into its standard practices. This approach will support a coherent, sustainable strategy to improve researchers' working conditions and career development.

How will you ensure that the proposed actions are implemented?

Four main mechanisms will support implementation: clear responsibility, set timelines, measurable indicators, and regular monitoring.

Each of the 26 actions in the Action Plan has assigned responsible institutional units and an implementation period. This creates a direct link between each HRS4R commitment and the institutional body delivering it. The Scientific Council, NIST management, HR, Financial and IT Departments, the Research Department, and research program coordinators will contribute according to each action's nature.

Implementation will be phased. The first stage will establish or strengthen procedures and mechanisms related to ethics, research practices, Open Science, recruitment, flexible working,



research infrastructure, and training. Later stages will consolidate digitalisation, international cooperation, professional development, mentoring, and career-development measures. The Action Plan also includes longer-term institutional development, such as the proposed creation of a PhD School within the Romanian Academy Doctoral School framework.

The responsible units will document implementation through the evidence associated with the indicators defined for each action. These may include adopted procedures, training records, participation figures, infrastructure reports, digital resources, mentoring records, international partnerships and Individual Development Plans.

NIST will use existing institutional resources whenever possible. If additional resources, external funding, or decisions by the Romanian Academy are needed, the relevant needs will be documented and submitted through appropriate institutional channels. This approach is especially important for infrastructure, additional research positions, and activities requiring external funding.

The HRS4R Working Group will identify implementation risks and delays and will propose corrective measures when necessary. Changes to the timetable may be made where justified by institutional, legal or financial circumstances, while preserving the underlying HRS4R objectives.

How will you monitor progress (timeline)?

NIST will monitor progress against the timelines established for each of the 26 actions, combining short-, medium-, and long-term implementation horizons. The timetable will provide a structured framework for sequencing activities, identifying dependencies and assessing whether actions are progressing as planned.

2026–2027 will constitute the foundation phase. Priority will be given to establishing the institutional and procedural basis for HRS4R implementation. Key activities include strengthening ethics and research integrity, documenting research practices, advancing Open Science and digitisation, reviewing recruitment and selection procedures, improving flexible working arrangements, assessing research infrastructure needs, identifying training priorities, and establishing clearer mechanisms for career development. The first research infrastructure needs assessment is scheduled for Q4 2026 and will be repeated annually, providing an ongoing basis for identifying and prioritising infrastructure requirements.

In 2028, NIST will focus on consolidation and further development. Building on the procedures and mechanisms established during the foundation phase, NIST will advance activities to strengthen researchers' professional development and the research environment. These include an internal newsletter on training, conferences, and mobility opportunities; further development of digital research resources; training in digital skills and AI-assisted research; and more systematic supervision and mentoring. The consolidation phase will also provide an opportunity to review the



effectiveness of measures introduced during 2026–2027 and address any implementation gaps identified through monitoring.

Longer-term implementation includes the proposed establishment of a PhD School at NIST within the broader Romanian Academy framework, currently scheduled for the second semester of 2030. This action depends on the Romanian Academy's institutional and regulatory framework and will therefore be monitored in line with the progress of the relevant approval and implementation processes.

The HRS4R Working Group will maintain an overview of the implementation status of all 26 actions and will review progress at least annually. Responsible units will provide information and supporting evidence concerning activities undertaken, outputs achieved and indicators reached. For monitoring purposes, each action will be classified according to its implementation status, such as completed, ongoing, delayed or requiring corrective intervention. This approach will allow NIST to identify emerging difficulties early and determine whether additional measures are required.

Annual monitoring will distinguish between delays NIST can address through its own organizational measures and those caused by external institutional, regulatory, or financial dependencies. Where implementation depends on decisions, resources, or procedures beyond NIST's direct competence, such dependencies will be documented and considered when assessing progress.

The timetable will function not simply as a list of deadlines but as a management and monitoring tool supporting the systematic implementation of the HRS4R Action Plan. When adjustments to the initial schedule are justified, the reasons and revised timeframe will be documented and incorporated into subsequent monitoring cycles. This will ensure timing changes do not disrupt the overall implementation process or compromise achievement of the HRS4R objectives.

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

NIST will demonstrate progress toward the next HRS4R assessment through quantitative indicators, qualitative evidence, and researcher feedback. This approach will enable NIST to assess not only whether the planned activities have been completed, but also whether they have contributed to clearer procedures, greater accessibility, increased participation, and the gradual institutionalisation of HRS4R principles.

Quantitative indicators will provide objective evidence of implementation. Depending on the action, these may include the number of training and awareness sessions held and participants involved; new or revised procedures, guidelines, and institutional documents; participation rates in surveys and professional development activities; researchers benefiting from relevant working arrangements; international partnerships and grant applications; digital resources created and their



usage; mentoring and supervision activities; and the adoption and regular review of Individual Development Plans (IDPs).

The Action Plan sets specific, measurable targets for key activities, providing clear reference points for progress assessment. NIST aims to invite at least 80% of researchers to the annual research infrastructure needs assessment, achieve at least 70% participation in the annual training-needs survey, and ensure at least 60% of researchers have an Individual Development Plan by the end of 2028, with annual review thereafter. The bodies responsible for HRS4R will also assess the qualitative development of relevant institutional mechanisms.

Quantitative results will be supported by documentary and qualitative evidence demonstrating the substance of implementation. This may include approved or revised procedures, guidance documents, training materials, records of consultations and researcher engagement, infrastructure needs reports, mentoring and supervision records, and evidence of the creation, accessibility, or use of digital research resources. Where appropriate, evidence will also show how measures have been integrated into regular institutional practices rather than remaining isolated activities.

For each action, the responsible unit will collect and maintain relevant evidence and provide it to the HRS4R Working Group for monitoring. The Working Group will consolidate this information, compare results with the objectives and targets in the Action Plan, and identify areas where implementation has met expectations or where further attention is needed.

Progress assessment will not rely solely on the number of activities completed. NIST will also consider whether measures have improved the clarity and accessibility of institutional procedures, strengthened researcher participation, increased access to professional development opportunities, and more consistently embedded HRS4R principles in daily practice. Researcher feedback will complement numerical indicators and documentary evidence, offering an additional perspective on the relevance and effectiveness of implemented measures.

If an indicator or target is not achieved, NIST will document the reasons and assess their impact on the relevant action. Corrective measures may include adapting the implementation approach, extending the timeframe, clarifying responsibilities, or identifying additional resources. This evidence-based approach will enable NIST to demonstrate progress and lessons learned, supporting continuous improvement of the HRS4R strategy beyond the next assessment cycle.

Additional remarks/comments about the proposed implementation process

The proposed implementation process matches NIST's size, institutional profile, and resources while providing a realistic framework to address weaknesses identified in the internal Gap Analysis. The Action Plan includes 26 actions covering ethics and research integrity, Open Science, sustainability, gender equality and diversity, recruitment and selection, career progression, working



conditions, research infrastructure, professional development, supervision and mentoring, digitalisation, and international cooperation. These actions are not isolated but mutually reinforcing measures that contribute to gradually developing a more transparent, supportive, and sustainable research environment.

An important consideration for implementation is NIST's institutional and financial context. The Action Plan prioritises measures that can be implemented through existing organisational structures and resources while recognising that some developments depend on additional funding, national regulations, or decisions within the wider Romanian Academy framework. This is especially relevant to research infrastructure, creating additional research positions, and the proposed establishment of a PhD School. When implementation depends on factors outside NIST's direct competence, the Institute will document the needs, communicate proposals through appropriate institutional channels, and distinguish these dependencies from actions NIST can implement directly.

The implementation process is deliberately progressive rather than front-loaded. The 2026–2027 period establishes the strategy's procedural and organizational foundations, including measures on ethics, research practices, Open Science, recruitment, flexible working, infrastructure, training, and career development. The 2028 phase builds on these foundations with digital research resources, AI-assisted research training, professional development activities, internal communication, and more systematic supervision and mentoring. Longer-term institutional development includes the proposed PhD School within the Romanian Academy framework. This sequencing ensures new measures are introduced at a manageable pace and that later actions benefit from experience and evidence generated earlier.

A further strength of the proposed process is its emphasis on researcher participation. The Action Plan treats researchers not only as beneficiaries but also as contributors to design and evaluation. Annual assessments of infrastructure and training needs, consultations, feedback mechanisms, mentoring discussions, and Individual Development Plans offer several opportunities for researchers to communicate priorities and assess whether measures meet actual needs. Targets for researcher participation (at least 80% invited to contribute to the infrastructure assessment and at least 70% participation in the annual training-needs survey) will help ensure implementation remains evidence-based and connected to the research community.

The HRS4R process will support a gradual shift from informal practices to more transparent, documented institutional arrangements. This is important where the gap analysis identified practices that exist but are not sufficiently visible, systematic, or consistently communicated. Examples include career guidance, supervision and mentoring, recruitment feedback, recognition of diverse research outputs, training opportunities, and flexible working arrangements. The goal is



not to replace existing practices but to make effective ones clearer, more accessible, and more consistently applied.

The same principle applies to Open Science, digitalisation, and sustainability. NIST already has strengths in digitising and disseminating research outputs, and the Action Plan builds on these through further development of the e-Totalitarianism platform, searchable databases, and improved access to NIST publications. Sustainability will be approached proportionately, focusing on practical improvements compatible with NIST's resources and research profile rather than costly programs that would be hard to maintain. The Action Plan combines institutional development with realistic expectations about available resources.

The implementation process should be understood as a continuous improvement cycle rather than ending with the next HRS4R assessment. Monitoring results, researcher feedback, and evidence collected during implementation will identify successful measures, address shortcomings, and adapt actions as circumstances change. When targets cannot be reached, reasons will be analyzed rather than treated simply as failures. This will allow NIST to distinguish between shortcomings needing organisational correction and those caused by external regulatory, institutional, or financial constraints.

Overall, the proposed process seeks to turn the Gap Analysis findings into concrete, sustainable institutional practices. Its principal value lies not only in completing the 26 actions, but in strengthening the institutional capacity to support researchers throughout their careers, improve transparency and participation, enhance access to research resources and professional development, and embed the principles of the European Charter for Researchers into everyday practice. The HRS4R Action Plan will therefore serve as a practical framework for organizational improvement, while remaining flexible enough to respond to NIST's evolving needs and institutional circumstances.