

Internal Review

Internal Review

Case number

2023CZ53621

Name Organisation under review

Institute of Microbiology of the Czech Academy of Sciences

Organisation's contact details

Videňská 1083, Praha 4, 142 00, Czech Republic

1. Organisational Information

Please provide an update of the key figures for your organisation. Fields marked with * are compulsory.

STAFF & STUDENTS	FTE
Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, doctoral candidates either full-time or part-time involved in research *	434,6
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality) *	134,25
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is the host organisation) *	7,16
Of whom are women *	248,3
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) *	87,85
Of whom are R2 = recognised researcher (e.g. postdoctoral researcher, junior researcher) *	139,7
Of whom are R1 = first stage researcher (e.g. doctoral candidate, research apprentice) *	207,05

STAFF & STUDENTS	FTE
Total number of students (if relevant) *	0
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching, and research staff) *	604,42
RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for the most recent fiscal year)	€
Total annual organisational budget	37349949
Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)	12525398
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)	18211692
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	1381862

ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE (a very brief description of your organisation, max. 100 words)

The main activity of the Institute of Microbiology of the Czech Academy of Sciences is comprehensive, scientific research of microorganisms, such as bacteria, yeasts, fungi, algae with regard to basic research questions and their prospective practical use in medicine and industry. The main interests are cellular and molecular microbiology, genetics and physiology of microorganisms including bacterial pathogens and resistance to antibiotics, production of microbial metabolites and their biotransformation and grading of production strains by genetic modification; soil ecology, ecotoxicology and microbial degradation of organic pollutants, and, last but not least, the role of microorganisms in immunological processes and pathogenesis.

2. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice

Please review the strengths and weaknesses under the four pillars of the European Charter for Researchers, as provided by your organisation in the initial assessment phase. When doing so, you should do not only look back, but also consider new priorities, strategic decisions, etc. which may further influence the action plan. Please also provide a brief commentary in the 'Remarks' column if major changes have occurred versus the initial plan.

Note: Click on the name of each of the four thematic headings of the European Charter for Researchers to open the editor and provide your answers in the section dedicated to internal review for the interim assessment.

Strengths and weaknesses (initial phase)**STRENGTHS:**

- 1) The Institute of Microbiology CAS (IMIC) runs currently in accordance with the Code of Ethics for Researchers of the Czech Academy of Sciences, which fully complies with all general Charter and Code (C&C) principles.
- 2) Intellectual property protection and technology transfer services are supported by the Technology Transfer Department. The institution has contacts with either national technology transfer agencies (e.g. Czechinvest, CzechBio and PragueBio) or regional ones (South Bohemian Science and Technology Park (<https://www.jvtp.cz/>), South Bohemian Agency for Innovation Promotion (JAIP) (<http://www.jaip.cz/>), Biological Centre - Institute for Technology Transfer, Czech Biotechnology Platform - CEBIO, or Innovation Commission of the South Bohemian Region). IMIC has concluded contracts with SOTIO Biotech (CZ), a.s., Biosynth GmbH (DE), Nurix Therapeutics, Inc. (US), Nested Therapeutics, Inc. (US) and others.
- 3) The Project Management Department assists with project administration and is also searching for available funding and scholarship opportunities.
- 4) The Human Resources Department provides full support in the recruitment of new employees, including foreigners. Since the autumn of 2023, the Human Resources Development Department has been strengthened by an additional English-speaking employee.
- 5) The Institute has extensive co-operation with the universities and many students participate in research activities of particular research groups. Together with lecturing at universities, that allows direct knowledge transfer from researchers to students.
- 6) The web page (<https://mbucas.cz/en/hrs4r/> (<https://mbucas.cz/en/hrs4r/>)) provides information on the Institute's accession to the Bonn Declaration on Research Freedom and the status of the HRS4R process.
- 7) An externally managed channel for employee complaints has been established and is being maintained.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) The Code of Ethics of the Institute of Microbiology of the CAS is missing. This year, however, the Scientific Council of the CAS proposed and the Academic Council and the Academic Assembly approved an updated Code of Ethics for Scientific Research of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. Prof. Ondřej Prášil, an employee of our Institute, also contributed to this document. Hence, our Institute does not have to create its own code, but after some slight modifications it will adopt the code approved by this year's Assembly of the CAS.
- 2) The Institute is multidisciplinary and is located in several geographically separated places (Prague, Vestec, Nový Hrádek, Třeboň). This often leads to a reduced sense of belonging to the Institute and a tendency to present the laboratories as separate entities. Over time, the laboratories have developed their own graphic identity and often their own mechanisms of internal or external communication. This should be unified and regulated by clear constitutional rules.
- 3) Most of the internal documents are only in the Czech language. Translation of basic documents into English is done in an unsystematic and ad hoc manner.
- 4) The Institute's internal website is mostly in Czech only. The website should be simplified and updated to become bilingual.
- 5) Awareness of the support available and the work carried out by the Technology Transfer Department and of the rules governing the protection of intellectual property is not high.
- 6) Although it is clearly defined how to proceed in case of any ethical problem, discrimination or conflict, our researchers are not fully aware of their options because the related rules are scattered in a number of different documents.

Strengths and weaknesses (interim assessment)**STRENGTHS:**

1. The Institute of Microbiology of the Czech Academy of Sciences (IMIC) has officially adopted and published on its intranet the Code of Conduct of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Code of Ethics for Researchers of the Czech Academy of Sciences, which are fully in line with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers. All employees have been systematically familiarized with these documents, and their acknowledgment was confirmed first by signature and subsequently via the Flowio platform.

2. The institute's management established and filled the position of ombudsperson, and subsequently, with the help of an external firm, trained 15 contact persons across all departments. In collaboration with the organization KONSENT, a Methodological Guide for Promoting Social Safety was developed and published on the intranet in both Czech and English, thereby creating a robust framework for preventing and addressing unethical behavior, discrimination, and conflicts.
3. The institute's external communication and transparency improved significantly with the launch of a new, modern website on the WordPress platform and the completion of a new unified visual identity, which consolidated the previously fragmented visual presentation of individual laboratories.
4. Support for open science is growing; for several years now, the institute's management has been allocating 2 million CZK annually to cover Open Access publication fees, and the institute is actively considering participating in the Open Science III call for proposals to improve the use of open data.
5. Activities in technology transfer have been stepped up. The IMIC management has signed new contracts with the Technology Transfer Center of the Czech Academy of Sciences (CETAV) for consulting and the coordination of the institute's technology transfer activities, as well as with the Prague Technology Center for incubation services. The institute is a member of Prague.bio, an association of key players in life sciences.
6. The Institute regularly addresses research integrity; the IMIC Council reviews discrepancies in publications flagged by the Library of the Czech Academy of Sciences through monitoring of the PubPeer platform and requires statements from the authors before taking further action.

WEAKNESSES:

1. The updated guidelines on the institute's intellectual property policy have not yet been drafted.
2. Although key internal regulations (e.g., the Organizational Rules, Work Rules, Code of Conduct, Code of Ethics, OTM-R rules) are available in English, the translation of all older or less frequently used internal regulations is still in progress, resulting in a somewhat inconsistent availability of bilingual documents.
3. It remains to be assessed whether all employee groups are equally familiar with and effectively utilize the newly established support channels (ombudsperson, ethics committee, contact persons).

Remarks (max 500 words)

Since the initial phase, there has been a significant shift in fostering an ethical environment. The Institute has officially adopted and published on the intranet the Code of Conduct of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Code of Ethics for Researchers of the Czech Academy of Sciences, and employees' acknowledgment of these documents is now systematically confirmed via the Flowio platform. The position of ombudsperson was established and filled, and 15 contact persons were trained; in collaboration with the organization KONSENT, a Methodological Handbook for Supporting Social Safety was developed. This has created a solid framework for preventing and addressing unethical behavior, discrimination, and conflicts, which has significantly strengthened the principles of professional responsibility and non-discrimination. Awareness of the available channels has increased, although it remains to be assessed whether all employee groups are using them. A new website, a unified visual identity, and a strengthened PR department are improving external communication and transparency. Support for open science is growing; we are actively involved in outreach activities for the general public, over the past three years, we have also begun organizing Researchers' Night (now Science Night), and we are a partner in the WAAITT project under the MSCA program, where we are responsible for the "Researchers in Schools" initiative. As part of this initiative, we collaborate with the National Pedagogical Institute to make scientific knowledge accessible to teachers and students in elementary and secondary schools.

The IMIC management allocates 2 million CZK annually to cover the costs of Open Access publications. Although the current intellectual property protection policy remains in effect and governs procedures for the protection and registration of intellectual property at the institution, it is currently being updated to include provisions that reflect new developments and practical experience, particularly in connection with consulting, licensing, and other contractual relationships that have been entered into. At the same time, concrete steps are being taken to strengthen technology transfer, for example through cooperation with CETAV and membership in Prague.bio.

Areas that still require further development include, in particular, the inconsistent availability of all internal regulations in English and the completion of the process of updating the intellectual property protection guidelines, along with a related simplified information overview for employees that summarizes the basic rules for intellectual property protection at the institute in an accessible format. Overall, however, a significant shift can be observed from fragmented information to a systematic approach based on openness, transparency, and support for research integrity.

Strengths and weaknesses (initial phase)

STRENGTHS:

- 1) Selection procedures are governed by the legislation in force (Labour Code).
- 2) Advertisements are published on the Institute's website, jobs.cz, vedavyzkum.cz, or EURAXESS.
- 3) The Institute of Microbiology CAS (IMIC) has an up-to-date New Employee Handbook in both Czech and English languages; this is regularly updated. It is distributed to new employees in printed form and is also available on the intranet.
- 4) A HR-related website has been created (mbucas.cz/HRS4R (<https://mbucas.cz/HRS4R>)). A link to the Rules of the IMIC OTM-R Selection Procedure (https://intranet/images/RULES_OT_THE_IMIC_OTMR_SELECTION_PROCEDURE.pdf) been added to the recruitment page (mbucas.cz/en/kariera/ (<https://mbucas.cz/en/kariera/>)).

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) Rules of the IMIC selection procedure are not published in full. A composite document should be created and published in both Czech and English languages.
- 2) A detailed description of the recruitment process including the composition of selection committees is missing.
- 3) The IMIC lacks a standardised onboarding process during which all new employees would be trained to become fully functional members of the team.

Strengths and weaknesses (interim assessment)

STRENGTHS:

1. Clear and binding rules for open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R) have been implemented. The "Rules for the IMIC OTM-R Selection Process" and the related detailed "Methodology for the Recruitment and Selection of Research Positions at the Institute of Microbiology of the Czech Academy of Sciences" were published on the intranet.
2. A direct link to the OTM-R documents has been added to the career section of the Institute's new website, ensuring their public availability. Vacancies are routinely advertised through international channels, which reinforces the openness of the selection process.
3. A standardized onboarding plan has been created, published on the intranet, and regularly updated in both Czech and English, providing lab managers with a simple tool for training new employees.
4. The handbook for new employees is regularly updated and distributed to new hires, providing essential information about the institute's day-to-day operations as well as employees' rights and responsibilities.
5. Human resources staff engage in continuous professional development, for example by attending the HR Excellence in Research Award conference and sharing the knowledge they gain within the institute.

WEAKNESSES:

1. Comprehensive training for all members of selection committees on topics such as unconscious bias and gender-sensitive evaluation has not yet been implemented across the board.
2. Although career breaks and mobility experiences are formally recognized in the OTM-R methodology, their systematic consideration in the practical selection process needs to be continuously monitored and further evaluated.

Remarks (max 500 words)

Key measures in the area of recruitment have been implemented. The IMIC OTM-R Selection Procedure Rules and the detailed Methodology for the Recruitment and Selection of Research Positions have been published on the intranet, thereby standardizing previously fragmented rules. The career section of the website includes a link to OTM-R documents, and job postings are distributed through international channels. These steps address a weakness identified in the initial analysis, namely the absence of fully published rules and a process description. The implementation of a unified onboarding plan (available on the intranet in Czech and English) and a regularly updated Employee Handbook facilitates the integration of new hires. The Human Resources Department undergoes ongoing training (e.g., participation in the

HR Award conference). Recruitment processes for R2–R4 positions are now routinely advertised in both languages, and the process is guided by the principles of openness, transparency, and evaluation based on the candidate's skills, qualifications, and experience. Comprehensive training for all members of selection committees and the systematic consideration of career breaks and mobility during the selection process remain a challenge, but the basic framework is firmly in place.

Strengths and weaknesses (initial phase)**STRENGTHS:**

- 1) Within internal rules, working hours can be chosen with different starts, as agreed with the supervisor. Only the monthly pool of hours worked is monitored.
- 2) The IMIC offers part-time positions.
- 3) The use of sports facilities and loans from the social fund, etc. are available to all employees..
- 4) As well as GDPR and whistle-blowing regulations, we have formulated a Gender Equality Plan (<https://mbucas.cz/en/about-institute/gender-equality-plan/>) and it is being implemented. A regular gender audit by an external company is planned.
- 5) According to the Career Regulations of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (the official version of this legally binding document is available only in Czech), the performance of researchers (R2 - R4) is evaluated regularly (usually once a year) according to established criteria. This evaluation applies to and is mandatory for all employees in the given categories, regardless of their workload during the attestation period and regardless of the duration of their employment, with exceptions defined only by the Career Regulations of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. The Attestation Committee is responsible for collecting and reviewing the data and recommending the career progression/step of individual employees, and then submitting the results to the Director of the institution, who will evaluate the Attestation Committee's proposal and draw employment consequences if necessary.
- 6) The IMIC Council has developed the RULES FOR EFFECTIVE FUNDING OF IMIC LABORATORIES and the METHODOLOGY FOR EVALUATING RESEARCH PERFORMANCE OF LABORATORIES (in Czech only), according to which part of the institutional funds (excluding salary funds) is allocated to individual laboratories each year. It provides laboratory managers with an overview of the amounts allocated for laboratory operations in a given year. These funds may be used to supplement the non-wage component of the salary (personal appraisals) or annual bonuses for laboratory staff.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) The level of salaries paid to staff is low. The fact that salaries in the academic field are below average compared to other EU countries is a hard fact, and any correction is beyond the power of IMIC or CAS management. Nevertheless, the Institute should strive to ensure fair salaries in all departments and to eliminate inconsistencies.
- 2) Information about the evaluation and reward system is not fully known.
- 3) Some tools to balance work and family life better could be improved (e.g., home-office rules and others; see GEP for more), but this is tied to the new and expected changes in state legislation to be adopted in 2024. The Institute does not yet have binding rules on the work of pregnant women; these should be prepared and adopted (The rules will be in line with those of other experimental institutes).
- 4) Despite IMIC's efforts to reduce paperwork, not all agendas have been fully converted to electronic processing. The gradual expansion of this option will certainly facilitate working conditions, especially for laboratory managers.
- 5) The current intranet is unclear and much information is difficult to find. Although it has both a Czech and an English section, not all documents are available in English. The platform on which the intranet runs is outdated. The intranet should be updated both operationally and in terms of content and should be more intuitive.
- 6) Although it is clearly defined how to manage any ethical problem, discrimination or conflict, our researchers are not fully aware of their possibilities/rights because the related rules are scattered in different documents.
- 7) We also perceive a certain new weakness in the slight isolation of scientists and laboratories, resulting from the limitation of mutual contacts during the covid period and the lukewarm response to jointly organised events at the Institute.

Strengths and weaknesses (interim assessment)**STRENGTHS:**

1. Transparent and binding rules for working from home have been established and published, allowing employees to work remotely for up to 4 days per month—and even more by mutual agreement—thereby addressing the previously identified lack of clear regulations in this area.
2. The institute's new Attestation Regulations have been approved, introducing a two-year evaluation cycle in place of the one-year cycle and extending the certification requirement to researchers (R2–R4) regardless of their workload. The new system places greater emphasis on current scientific outputs, grant projects, and other activities, such as technology transfer.

3. The implementation of the Flowio platform and the launch of the new intranet significantly reduce the administrative burden on researchers and, within the Institute's processes, establish a clear and verifiable workflow for document approval. Electronic forms are available for vacation requests, business trips, and purchase orders, and the platform is also used to confirm acknowledgment of internal regulations.
4. The institute's management has launched an employee benefits program using the Up card, which makes it easier to access contributions from the social fund, replacing paper benefit vouchers.
5. The Institute secured a Johannes Amos Comenius Program (OP JAK) project "A Slightly Faster Career Start" (TRySK) and joined the Academy of the Future program, which provides return grants for researchers returning from career breaks and supports work-life balance.
6. Institutional procedures for working with individuals on career breaks were implemented, and the Director's Recommendations for senior researchers on working with individuals on career breaks were issued. This includes support for maintaining contact with the scientific community through the temporary assignment of work laptops.
7. The Institute continues to support part-time employment.
8. The Institute's management has updated the Job Catalog for other (non-research) employees (effective February 1, 2026), which introduces an expanded classification of job positions and corresponding pay grades. This is one of the important steps toward the upcoming pay system in accordance with the European Directive on Pay Transparency.
9. A binding internal regulation on the safe employment of pregnant women, nursing mothers, and minors has been drafted and published, thereby addressing the previous lack of formal rules beyond the scope of the Labor Code.

WEAKNESSES:

1. Regular evaluations apply exclusively to research staff; there is a lack of any transparent information regarding career advancement opportunities for non-research staff.
2. Comprehensive rules for short-term and long-term research mobility have not been developed and published as separate internal regulation; mobility is currently managed within the framework of individual projects.
3. An analysis of the current compensation system and a proposal for a new compensation model aimed at compliance with the EU Directive on pay transparency have been initiated in collaboration with Deloitte, but the results and a publicly available document are still pending.

Remarks (max 500 words)

A number of specific improvements have been made here, although some areas still require further work. The institute's management has formalized transparent rules for working from home—binding guidelines have been issued, and employees can take up to 4 days per month. New certification regulations have been approved, establishing a two-year cycle and extending the certification requirement to researchers (R2–R4) regardless of their employment status, which clarifies the evaluation and career advancement process. Support measures also include return grants from the OP JAK project "A Slightly Faster Career Start" (TRySK) or the Academy of the Future, recommendations from the director to senior staff on working with individuals on career leave, support for maintaining contact with the scientific community through work laptops, and so on. The implementation of the Flowio platform and the new intranet significantly reduce the administrative burden and, within the institute's processes, establish clear and verifiable workflows for document approval (electronic requests, vacation requests, approvals). In addition to existing options for drawing on the social fund, paper benefit vouchers have been replaced by the Up card benefit program. Despite these successes, the rules for a comprehensive mobility system remain incomplete and have not yet been approved. In the area of compensation, the principles of the EU Pay Transparency Directive are being implemented in collaboration with Deloitte, but the results are still pending. Overall, flexibility and transparency are being strengthened; however, it is crucial to finalize the formal outputs and ensure long-term sustainability.

Strengths and weaknesses (initial phase)**STRENGTHS:**

- 1) Combined with their individual abilities, the scientific development of researchers is facilitated by the overall culture of freedom of research at IMIC.
- 2) Via the mailing list and the intranet, all researchers are regularly informed about the offer of specialist courses and lecture series.
- 3) Young researchers have the opportunity to apply for participation in national and international development programmes.
- 4) The Institute offers free participation in English courses for local researchers and Czech courses for foreign researchers.
- 5) Every year, the Institute announces competitions and rewards the best student work.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) There is no comprehensive training system based on the specific needs of the nature of work in a research institution. The range of courses could be expanded based on questionnaire responses.
- 2) Some managers lack appropriate leadership and management skills. A training or workshop on the use of AI in administration or project documentation would also be a suitable challenge.
- 3) There is no career development system (except a document offering career development opportunities at IMIC).
- 4) The Institute needs to strengthen its PR department and make it more efficient and effective.

Strengths and weaknesses (interim assessment)**STRENGTHS:**

1. The institute has significantly expanded its training offerings. In addition to mandatory training on occupational health and safety (OHS) and fire safety, management skills (typology), and cybersecurity, seminars were held on preparing ERC grants, the use of artificial intelligence in research, institutional resilience, bullying and gender-based violence and how to address them, as well as voluntary online training on gender in research. All presentations are available on the intranet.
2. The first e-learning course (occupational safety and fire protection) has been launched, and additional modules are planned (institutional resilience, cybersecurity according to NIS2), thereby fulfilling the goal of making it easier for employees to complete mandatory training, particularly in terms of time management. The training sessions are conducted in a hybrid format, and recordings are made available.
3. Early-career researchers receive financial support through the Programme to Support Prospective Human Resources – post Ph.D. candidates (PPLZ) and a guaranteed minimum doctoral stipend, as well as non-financial support; a PhD student club has been established that organizes its own conferences and other activities. Each year, the institute awards prizes for the best publications, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations.
4. The PR department has been staffed with additional personnel, and the institute actively participates in major science outreach events, such as the Science Fair, ScienceFest ("Vědafest"), and Researchers' Night, thereby increasing the visibility of the institute and its results.

WEAKNESSES:

1. There is still a lack of a structured mentoring program and systematic career counseling that would provide a clearer outlook, particularly for postdoctoral researchers.
2. There is also a lack of systematic, mandatory management training for laboratory directors and other senior staff, including grant investigators who lead their own small teams—such as training in conflict resolution, responsible leadership, and so on.
3. The comprehensive training and development system remains more of a patchwork of individual activities than a fully integrated program tailored to the specific needs of the research institution. The next step should be to link these initiatives into a cohesive professional development framework.

Remarks (max 500 words)

The institute has significantly expanded its training offerings. In addition to mandatory training in cybersecurity and managerial skills (typology), seminars were held focusing on ERC grants, the use of artificial intelligence, institutional resilience, and gender in research. The first e-learning course (occupational safety and fire protection) was launched, and more are planned, thereby fulfilling the goal of making it easier to complete mandatory training. Early-career researchers are supported not only through salary assistance (the PPLZ program, guaranteed doctoral stipend) but also through the establishment of a PhD student club and the continuation of awards for the best theses. However, there is a lack of a structured mentoring module and systematic career counseling, which would provide a clearer career path, particularly for postdoctoral researchers. The development of soft skills and language support (English/Czech courses for employees) continues, but a comprehensive training system tailored to the specific needs of the research institution remains, for now, more of a patchwork of individual activities. Nevertheless, a noticeable shift has occurred from the initial weakness (the lack of a comprehensive system) toward a targeted offering.

Have any of the priorities for the short- and medium-term changed? (max. 500 words)

The original action plan called for the implementation of most measures by the end of 2026, and we are sticking to that timeline. Priorities such as the introduction of OTM-R rules, a code of ethics, an ombudsperson, and a new intranet have already been met, so the focus is now shifting to completing the remaining, but no less important, actions. These include, in particular, the systematization of mobility rules, the preparation of an analysis of the stability of working conditions, the completion of the implementation of the EU Directive on Transparency of Remuneration, and the creation of a mentoring program for early-career researchers. In the short term, the priority has become the smooth introduction of e-learning tools and the full utilization of the Flowio platform for the digitization of administrative processes, including familiarizing employees with regulations. A significant new agenda item that was not explicitly highlighted in the original plan is strengthening institutional resilience and cybersecurity in accordance with the NIS2 Directive, for which the institute is already taking concrete steps (introduction of e-learning, training). In the coming period, we intend to focus more on foreign employees, particularly new arrivals, to facilitate their integration not only into the institute but also into Czech society. Overall, it can be said that the original priorities remain valid, but they have been expanded to include security and digitization, which have become an integral part of our human resources policy.

Have any of the circumstances in which your organisation operates changed and, as such, have had an impact on your strategy for the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers? (max. 500 words)

Yes, both external and internal circumstances are evolving. At the legislative level, EU Directive 2023/970 on pay transparency was adopted; its implementation has become a key new obligation that impacts compensation policy and requires external collaboration (Deloitte). An amendment to the Higher Education Act fundamentally changed the terms of funding for doctoral students; the institute had to quickly enter into agreements with universities and guarantee a minimum doctoral stipend, which affected both budgets and employment relationships. In the area of funding, there has been a significant shift toward earmarked funds (59% in 2025), primarily due to massive involvement in OP JAK projects, which, while bringing in funds, simultaneously increases the administrative burden and reduces the amount of institutional funds available for across-the-board salary increases. Furthermore, new cybersecurity regulations (NIS2) have come into effect; the institute intends to comply with these regulations, which entail high costs for hardware and software, as well as specific training and processes. These changes in external conditions have not deviated from the direction of our strategy; on the contrary, they have reinforced it—accelerating digitization (Flowio, intranet), strengthening the emphasis on pay transparency, and leading to the creation of support programs (TRYSK return grants). The strategy for implementing the Charter is thus being enriched and refined, rather than altered.

Are any strategic decisions under way that may influence the action plan? (max. 500 words)

Yes. Among the most significant is the institute's commitment to fully implement the Pay Transparency Directive, for which external consulting and workshops with lab heads are already underway. Another is the decision to build a robust e-learning system and use the Flowio platform to automatically familiarize new employees with internal regulations, which will strengthen the continuity of onboarding and legal certainty. At the organizational level, new research units (start-up laboratories) and a protein technology service center have been established and incorporated into the Organizational Regulations, thereby expanding the range of research and services. Another strategic decision is to strengthen public relations and communication (through increased staffing, a new website, and a regular newsletter), which directly supports the principles of openness and the dissemination of results. Last but not least, the institute is intensifying its preparations for NIS2 requirements and institutional resilience, thereby making the security agenda an integral part of processes that affect every employee. All of these decisions are in line with the action plan and further develop it, particularly in the areas of working conditions, professionalization of management, and ensuring long-term sustainability.

3. Actions

Please consult the [list of all the actions](#) you have submitted as part of your strategy for the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers. Please add to the overview [the current status of these actions as well as the status of the indicators](#). If any actions have been revised or omitted, please provide a commentary for each action. You can also add new objectives.

Note: Choose one or more of the principles automatically retrieved from the gap analysis with their ratings.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 1				
The Code of Ethics	GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
	(++) 1. Research freedom	Q4 2024	HR Award Team Director	Target: Filling a gap in the Institute's rules: adoption of the CAS Code of Ethics with only minor modifications. Communication of the Code among the institution's staff. Indicator: Publication of the IMIC Code of Ethics on the intranet.
	(+/-) 2. Ethical principles			
	(+/-) 4. Professional attitude			
	(+/-) 10. Non discrimination			
	(+/-) 15. Transparency (Code)			
Current Status		Remarks		
COMPLETED		The CAS Code of Conduct and the CAS Code of Ethics for Researchers were officially published on the intranet in September 2024. Employees were subsequently asked via email to confirm in writing that they had reviewed these documents, thereby fulfilling the requirement to inform the entire institute and fully achieving the goal set for the fourth quarter of 2024. In addition, in June 2026, several key internal regulations (notably the Organizational Rules, Work Rules, Pay Regulations, Code of Ethics, Labor Code, and, newly, the regulation governing the safe employment of women and minors) were communicated and confirmed via the Flowio system. We are currently setting up a mechanism to automatically familiarize new employees with these regulations when they log into the Flowio system for the first time.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 2

Establishment of the institution of the Ombudsman

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(++) 1. Research freedom			
(+/-) 2. Ethical principles			Target: Introducing the institution of the Ombudsman as the highest constitutional authority in resolving ethical conflicts.
(+/-) 3. Professional responsibility	Q2 2025	HR Award Team Director	Indicator: Appointment of the Ombudsman.
(+/-) 4. Professional attitude			Publicising the contact details of the Ombudsman within the institution.
(+/-) 34. Complains/ appeals			
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	Prior to establishing the Ombudsman's Office at IMIC, we awaited the creation of the Ombudsman's Office at the Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS), which took place in February 2025, and the position was filled in September 2025. In collaboration with the organization KONSENT, z.s., a Methodological Handbook for Promoting Social Safety at the Institute of Microbiology of the Czech Academy of Sciences was developed and published on the intranet in February 2026, together with the document "PROTECTION OF EMPLOYEE RIGHTS." Both documents are now available on the intranet in both Czech and English. Subsequently, 15 contact persons were trained; they are a key component of the Mechanism for the Prevention and Resolution of Inappropriate Behavior, with the aim of ensuring accessible, sensitive, and effective support for people who find themselves in difficult situations. In January 2026, the Institute established the position of ombudsperson, which has been held by Mgr. Radoslava Kartnerová, LL.M., has held the position since February 2026. Her goal is to provide employees with trustworthy and independent support in situations that may disrupt the workplace culture, jeopardize a sense of safety, or infringe upon personal dignity, and to facilitate resolutions to situations that may negatively affect working relationships or the workplace atmosphere. Activities to date have focused primarily on establishing procedures for the safe and confidential reporting of suspected cases; revising internal regulations; organizing introductory meetings; and collaborating with the ombudsman of the Czech Academy of Sciences and with internal contact persons.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 3

New web pages of the IMIC

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 4. Professional attitude			
(+/-) 5. Contractual and legal obligations			
(+/-) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results	Q4 2024	HR Award Team	Target: Create a new modern and dynamic IMIC website based on a new graphic identity (see Action 4). Restructure the website and make information more accessible, including information on scientific achievements or job vacancies.
(+/-) 9. Public engagement		Director	Indicator: New web pages.
(+/-) 12. Recruitment			
(+/-) 23. Research environment			
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	The new IMIC website was built on the WordPress platform and launched in 2025. The purpose/goal of creating the new website was: Redesign (taking into account the high volume of traffic from mobile devices—phones and tablets), enhancing the institute's prestige through a modern web presence, reorganizing and reviewing data—the site was built from the ground up, with content created from scratch, thereby removing irrelevant and outdated information—and improving external communication, i.e., more effectively presenting the institute's activities and results. Each laboratory can manage its own section. This has unified the separate websites under a single brand. The site now clearly presents the institute, including career opportunities and OTM-R principles, thereby strengthening transparency and external communication.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 4

Completion of the new graphic identity of the Institute

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 3. Professional responsibility			Target: To consolidate and unify the fragmented graphic design of documents and the external presentation of individual laboratories and other organisational units of the Institute. Indicator: Completion of the Institute's new graphic identity and new logo. Creation of the IMIC logo and graphic identity manuals and their publication on the intranet.
(+/-) 4. Professional attitude	Q2 2024	Director	
(+/-) 23. Research environment			
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	The change in visual identity at IMIC was carried out to modernize the institute's presentation and unify its graphic communication. Through this step, the institute sought to improve its recognizability and communication with both the professional and general public, in line with its vision of becoming a modern scientific institution of global significance. The core element of the unified visual style is the IMIC logotype in Czech, English, and a mixed-language version. The new visual identity also includes a primary and secondary typeface, a color palette, and, above all, applications for both internal and external communication. The new visual identity was completed and served as the foundation for the new website and other promotional materials, thereby unifying the fragmented visual styles of the laboratories. The graphic manual and logo were implemented.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 5

Translation of all important internal rules into English

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 4. Professional attitude	Q2 2026	Secretary	Target: In order to facilitate the orientation of foreign employees in the Institute's rules and regulations, all necessary information will be made available in English. Indicator: Translation of all important documents into English and their publication, bilingual minutes of the Institute's management meetings.
(+/-) 24. Working conditions			
(+/-) 37. Supervision and managerial duties			
Current Status	Remarks		
EXTENDED	Key documents, such as the Work Rules, Code of Conduct, the Code of Ethics, and the OTM-R rules, are available in English on the intranet. Translations of other internal standards and documents are still in progress; however, most important documents will be translated by the second quarter of 2026. The translation of older documents, in particular, is delayed because the scans are not always machine-readable. Minutes from the Director's Board and the IMIC Board, as well as from meetings of the Equal Opportunity Team, are published on the intranet in both languages on an ongoing basis and are simultaneously distributed to employees via email to the list-MBU mailing list. This systematically eliminates the language barrier for foreign employees.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 6

Implementation of OTM-R principles

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 12. Recruitment	Q2 2024	HR Award Team Director	Target: Introduce clear rules for selection procedures under the OTM-R, combining the Labour Code legislation, the Career Development Rules for CAS Employees with a University Degree and existing internal regulations into one basic document, together with detailed instructions. Improve the entire selection process by harmonising the form and content of vacancy announcements, the methods of publication, the procedure and composition of selection committees, the rules for selecting the most suitable candidates, etc. Indicator: Preparation of binding RULES OF THE IMIC OTM-R SELECTION PROCEDURE and PROCEDURE AND METHODOLOGY OF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF SCIENTIFIC POSITIONS AT THE INSTITUTE OF MICROBIOLOGY CAS documents and their publication on the intranet.
(+/-) 13. Recruitment (Code)			
(+/-) 14. Selection (Code)			
(+/-) 15. Transparency (Code)			
(+/-) 28. Career development			
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	The IMIC OTM-R Selection Procedure Rules were published on the intranet in March 2024. Along with these, the detailed Methodology for the Recruitment and Selection of Research Positions was also discussed and published on the intranet. A link to these rules was added to the career pages of the website, and the entire selection process was standardized in accordance with European standards. The rules for recruiting new employees were published on the intranet in a clear and organized format. The measure has been fully implemented.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS**Action 7**

Regular training of HR staff

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 12. Recruitment			
(+/-) 13. Recruitment (Code)			
(+/-) 14. Selection (Code)			
(++) 16. Judging merit (Code)			Target: Regular training of HR staff on HR regulations and their updates. To improve the assistance given to new employees, including foreigners, in order to familiarise them with the normal functioning of the Institute and its internal rules. Indicator: Number of training sessions and persons trained per year.
(++) 17. Variations in the chronological order of CVs (Code)	Continuously	HR Staff	
(++) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code)			
(++) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code)			
(++) 20. Seniority (Code)			

PROPOSED ACTIONS

		Current Status	Remarks
		IN PROGRESS	Human resources staff undergo ongoing training: In 2025, they completed training courses on Occupational Health Services, Fair and Transparent Employee Compensation, Changes in HR and Payroll Matters Effective January 1, 2026, and Employer Liability for the Use of Artificial Intelligence by Employees (online), Management of HR and Payroll Administration, Current Changes in Labor Law in 2025 and Their Application, Flexible Amendment to the Labor Code Effective June 1, 2025, Data Archiving and Personal Data Protection, Sickness Insurance and Premiums, Annual Tax Settlement for Employees with an International Component, Annual Settlement of Advance Payments for 2024 and Current Changes in the Tax Period, Handling Difficult Communication Situations (soft skills), How to Respond Promptly and Appropriately in Unexpected Situations (soft skills). In 2026, the training sessions included: Advanced Human Resources Management or an HR “audit”—what we need to prepare for in connection with the implementation of the EU directive; Employment of Foreign Nationals in the Czech Republic under the Act on the Residence of Foreign Nationals in 2026; Pregnancy, Maternity, and Parental Leave Following the 2026 Amendments to the Labor Code, Changes in HR and Payroll Matters Effective January 1, 2026, Annual settlement of tax advances and tax credits for 2025, including the minimum health insurance contribution for 2026, Comprehensive THS Development: Conflict Resolution (soft skills), Cross-Departmental Collaboration (soft skills), and Stress Management and Mental Resilience (soft skills). HR department staff also participate irregularly, approximately 5–6 times a year, in meetings of the HR Platform of the Czech Academy of Sciences. In addition, the Deputy Director for Finance and the Institute Secretary attended a training session on “Equal Pay in Practice.” The ongoing nature of these activities is maintained.

Action 8					
New Employee Handbook		GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year’s quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
		(+/-) 3. Professional responsibility			Target: Provide new staff with as much up-to-date information as possible about the day-to-day running of the Institute, the rights and obligations of staff and help them to deal with common situations. Indicator: Regular updates of the handbook (twice a year or as required).
		(+/-) 10. Non discrimination	Q1 & Q3 2024 Q1 & Q3 2025 Q1 & Q3 2026	HR Staff Director	
		(+/-) 24. Working conditions			
		(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development			
		Current Status	Remarks		
		IN PROGRESS	The handbook is regularly revised: in May 2024, a survey was launched to update it; the results were analyzed in June 2024; and another call for updates was sent out in October 2025. The latest version is from 2026. This ensures that the handbook remains up-to-date in line with the measures planned for each half-year.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 9

Onboarding Plan

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 4. Professional attitude			
(+/-) 12. Recruitment			Target. To provide a simple guide for managers to facilitate the first steps in the Institute for all new staff in research units.
(+/-) 23. Research environment	Q1 2025	Heads of Units	Indicator: Development of rules for mentoring new staff ("Onboarding plan" with checklist of tasks/activities to be explained or introduced), published on the intranet and distributed directly to laboratory managers (heads of units).
(+/-) 24. Working conditions		Director	
(+/-) 37. Supervision and managerial duties			
(+/-) 40. Supervision			
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	The first draft of the onboarding plan was circulated for feedback in March 2025. The final version was completed and published on the intranet in 2025, thereby fulfilling the Q1 2025 target with a slight delay. The plan is currently available on the intranet in both Czech and English and will continue to be updated regularly.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 10

Improvement of the intranet

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 3. Professional responsibility			
(+/-) 4. Professional attitude			
(+/-) 5. Contractual and legal obligations	Q2 2026	Secretary HR Staff IT Department	Target: Gradually improve the existing intranet to make it more user-friendly and intuitive. Complete revision of content and removal of obsolete standards and regulations. Key documents, manuals and work-related information at the click of a button. Upgrade the existing software platform. Indicator: New version of the intranet.
(+/-) 7. Good practice in research			
(++) 11. Evaluation/appraisal systems			
(+/-) 24. Working conditions			
Current Status	Remarks		
IN PROGRESS	A completely new intranet was launched in May 2026, as announced in an email to all employees. Its development took place in close collaboration with the IT department and representatives from the laboratories. The deadline of the second quarter of 2026 was met, and the intranet is now modern, well-organized, and bilingual. Representatives from individual departments have been granted editing rights for their respective sections and can thus edit them themselves. However, some of the original functionalities of the previous intranet are gradually being taken over by the Helios/Flowio financial system (particularly the room reservation system). The intranet is being gradually expanded, primarily with English translations of key documents; a database and a reservation system for equipment (possibly also via Flowio) will be added in due course, along with forms for submitting publications to the ASEP database and for certification.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 11

Establish clear rules on home office

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 5. Contractual and legal obligations	Q4 2024	Secretary Director	Target: Establishment of clear and transparent rules that take into account current amendments to the Labour Code or other regulations of the CAS, and information to researchers. Indicator: Internal Regulations of the Director published on the intranet.
(+/-) 24. Working conditions			
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	Binding guidelines for working from home were issued in November 2024 and subsequently clarified for part-time employees as well. This made it possible to address the lack of transparent rules in a timely manner, by the end of 2024. Currently, after signing the relevant work-from-home agreement, employees can work from home for 4 days per month without excessive additional paperwork; in justified cases, the director may authorize working from home for a longer period.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 12

Evaluation of researchers

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(++) 11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems	Q3 2025	IMIC Council Director	Target: Analysis of the current way in which individual R2-R4 staff are evaluated: periodicity, criteria - both measurable scientific production, e.g. in terms of number or quality of publications (e.g. IF, Quartils) - and contribution to the institute in terms of managing the necessary infrastructure, teaching, PR activities, etc. and, if necessary, modification of the current rules and criteria for attestation. Indicator: Update of the attestation rules (document). Simplification of the attestation form.
(-/+) 25. Stability and permanence of employment			
(-/+) 26. Funding and salaries			
(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development			
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	The new IMIC Attestation Regulations were approved by the Institute Board in November 2025. The Attestation Regulations also include an updated system for scoring research outputs, with greater emphasis on current scientific outputs, grant projects, and other activities, such as knowledge and technology transfer (e.g., patents), as well as a two-year attestation cycle. The system also extends the evaluation requirement to research staff (R2–R4) regardless of their employment status. No evaluations took place in 2025, and the next regular round will take place in the fall of 2026. The measure for the third quarter of 2025 has therefore been fulfilled.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 13

Simplify administration

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(++) 1. Research freedom			
(+/-) 4. Professional attitude			Target: Convert as much of the remaining paper agenda as possible into an electronic form to minimise the administrative burden (e.g. proposals for leave, resignation, recruitment). Indicator: Application for leave on the intranet. Request for termination of employment, request to start recruitment using the intranet.
(+/-) 5. Contractual and legal obligations	2025 Q2	Deputy Director	
(+/-) 24. Working conditions			
(+/-) 37. Supervision and managerial duties			
Current Status	Remarks		
EXTENDED	The implementation of the Flowio platform continues, offering electronic forms such as purchase orders, requests for material issuance from the warehouse, requests for vacation or to work from home, as well as business trip requests and expense reports. In 2025, the implementation of the Flowio platform continued with a new mobile version. Based on a wide range of user feedback, the relevant operational workflows and user access were updated; the mobile Flowio app allows for the approval of orders, requests, and invoices, as well as the submission of absence requests (vacation, work-from-home, etc.). Flowio enables document approval, including compliance with regulations, thanks to unique user identification (login with two-step verification using Microsoft Authenticator). Another version (Flowio 2) is currently under development, which should allow for easier expansion with new features. The gradual transition from paper-based to digital processes is proceeding successfully and reducing the administrative burden on employees. Administrative procedures have been further streamlined by the new Job Catalog for other employees (effective February 1, 2026), which has standardized job descriptions and pay grades across the institute.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 14

Looking for ways to improve the stability of working conditions at IMIC

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 5. Contractual and legal obligations	Q4 2025	Director	Target: Through discussion with the trade union, seek ways to further improve the stability of current working conditions.
(-/+) 25. Stability and permanence of employment		Trade Union	Indicator: Preparation of a document Report on the analysis of the current possibilities for improvement of the stability and duration of employment in IMIC and its publication on the intranet.
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	There are two primary labor unions at IMIC, with which management regularly discusses relevant internal regulations, social fund rules (including the use and implementation of benefits), and organizational changes. Starting in 2025, employees will also be able to access benefits via the Up electronic card. Stability is further supported by part-time positions, flexible work-from-home policies, the new Job Catalog for non-research staff (effective February 1, 2026), and return-to-work programs: the OP JAK project "A Slightly Faster Career Start" (TRySK, 12 return grants) and the Academy of the Future program (3 returns in 2026). The document "Analysis of Current Options for Improving Stability and the Average Length of Employment at the Institute of Microbiology" was prepared in July 2026 and will be published on the intranet. The analysis identifies the main sources of uncertainty (salary levels, fixed-term contracts for project staff) and formulaheates five key recommendations: (1) reducing uncertainty for project staff through more consistent use of institutional funds to bridge gaps between projects, (2) maintaining, and possibly further strengthening, grant support, including the introduction of a bridge-funding system for successful applicants, (3) establishing transparent rules for obtaining permanent employment, and (4) further strengthening employee motivation and well-being. The measure has been implemented.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 15

Potential for salary increase

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 5. Contractual and legal obligations	Q1 2026	Director HR Staff Board of the Institute	Target: Competitive salaries for employees. The first step is to analyse the current remuneration system at IMIC - an overview of the legal options, i.e. the scope and validity of the salary scales, the determination of the basic salary and the regulations on the additional financing from grant funds. Indicator: Preparation of a document
(++) 11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems			Analysis of the current remuneration system in IMIC and proposal for a new remuneration system and its publication on the intranet.
(-/+) 26. Funding and salaries			
Current Status	Remarks		
EXTENDED	At IMIC, pay scales are regularly adjusted (to account for inflation and increases in the minimum wage), most recently as of January 1, 2026. Effective February 1, 2026, a new Job Catalog for other (non-research) employees came into effect, updating the classifications of job positions in categories O1–O12 and the corresponding pay grades. This document is one of the key steps toward a transparent compensation system that the institute is developing in accordance with the requirements of EU Directive 2023/970 on pay transparency. While the pay scale salary is determined by education and professional experience in the field, personal allowances and bonuses are largely at the discretion of the group leader; in the case of research staff, they depend to a significant extent on the opportunities, number, and rules of the grants in which the employee participates, the extent of their involvement, the scope of their responsibilities, and so on. In May 2026, a workshop was held for laboratory and center heads, followed by individual meetings with each head and Deloitte, focused on introducing the principles of EU Directive 2023/970 on pay transparency and its implementation within the institute—a task that will not be easy at a research institution with a significant number of projects. Deloitte is currently preparing an analysis of our current situation for us. However, the possibilities for raising salaries depend on available funding. The MBÚ's main source of revenue is the state budget. Based on submitted grant applications, the results of public grant competitions, and, in particular, the number of projects implemented under the OP JAK program, there is currently a shift toward earmarked funding (59% in 2025 vs. 50% in 2023).		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 16

The best PhD and Diploma work award, The best scientific paper award

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 23. Research environment	Q1 2024 Q1 2025	Board of the Institute	Target: To promote student interest in laboratory work and in science in general.
(-/+) 26. Funding and salaries	Q1 2026	Laboratory Heads	Indicator: Continue to announce annual competitions and reward the best student work.
Current Status	Remarks		
IN PROGRESS	The annual awards ceremony continues. Typically in March, The Institution's Board recommends to the director to award prizes to all original student works where the student is the first author (in 2026, the director awarded a uniform prize of 5,000 CZK to each) as well as the best original works with a first or corresponding author from IMIC (60,000 CZK) and the best master's theses (10,000 CZK) and doctoral dissertations (20,000 CZK); nominations are reviewed in May, and the awards are presented during IMIC Day in June. Presentations by the authors of the winning doctoral and master's theses will take place as part of the IMIC seminar on September 18, 2026, starting at 10:00 a.m. The measure for the years 2024–2026 is being consistently implemented.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 17

Intellectual Property Protection

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 31. Intellectual Property Rights	Q2 2025	Deputy Director PR Manager Laboratory Heads	Target: Raising awareness of intellectual property protection among scientists and updating intellectual property documents in light of the new CAS internal rules. Indicator: Update of the IMIC Intellectual Property Policy directive and its publication on the intranet in both Czech and English versions.
Current Status	Remarks		
EXTENDED	The Board regularly reviewed specific invention applications and an international PCT application. In 2025, a new contract was signed with the Technology Transfer Center of the Czech Academy of Sciences (CETAV) to provide consulting services, including implementation, in the area of technology transfer (TTO), as well as a contract with the Prague Technology Center for the provision of services and incubation to support the development of startups. The Institute is also a member of Prague.bio, which brings together key players in the life sciences sector and aims to unite at least 70% of Czech entities active in the life sciences and become their key partner in creating, developing, and utilizing a dynamic ecosystem that connects research, innovation, the business sector, and the public sector. We are also dedicated to knowledge transfer and publish our own journal, "Folia Microbiologia", which moved up to the Q2 category in 2025 and achieved an Impact Factor of 3.1. Effective July 1, 2025, Prof. Václav Větvíčka became the new editor-in-chief. He successfully expanded the journal's editorial board and organized the publication of a special issue of "Folia Microbiologica" to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of one of the founders of the Prague School of Immunology and former director of the IMIC Prof. Jaroslav Šterzl. Our staff members serve on the journal's editorial board, which allows them to gain experience in editorial work. We have long supported the publication of our employees' research results in this journal. The Institute also has an internal guideline for enhancing institutional resilience at the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in order to consistently maintain a high level of institutional resilience against the influence of foreign powers; among other things, this guideline mandates that employees complete training on institutional resilience, typically in conjunction with training on occupational safety and health and fire safety, and renew this training regularly. Before entering a contractual relationship with an external partner, employees responsible for drafting such a contract are required to assess the risks of cooperating with the other contracting party. Although the current Intellectual Property Protection Policy remains in effect and governs procedures for the protection and registration of intellectual property at the institution, it is currently being updated to include provisions that reflect new developments and practical experience, particularly in connection with consulting, licensing, and other contractual relationships (e.g., cooperation with CETAV, and the Prague Technology Center). The accompanying simplified information guide for employees, which summarizes the basic rules for intellectual property protection at the institute in an easy-to-understand format, will also be updated.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 18

Mobility rules

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 29. Value of mobility	Q2 2025	Deputy Director PR Manager Laboratory Heads	Target: All staff and trainees will have easy access to the rules for different types of short and long term scientific placements.
(-/+) 39. Access to research training and continuous development			Emphasis will be placed on Erasmus-type internships and others supported by the Academy of Sciences and grant agencies. Indicator: Rules for short and long term mobility are developed and published.
Current Status	Remarks		
IN PROGRESS	The Institute of Microbiology has long been a strong supporter of international mobility for researchers, particularly young researchers. For this reason, our institute has carried out a large number of incoming and outgoing mobility projects, which were funded primarily by the Research, Development, and Education Operational Program, the Jan Amos Comenius Operational Program, Horizon 2020, and Horizon Europe. A large portion of these projects are still ongoing or are yet to begin. The overall goal of these mobility programs is to internationalize and strengthen research at our institute. Outbound mobility programs have been and continue to be focused on supporting the professional development of early-career researchers at our institute by enabling them to gain new experiences and practical skills abroad, as well as on supporting high-caliber senior researchers at our institute in their continued professional growth. Incoming mobility programs, meanwhile, have been and continue to be aimed at harnessing the potential of postdocs from abroad within our institute and transferring the international experience of high-caliber senior researchers into our institute's research practices. A large portion of incoming mobility is funded by projects carried out under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions grant schemes, namely MSCA – Individual Fellowships (Postdoctoral Fellowships), MSCA-RISE (Research and Innovation Staff Exchange), MSCA Staff Exchanges, MSCA Doctoral Networks, and MSCA COFUND. Other mobility programs are carried out as sub-activities within large projects funded through the "Top-Level Research" call under the OP JAK program. Some mobility programs of a smaller financial scope have been and continue to be implemented with support from national sources, particularly from the Czech Academy of Sciences (e.g., Mobility Plus projects) and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT). The rules governing these mobility programs are established within each of these projects. However, comprehensive rules for short-term and long-term research mobility as a separate internal regulation have not yet been drafted and published.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 19

Gender Equality Plan

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 9. Public engagement			
(+/-) 10. Non discrimination			
(+/-) 27. Gender balance		Deputy	Target: In all activities, the Institute should transparently follow the Gender Equality Plan (available on the intranet in CZ and EN), evaluate its implementation annually, and amend it if necessary. Indicator: Annual report on the activities of the Gender Equality Team.
(+/-) 34. Complains/ appeals	Q1 2024 Q2 2025 Q3 2026	Director PR Manager Laboratory Heads	
(++) 35. Participation in decision-making bodies			
(+/-) 37. Supervision and managerial duties			
Current Status	Remarks		
IN PROGRESS	The 2024 Gender Equality Plan is permanently available on the website in both Czech and English. The Equal Opportunities Team (GET) meets regularly once a month to discuss relevant issues and prepares minutes of all meetings in both Czech and English, which it distributes via the list-mbu mailing list and publishes on the intranet. The team also prepared a questionnaire on the GET's activities; the results of the questionnaire were published in December 2025. An annual evaluation of the team's activities is conducted, annual reports are published, and the measures are implemented on an ongoing basis. Currently, the NORA Gender Information Center, o.p.s., is preparing an "Equal Opportunities Analysis" questionnaire to serve as the basis for a gender audit and the development of a new plan for gender equality, effective starting in 2027.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 20

Internal rules for expectant mothers

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 5. Contractual and legal obligations	Q1 2026	HR Staff Gender Equality Team Laboratory Heads Director	Target: The Institute does not yet have any binding rules on the work of pregnant women. It only complies with the Labour Code. Since almost all workplaces are considered to be risky, the possibilities of working in such cases are limited, but they do exist, although awareness of them is low. Indicator: Summary of rules for pregnant workers at IMIC and their publication on the intranet.
(+/-) 27. Gender balance			
(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development			
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	In March 2026, the first draft of guidelines for the safe employment of women and minors was prepared and distributed to the members of the working group. It focuses not only on pregnant women but also addresses rules for the safe employment of breastfeeding employees, employees who are mothers until the end of the ninth month after childbirth, and minors (including high school students and participants in events such as “Open Science,” etc.). The guidelines also include Requirements for Safe Work Spaces and a practical guide titled “What to Do If an Employee/Student Becomes Pregnant.” The document was finalized and published on the intranet in June 2026; it is effective as of July 1, 2026.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 21

Occupational health care

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 3. Professional responsibility	Q4 2024 Q4 2025		Target: Monitor the satisfaction of foreign and Czech employees with the newly appointed doctor. Ensure that foreign researchers undergo entrance, periodic and exit medical examinations without unnecessary difficulties. Indicator: Satisfaction questionnaires and their analysis.
(+/-) 5. Contractual and legal obligations	Q4 2026		
Current Status	Remarks		
EXTENDED	A satisfaction survey regarding the provision of occupational health examinations was launched in November 2024, with 188 employees participating. On a five-point scale (1 being best, 5 being worst), satisfaction with the provision of occupational health examinations averaged 3.9. However, since then, there have been changes in the clinic's staffing, so we plan to repeat the survey at the end of 2026. Regular monitoring of satisfaction has thus begun and will be repeated in subsequent years as planned.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 22

Management training programme

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(++) 1. Research freedom	Continuously	HR Staff Deputy Director Laboratory Heads	Target: As part of management skills, managers should be trained in e.g. time management, assertive communication skills in practice, and interested parties should also be trained in e.g. presentation skills, full use of Researchgate and LinkedIn options, etc. The current big challenge is the critical use of AI in all relevant domains, which will also be the subject of discussion workshops. Indicator: Lectures or workshops on the above topics: meeting dates and number of participants.
(++) 6. Accountability			
(+/-) 28. Career development			
(++) 35. Participation in decision-making bodies			
(+/-) 37. Supervision and managerial duties			
(-/+) 39. Access to research training and continuous development			
Current Status	Remarks		
IN PROGRESS	In addition to the mandatory cybersecurity training, a management skills training course titled “Management Skills – Personality Typology” was held. All employees were also offered preparatory workshops for ERC grant applicants (March 2024, 2025, and 2026), training on IT security (February 2025 and 2026), the use of artificial intelligence in research (December 2025), institutional resilience (May 2026), and “Gender in Research” training (June 2026). Presentations from the courses are available on the intranet. The range of additional soft skills courses is continuously expanding; mandatory cybersecurity training will take place in the near future. This measure is being implemented on an ongoing basis; however, systematic mandatory management training for laboratory heads and other senior staff, including grant investigators who lead their own small teams such as training in conflict resolution and responsible leadership, is still lacking.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 23

Increased use of e-learning tools

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 3. Professional responsibility			
(+/-) 5. Contractual and legal obligations			
(+/-) 7. Good practice in research	Q2 2025	Director Deputy Director Secretary	Target: Facilitate workers' participation in mandatory training by converting it into an electronic form: create e-learning courses in e.g. occupational health and safety, fire protection, GDPR and institutional resilience that can be completed at any time, for example over a two-week period, rather than at a set time. Indicator: E-learning system with final test and certificate for each trainee.
(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development			
(-/+) 39. Access to research training and continuous development			
Current Status	Remarks		
EXTENDED	The institute's management is making every effort to facilitate employee participation in mandatory training by converting it to an online format. An e-learning course focused on occupational safety, available through the Center for Occupational Safety and Fire Protection (CIVOP) e-learning system, was launched for employees in April 2026. This was followed by training on institutional resilience (in May 2026) and "Gender in Research" training (in June 2026). Additional training sessions (such as driver training and mandatory cybersecurity training, which also meets the requirements of the NIS2 Directive) will follow. At the same time, we are familiarizing employees with important regulations via the Flowio system, conducting in-person training in a hybrid format (via Zoom), and publishing recordings of these training sessions on the intranet.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 24

Co-authorship

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(++) 32. Co-authorship	Q4 2024	Deputy Director IMIC Council	Target: Although the GAP analysis did not reveal any significant problems with co-authorship, guidelines for authorship of professional or scientific publications based on the CAS Code of Ethics will be prepared and published on the intranet. Indicator: Preparing and publishing Guidelines for Authors of Professional or Scientific Publications in Czech and English and publishing them on the intranet.
(+/-) 36. Relation with supervisors			
(+/-) 37. Supervision and managerial duties			
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	Recommendations on authorship and co-authorship of scientific publications were issued and distributed in October 2024. The text is based on the Code of Ethics of the Czech Academy of Sciences and is published on the intranet; the measure for the fourth quarter of 2024 has been fulfilled.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 25

Encourage early career researchers

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(++) 21. Postdoctoral appointments (Code)	Q1 2026	Laboratory Heads IMIC Council Director	Target: Facilitate the start of doctoral/postdoctoral research careers; develop a mentoring programme methodology. Explore training opportunities suitable for early-stage researchers, whether national or international, e.g. using the EURAXESS Startup Hub, which offers a series of webinars for researchers (mainly PhD students) on leadership skills and the basics of a start-up enterprise. Indicator: Design of a mentoring module for young researchers, including training activities aimed at acquiring and consolidating the knowledge and skills necessary for scientific work.
(++) 22. Recognition of the profession			
(+/-) 28. Career development			
(++) 30. Access to career advice			
Current Status	Remarks		
EXTENDED	In connection with the amendment to the Higher Education Act, the institute guarantees a minimum doctoral income to full-time doctoral students pursuing their studies within the standard period of study. This income must correspond to a multiple of the minimum wage as stipulated by law. The minimum doctoral income consists of a doctoral stipend provided by the university and any salary for research activities conducted in connection with the doctoral student's dissertation. In this regard, the institute has signed agreements with individual universities whose students are employed by us and, under the supervision of their advisor, who is an employee of IMIC, work on their dissertations. We support students by offering part-time employment. Salary support for postdoctoral researchers is provided through the PPLZ program; candidates are recommended by the IMIC Board every April. In addition, with the support of the institute's leadership, a PhD student club has been established at the institute; it meets regularly, organized a student conference as part of the INTER-MICRO OP JAK project, and is planning a retreat to Nové Hradky. We also support early-career researchers by recognizing student publications where they are the first author, as well as the best bachelor's and master's theses and dissertations. However, a mentoring program for young researchers is still lacking.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 26

Reporting on the activities of the Transfer Technology Department

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 5. Contractual and legal obligations	Continuously	TTD Head	Target: Communicating the initiatives and results of the TT Department's activities to the Institute's staff and the public. Indicators: Regular press releases published on the Institute's website. Inclusion of this item on the agenda of regular meetings of director's college and meetings of laboratory heads.
(++) 6. Accountability			
(+/-) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results			
(+/-) 9. Public engagement			
Current Status	Remarks		
IN PROGRESS	The activities of the Technology Transfer Department (patents, contract research, commercial agreements) are regularly presented to the Institute Board and included in annual reports. Reporting obligations are consistently fulfilled in accordance with established measures, e.g., promotion/media coverage of IMIC's entry into AffiPro—raising awareness of IMIC's technology transfer among the general public; legal, transfer, and PR services for IMIC's Core Facilities aimed at potential customers; marketing support, e.g., through websites and social media, and sharing information about professional events on the topic of technology transfer (e.g., from the Ministry of Industry and Trade / CzechInvest, the STAR Cluster – Leadership Academy for Researchers, etc.).		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 27

Increased PR activities

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results	Continuously	PR Department	Target: To "personalise" information for the press, politicians, the professional and lay public and students, and to increase public awareness of the Institute's research results.
(+/-) 9. Public engagement		Laboratory Heads Director	Indicators: Regular publication of a newsletter and press releases dedicated to the achievements of IMIC scientists. Participation in national and regional popularisation events. Annual report on contributions to media and popularisation journals.
Current Status	Remarks		
IN PROGRESS	A new visual identity, website, and intranet have significantly strengthened both external and internal communication. In early 2025, the PR team was bolstered by a new coordinator, Kateřina Voráčová, Ph.D. The PR department regularly reports on the significant achievements of IMIC researchers on the IMIC website and social media channels. The Institute regularly and actively participates in the Science Fair (June), ScienceFest (June), and Researchers' Night (September). The PR department also organizes IMIC Day, which includes an awards ceremony for the best publications, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations, as well as a sports and cultural afternoon and a Christmas gathering for all employees. Regular press releases, supported by social media outreach and monitoring of the impact of PR activities, demonstrate that this objective is being met.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 28

Teaching Activities

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(++) 33. Teaching	Continuously	Deputy Director Laboratory Heads	Target: Support the involvement of the Institute's staff in teaching at secondary schools and universities, to enable contact between students and the Institute's postgraduate students and scientists. Organising and participating in summer schools and courses. Facilitating internships for high school and university students at the Institute. Promoting the activities and results of the Institute among young people at every opportunity. Looking for ways to help them develop their interest in science. Indicators: Annual review of teaching activities and participation in summer schools and courses; number of diploma and PhD students working at the IMIC; number of new students and graduates.
(-/+) 39. Access to research training and continuous development			
Current Status	Remarks		
IN PROGRESS	Collaboration with universities and the involvement of researchers in teaching is a long-standing tradition that continues to this day. IMIC staff are involved in teaching, particularly at universities (VŠCHT, UK, ČVUT, UP, etc.) in a number of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs; in 2025, they taught a total of 1,003 hours. Students participate in research, and the institute organizes summer schools and internships. The institute also actively participates in the Czech Academy of Sciences' "Open Science" project for high school students. As part of the new MSCA project to organize the WAAITT Science Night, we are partners responsible for the "Scientists in Schools" initiative, where we have established cooperation with the National Pedagogical Institute regarding the preparation of teaching materials and the offering of thematic lectures for elementary and high schools. Thanks to the efforts of the PR department, awareness of our events (including invitations and follow-ups) has increased in recent years. Educational activities are regularly evaluated in our annual reports.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 29

Prevention of gender-based violence and intolerance

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 2. Ethical principles	Q1 2026	Laboratory Heads	Target: To prevent all forms of intolerance and the possible occurrence of gender-based violence. To remind laboratory managers and supervisors of their responsibility to resolve and prevent potential conflicts in the workplace. To improve the interpersonal relations in the workplace through the promotion of informal meetings and events. Indicators: Adoption of the Code of Conduct in the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. Adoption and publication of a methodology for gender-based violence prevention and resolution procedures at IMIC. Organisation of informal events for PhD students, such as get-togethers, barbecues, sports events, etc., leading to closer mutual acquaintance.
(+/-) 24. Working conditions			
(+/-) 36. Relation with supervisors			
Current Status	Remarks		
COMPLETED	The Code of Conduct was signed by employees in 2025 and re-signed via the Flowio app in July 2026. For new employees, we have set up an automatic confirmation process to acknowledge the Code of Conduct and other important regulations via the Flowio app when they log in to the app for the first time. In collaboration with the organization KONSENT, z.s., a Methodological Guide for Promoting Social Safety at the Institute of Microbiology of the Czech Academy of Sciences was developed and published on the intranet in February 2026, along with the document "PROTECTION OF EMPLOYEE RIGHTS." KONSENT, z.s., trained 15 contact persons, and the ombudsperson's office provides a secure channel for complaints; contact information is published on the Institute's website and on the intranet and is included in the handbook for new employees. In addition, the Institute has an internal directive on whistleblower protection, which established an internal reporting system designed to prevent and detect unlawful conduct within the scope of the Act and is intended to protect employees who intend to use the system to report such conduct. Furthermore, with the support of the institute's leadership, a PhD student club has been established at the institute; it meets regularly, organized a student conference as part of the INTER-MICRO project, and is planning a retreat in Nové Hradý.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 30

Feedback

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 3. Professional responsibility			Target: Feedback to the HR Award Steering Committee and the Institute management. Indicator: Regular online surveys - Satisfaction with the changes that have been made and suggestions for the future. Incorporation of realistic comments into institutional rules and possibly implementation of suggested specific actions.
(+/-) 5. Contractual and legal obligations			
(+/-) 13. Recruitment (Code)	Q1 2025 Q1 2026	HR Staff	
(+/-) 24. Working conditions			
(+/-) 28. Career development			
Current Status	Remarks		
EXTENDED	Regular anonymous surveys (HR surveys launched in December 2023 and 2024, a survey on satisfaction with the provision of occupational health examinations (November 29, 2024), a GET survey in October 2025 with results published in December 2025, GET/HR survey launched in June 2026) provide valuable feedback. Suggestions are incorporated into institutional policies and proposed measures—this measure is being implemented on an ongoing basis.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 31

Welcome Office and Buddy System The services provided by the Welcome Office and Buddy System will include: - Administrative support – assistance with visas (via EURAXESS), residency, employment documents, and housing within the institution's facilities - Orientation within the institution – familiarization with rules, safety, IT systems, and the organizational structure - Coordination with the HR department and oversight of the implementation of the onboarding plan - Personal Buddy Service – a network of trained volunteer employees from across all of the institute's campuses (Prague-Krč, Vestec, Nový Hrádek, Nové Hradky, Třeboň) who will be available to newcomers as informal guides during their first weeks or months. The buddy will help with day-to-day matters (the cafeteria, the printer, finding your way around the buildings), introduce the newcomer to the workplace's social network, and help them overcome initial isolation. The buddy is someone from the newcomer's immediate surroundings—they do not have to be from the HR department, but rather from the same or a neighboring location, so they understand the local context and are easily accessible. - Organizing welcome events and networking meetings - Support with practical matters – daycare within the institute's facilities, transportation, and Czech language courses

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 4. Professional attitude			Target: Establish a contact point (Welcome Office) within the Human Resources Department to provide new employees—particularly foreign employees, but also Czech employees—with prompt, clear, and consistent support upon joining the institute and during their first weeks there. The Welcome Office will also coordinate a network of personal mentors ("buddies") who will be based directly at individual work sites, thereby ensuring personalized support for all newcomers regardless of their location. Indicators: - Developing a job description for the Welcome Office and the buddy role, and publishing it on the website and intranet in Czech and English - Appoint a Welcome Office coordinator (an HR department employee) and designate at least one buddy at each of the institute's main locations (Prague-Krč/Vestec, Nový Hrádek, Nové Hradky, Třeboň) - Number of employees who used the Welcome Office's services (annual statistics) - Satisfaction survey for new employees regarding the onboarding process and buddy support
(+/-) 5. Contractual and legal obligations			
(+/-) 10. Non discrimination			
(+/-) 12. Recruitment			
(+/-) 24. Working conditions			
(+/-) 28. Career development	Q3 2027 – Q2 2028	HR Department, Coordination Center, PR Department	
(++) 30. Access to career advice			
(+/-) 36. Relation with supervisors			
(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development			
(+/-) 40. Supervision			
Current Status	Remarks		
NEW	Although an onboarding plan already exists, its implementation falls under the purview of laboratory managers and varies from one workplace to another. International employees repeatedly report difficulties navigating the administrative and social environment. There is a lack of a single point of contact, as well as personalized support that goes beyond the supervisor-subordinate relationship. A Welcome Office coordinator within the Human Resources Department will provide standardized administrative and orientation support, while a network of buddies will offer informal and location-specific support at all sites, including remote offices. This integration of both functions will create synergy—buddies will have an overview of the entire onboarding process thanks to coordination with the Welcome Office, and at the same time, they will be easily accessible to new hires directly at their workplace.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 32

Analysis of the Contribution and Role of International Staff The analysis will include: - A statistical evaluation of the proportion of foreign researchers in the institute's total scientific output (Q1–Q2 publications, patents, conference presentations) compared to their proportion of the total number of researchers - An analysis of grant activity—the number of grants independently submitted and awarded to foreign researchers (MSCA, Czech Science Foundation, Czech Health Research Council, Technology Agency of the Czech Republic, etc.), and the amount of funding secured - Mapping of career trajectories—where foreign researchers go after leaving IMIC (other academic positions in the Czech Republic, within the EU, outside the EU, or in the private sector) and how long they stay at the institute on average - Qualitative survey (interviews, questionnaire) among foreign staff and their supervisors—what the institute has provided them and what they have contributed to the institute, what barriers they perceive, and what would improve their professional development and retention Formulation of recommendations for the coming period—whether and how to adjust the recruitment strategy, support services, and retention measures

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 10. Non discrimination			
(+/-) 12. Recruitment			
(++) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code)			
(++) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code)		Deputy Director for HR Award, Human Resources Department, Grants Department, Public Relations Department	
(+/-) 24. Working conditions	Q1 2028 – Q2 2029		Target: To systematically evaluate the contribution of foreign researchers to the Institute of Microbiology—in terms of the quality and volume of scientific outputs, involvement in grant activities, knowledge and technology transfer, enrichment of the research environment, and internationalization—and, based on the results, to formulate recommendations for a recruitment strategy, a support system for foreign employees, and their retention at the institution. Indicators: - Preparation and publication of the document "Analysis of the Contribution and Role of Foreign Staff at the Institute of Microbiology" on the intranet in Czech and English - Data on the share of foreign staff in publications, patent applications, and grants
(-/+) 25. Stability and permanence of employment			
(-/+) 26. Funding and salaries			
(+/-) 28. Career development			
(+/-) 29. Value of mobility			
(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development			
Current Status	Remarks		
NEW	IMIC employs a significant number of international staff (approximately 23% of researchers, 51 out of 121 doctoral students), whose share has been growing in recent years alongside the expansion of international projects (MSCA, OP JAK, Horizon Europe). The contribution of these employees is intuitively perceived as positive, but it has not yet been systematically evaluated. There is a lack of data that would allow us to answer the following questions: whether the institute's environment allows international staff to fully develop their scientific potential; to what extent they independently secure grant funding; whether the institute serves primarily as an attractive destination; whether international staff remain at the institute long-term or use it as one stage in their international careers; what know-how they bring to the institute; and, conversely, what they take away. The answers to these questions are crucial for effectively designing support services (Welcome Office, buddy system, language courses), for formulating a realistic recruitment strategy, and for making decisions about investments in talent retention. The analysis will also help identify potential weaknesses—such as the loss of high-quality staff, insufficient involvement in grant activities, or an imbalance between benefits and costs—and propose measures to address them.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 33

Outboarding Outboarding will include: - Introduction of a voluntary and confidential exit interview - Ensuring the preservation of know-how - Creation of a voluntary alumni network for the institute

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 24. Working conditions	Q4 2027 – Q2 2028	Laboratory heads, Human Resources Department	Target: To implement a structured termination process that ensures a dignified departure for employees, the handover of responsibilities and knowledge, the collection of feedback, and the preservation of know-how. Indicators: - Development of an outboarding checklist and its publication on the intranet in Czech and English - Implementation of an exit interview system and annual statistics on reasons for departure
(-/+) 25. Stability and permanence of employment			
(+/-) 28. Career development			
Current Status	Remarks		
NEW	Currently, the termination of employment follows formal legal procedures (termination letter), but there is no exit interview to identify, for example, structural issues that lead to departures.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 34

Mentoring Program for Early-Career Researchers

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 28. Career development	Q1 2027 – Q4 2027 (pilot phase), full operation starting in 2028	Deputy Director for HR Award, Human Resources Department, Laboratory Heads	Target: To create a structured mentoring module for early-career researchers (R1–R2) that will provide them with systematic career counseling and access to the expertise of senior colleagues beyond the scope of the supervisor–student relationship. The program will also include systematic access to career counseling—the institute will utilize the capacity of career counselors working within the TRySK project or, if necessary, recruit new ones from among experienced staff, and will implement a system of regularly scheduled consultation slots during which employees (primarily early-career researchers, but also other interested parties) can discuss issues related to career planning, balancing parenthood with a research career, mobility options, grant opportunities, or retirement. Consultation slots will be offered institute-wide via the intranet and email with a predefined range of typical topics so that employees know what issues they can discuss with the advisors. Indicators: Development of a methodology for the mentoring program and its publication on the intranet in Czech and English Creation of a system for scheduling consultation slots with career counselors and the regular posting of these slots (at least 4 times per year per counselor) Number of trained mentors, number of mentees involved, and number of employees who used career counseling services Publishing an overview of career counseling topics on the intranet in Czech and English Annual evaluation of participant satisfaction (separately for mentoring and separately for career counseling)
(++) 30. Access to career advice			
(+/-) 37. Supervision and managerial duties			
(+/-) 40. Supervision			

PROPOSED ACTIONS

		Current Status	Remarks	
		NEW	The absence of a mentoring program was identified as early as the initial GAP analysis and repeatedly confirmed in subsequent questionnaire surveys. Early-career researchers lack structured career counseling and a clear vision for their future professional direction—whether in academia or beyond. Existing support (the PPLZ program, the PhD Student Club, and awards for research work) is valuable but does not provide systematic guidance in the area of career development. The institute already has four career counselors available through the TRySK project; however, their potential is not fully utilized institute-wide because there is no mechanism in place to regularly offer their services. Making career counseling available through consultation slots and linking it to a mentoring program will create a comprehensive system of support for professional growth that meets the requirements of the European Charter for Researchers regarding the availability of career counseling for researchers at all career stages, regardless of their contractual status.	

Action 35					
Systematic Management Training for Executives		GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
		(+/-) 28. Career development			Target: To implement a mandatory and structured management training program for all heads of laboratories, service centers, and grant principal investigators who lead research teams. Indicators: - Development of a management training curriculum - Number of managers trained - Participant satisfaction survey
		(+/-) 36. Relation with supervisors	Q2 2027 – Q4 2027 (pilot modules), full operation starting in 2028	Director, Deputy	
		(+/-) 37. Supervision and managerial duties		Director, HR Department	
		(++) 38. Continuing Professional Development			
		Current Status	Remarks		
		NEW	The current offering is unsystematic. There is no mandatory, comprehensive program that would unify leadership standards across the institute. Employees repeatedly identified shortcomings in communication and management in the questionnaires.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 36

Formalizing the Role of the Data Steward and Developing Research Data Management The action will include: - Formalizing the position of data steward—defining responsibilities, job duties, and integration into the organizational structure - Ensuring the long-term sustainability of the position (transition from project-based to institutional funding) - Developing a methodology for research data management and Data Management Plans - Training for researchers in the areas of Open Science and data management - Ensuring capacity expansion and upgrading the secure data repository within the institution - Intensifying collaboration with CESNET; raising awareness of the possibilities for using the CESNET data center and repository

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 3. Professional responsibility			Target: To formalize and strengthen the role of the data steward, which already exists at the institute (funded through the OP JAK projects), and to systematically promote a culture of open science and research data management. Indicators: - Formalization of the data steward position and publication of the job description on the intranet - Number of researchers trained in Open Science - Methodology for Data Management Plans published on the intranet - Number of publications with open data / a Data Management Plan
(+/-) 7. Good practice in research	Q2 2027 – Q2 2028	Deputy Director, IT Department, Data Steward	
(+/-) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results			
Current Status	Remarks		
NEW	The institute already has a person performing the duties of a data steward (Arzuv Čaryjeva); however, her role is not sufficiently defined and is tied to project funding. At the same time, the institute's management allocates 2 million CZK annually for Open Access publications and is preparing a project for the Open Science III call for proposals. The lack of systematic support for research data management limits researchers' ability to fully realize the potential of open science.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 37

Systematic Support for Science Outreach and Responsible Communication The measures will include: - Issuance of a declaration by the director/management of IMIC supporting science communication as a legitimate part of scientific work, including the expectation that laboratory heads will implement it - Developing a communication strategy that defines why, to whom, what, and how the institute communicates in order to build its good reputation. - Organizing a practical workshop on media communication for interested staff members (e.g., presentation skills, writing press releases, communicating on social media, handling difficult questions)

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 3. Professional responsibility	Ongoing	PR Department, Director, Deputy Director	Target: To institutionally establish science communication as an activity that serves the institute's interests, to develop a communication strategy, and to provide science communication staff with practical training in scientific communication and media appearances. Indicators: - Publication of a declaration supporting science communication on the intranet in Czech and English - Development of the institute's communication strategy - Conducting at least one media communication workshop per year - Number of science communication events and number of participating employees in the annual report
(+/-) 4. Professional attitude			
(+/-) 7. Good practice in research			
(+/-) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results			
(+/-) 9. Public engagement			
Current Status	Remarks		
NEW	Science outreach and the communication of research results to the public are an integral part of a research institution's mission and directly fulfill the Charter's principles regarding the dissemination of results and public engagement. Nevertheless, there is currently a lack of (a) a clear statement from management that popularization is a supported activity that laboratory heads should not unreasonably prevent their subordinates from engaging in, and (b) systematic training for those involved in popularization. The absence of these rules and guidelines may lead to employees' reluctance to participate in outreach events, inconsistent external communication, or reputational risks for the institute.		

PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 38

Methodological Support and Practical Guidelines for Administrative Processes The measure will include: - Creation of practical guides ("user guides") for the most common administrative processes—at a minimum: business trips (application, approval, reimbursement), orders for goods and services, requests for vacation and work-from-home arrangements, and travel expense reimbursement - Each guide will include: a step-by-step description in the correct order, warnings about the most common mistakes, sample examples (e.g., combining a business trip with vacation), and a link to the relevant internal regulation - Designation of a contact person who will provide authoritative methodological information and whom employees can contact with questions before performing an administrative task - Publishing the guides on the intranet in the "Documents – Guides" section in both Czech and English - Regularly updating the guides when processes or regulations change

GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
(+/-) 3. Professional responsibility	Ongoing	Secretary, IT Department, Finance Department, HR Department, Deputy Director	Target: To create and publish on the intranet a set of practical guides for the most common administrative processes (business trips, purchase orders, expense reports, vacation requests, working from home, approval processes in Flowio), including notes on the most common errors, critical points, and sample examples. To designate a contact person who will provide authoritative methodological information. Indicators: - Create and publish at least five practical guides on the intranet in Czech and English - Designate and publish a contact person for methodological inquiries - Satisfaction survey regarding the clarity of administrative processes (as part of the regular HR survey) - Reduction in the number of incorrectly submitted requests (statistics from Flowio / the Finance Department)
(+/-) 4. Professional attitude			
(+/-) 5. Contractual and legal obligations			
(+/-) 24. Working conditions			

Current Status

Remarks

NEW

The current documentation of administrative processes is either fragmented or insufficiently detailed. For instance, rules for combining business trips and vacation are not clearly documented anywhere. Much practical information is communicated verbally, which makes it impossible to verify retrospectively and leads to inconsistent interpretations. The consequences—in the form of financial penalties—are then borne by employees, even though the error stems from insufficient process documentation. Creating practical guidelines and designating a contact person for procedural questions directly fulfills the principle of administrative simplification and transparency of working conditions.

Unselected principles:

The extended version of the reviewed strategy for the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers in your organisation over the next three years, including the OTM-R policy, must be published on your organisation's website.

Please provide the link to the dedicated webpage(s) on your organisation's web site. Multiple links must be comma separated. *:

URL *:

<https://mbu.cas.cz/en/study-and-career/hr-award-en> (<https://mbu.cas.cz/en/study-and-career/hr-award-en>)

Please also indicate how your organisation is working towards / has developed an open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment policy (OTM-R). Although there may be some overlap with the range of actions listed above in the action plan (as they emerged from the gap analysis), please provide a short commentary demonstrating the progress made.

Comments on the implementation of the OTM-R principles (initial phase)

As the statutory representative, the director of the institution is responsible for personnel policy in IMIC. The selection of scientific workers for the IMIC is further governed by Act No. 283/1992 Coll. on the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, as amended by Act No. 420/2005 Coll. and the Statutes of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (including the Career Code of University-Educated Employees of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic). Although the main principles of the "European Charter for Researchers" and the "Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers" are taken into account in practice when conducting selection procedures, not all recommendations of the OTM-R policy are applied at the level of internal regulations.

The implementation of the new OTM-R policy will take place through close co-operation of the Personnel department and HR Steering Committee with the employees of the institute responsible for recruitment - especially the heads of selection committees, heads of individual departments/laboratories and the management of the institute. The implementation process, based on the requirements listed in the OTM-R Toolkit, or OTM-R Report and following on from the initial analysis of the current state captured through the "OTM-R Checklist", will be monitored in the form of fulfilling the indicators listed.

All suggestions from the GAP analysis and the OTM-R checklist have been taken into account in the action plan. The links between the OTM-R checklist and the Action Plan are clearly evident from the need to develop the "RULES OF THE IMIC OTM-R SELECTION PROCEDURE" and the "PROCEDURE AND METHODOLOGY OF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF SCIENTIFIC POSITIONS AT THE INSTITUTE OF MICROBIOLOGY CAS" to which the OTM-R checklist refers in points 1, 2, 5, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23. One of the main objectives will be the minimisation of administrative burdens and the electronic transmission of supporting documents and the development of an e-recruitment tool. RULES OF THE IMIC OTM-R SELECTION PROCEDURE and PROCEDURE AND METHODOLOGY OF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF SCIENTIFIC POSITIONS AT THE INSTITUTE OF MICROBIOLOGY CAS (Action 6) are currently being prepared. We also consider the regular publication of a New Employee Handbook and the development of an on-boarding plan (Actions 8 and 9) to be very important. The former is already published in both language versions (CZ/EN) on the intranet and distributed in printed form by the Personnel Department upon entry, and the latter is under development. All activities marked as ongoing (Actions 7, 16, 28 and 30) are continuously fulfilled.

Indicators are the clarification and updating of the intranet and the publication of all institutional documents in English, the creation of new binding OTM-R related documents mentioned above, the On-boarding Plan, and the IMIC Graphic Manual. Additional indicators are: the establishment of the institute of Ombudsman, and the adoption of IMIC Code of Ethics; conducting a regular gender audit; updating the New Employee Handbook; publishing a regular Newsletter; raising awareness of benefits and career development opportunities; continuing to announce prizes for the best research and student papers.

Comments on the implementation of the OTM-R principles (internal review for interim assessment)

Significant progress has been made in implementing the principles of open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R) at the MBÚ from the initial phase onward. The binding document "IMIC OTM-R Selection Procedure Rules" was published on the intranet on March 28, 2024, along with the detailed document "Procedure and Methodology for Recruitment and Selection for Research Positions at the Institute of Microbiology of the Czech Academy of Sciences." These documents unify previously fragmented rules by integrating provisions of the Labor Code, the Career Regulations for University-Educated Employees of the Czech Academy of Sciences, and existing internal regulations into a single comprehensive framework in accordance with European standards. A direct link to these OTM-R documents has been added to the "Careers" section of the Institute's new website, ensuring their public availability. Job openings are regularly published through international channels such as EURAXESS, thereby increasing the transparency of the selection process. The recruitment methodology now explicitly takes into account career breaks (parental leave, long-term illness, long-term care for a family member) and recognizes experience with mobility, whether geographic, intersectoral, or interdisciplinary. Selection committees are formed in accordance with OTM-R rules, and their composition is guided by the principles of gender balance and diversity. Job postings are published in both Czech and English, and the selection process is governed by transparent deadlines and clearly defined selection criteria, which are communicated to applicants in advance. However, comprehensive training for all members of selection committees on topics such as unconscious bias and gender-sensitive evaluation has not yet been fully implemented; this remains a priority for the coming period. A standardized onboarding plan for new employees has been developed; it has been published on the intranet in both Czech and English and is regularly updated; it provides laboratory managers with a practical checklist for onboarding new employees. The new employee handbook is regularly revised and provides basic information on the institute's operations and on employees' rights and responsibilities. Human resources staff are committed to continuous professional development and participate in conferences and training sessions on human resources regulations and their updates. Overall, it can be said that the OTM-R principles are now firmly embedded in the institute's recruitment procedures, and the remaining shortcoming—comprehensive training for members of selection committees—should be addressed in the coming period. The Institute is committed to continuously monitoring the practical application of these principles through feedback gathered in regular employee surveys and through direct communication with newly hired employees.

Ideally, the extended version of the reviewed OTM-R policy and actions should be published on your organisation's website.

Please provide the web link to the OTM-R dedicated web page(s) if it differs from the one where the reviewed strategy for the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers is located. Multiple links must be comma separated.

<https://mbu.cas.cz/en/study-and-career/hr-award-en> (<https://mbu.cas.cz/en/study-and-career/hr-award-en>)

URL:

4. Implementation process

General overview of the implementation process (max. 1000 words)

The implementation phase began in the first quarter of 2024 with an introductory presentation for the entire IMIC research community. We recognize that effective communication and collaboration with stakeholders are essential for a proper understanding of the HRS4R principles and for achieving the established goals. Therefore, all researchers at levels R1–R4 (assembly) were invited to this meeting, where initial discussions took place regarding the implementation of the first measures. The results of the gap analysis and the action plan for the next two years were also presented. All planned actions were continuously consulted on, revised, and updated based on discussions between the HR Award team, the assembly, and specific employees (managers, researchers, or administrative staff).

We used online questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, and meetings as tools for these discussions. The working group regularly assessed progress and potential risks. The steering committee oversaw the working group's activities, coordinated and approved the implementation of HRS4R principles within the institution, and participated in key strategic decisions.

One of the first measures implemented was a revision of the OTM-R policy. The "OTM-R Selection Procedure Rules" were published on the intranet in March 2024, along with a detailed document titled "Procedure and Methodology for Recruitment and Selection for Research Positions." A link to these documents was added to the career pages on the new website, and job postings are now regularly published through international channels. The Code of Conduct of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Code of Ethics for Researchers at the Czech Academy of Sciences were published on the intranet in September 2024, and employees confirmed that they had reviewed them, first by signing and then via the Flowio platform. In 2025, a new, modern website was launched on the WordPress platform, based on a new unified visual identity that consolidated the previously fragmented visual presentation of individual laboratories.

In the area of working conditions, binding rules for working from home were issued in November 2024, allowing employees to work remotely for up to 4 days per month. In November 2025, the Institute Board approved new attestation rules, which introduced a two-year evaluation cycle and extended the evaluation requirement to all research staff regardless of the extent of employment. The Flowio platform was gradually implemented, significantly reducing the administrative burden through electronic forms for vacation requests, business trips, and purchase orders; it is also used to confirm acknowledgment of internal regulations.

A key milestone was the establishment of the ombudsman position. In collaboration with the organization KONSENT, a Methodological Guide for Promoting Social Safety was developed and published on the intranet in February 2026 in both Czech and English. Fifteen contact persons were trained in the institute's various departments, and the ombudsman position was filled effective February 2026.

A completely new intranet was launched in May 2026, meeting the deadline set for the second quarter of 2026. The intranet is modern, user-friendly, and bilingual, with defined editing permissions for representatives of individual departments. The new intranet also includes a section dedicated to internal policies; key employment guidelines are also available in a separate section. In March 2026, the first draft of the internal rules for the safe employment of pregnant women, nursing mothers, and minors was circulated for comment, and the final version of the document was published on the intranet in June 2026, effective July 1, 2026.

In July–August 2026, employees confirmed several key internal policies via the Flowio platform (organizational regulations, work regulations, payroll regulations, code of ethics, and the newly adopted policy on the safe employment of women and minors). A mechanism is currently being implemented to automatically familiarize new employees with these policies when they log into the Flowio system for the first time.

In May 2026, a workshop on pay transparency was held for laboratory managers in collaboration with Deloitte, marking a significant step toward implementing the EU Pay Transparency Directive. The first e-learning course (workplace safety) was launched, and additional modules (institutional resilience, NIS2 cybersecurity) are planned. Regular employee surveys (HR surveys, GET surveys) continue to provide valuable feedback that is incorporated into institutional policies.

Throughout the implementation process, the institute maintains close communication with all stakeholders: biannual newsletters and regular emails sent via the list-MBU keep staff informed of progress; public meetings in the lecture hall provide an opportunity for direct discussion. The working group and steering committee continue to regularly monitor the remaining measures and prepare for the external review.

Make sure you also cover all the aspects highlighted in the checklist, which you will need to describe in detail.

Note: Click on each question of the checklist to open the editor.

How have you prepared the internal review?*



Detailed description and justification (max. 500 words)

The internal evaluation was prepared as part of a collaborative, evidence-based process led by the HR Award working group under the supervision of the steering committee. First, we conducted a systematic review of all 30 actions in the original action plan and assessed the current status of each indicator. This involved gathering written evidence from various sources: intranet publications, email correspondence with employees (list-MBU), minutes from meetings of the Institute Board and the Director's Board, records of training participation, survey results, and the Institute's annual reports for 2023, 2024, and 2025. The workflow tracking table, which has been continuously updated since January 2023, provided a detailed chronological record of all steps taken as part of each measure.

Second, we compared the progress to date with the original gap analysis to determine which weaknesses had been fully addressed, which had been partially addressed, and which remained unresolved. This allowed us to update the analysis of strengths and weaknesses within each of the four pillars of the European Charter for Researchers.

Third, we worked closely with relevant stakeholders to validate and enrich the assessment. Working group members, who represent various roles within the institute (researchers at different career stages, administrative staff, PR staff, HR staff, and management), provided input from their respective areas of expertise. The Gender Equality Team (GET) contributed data on gender equality measures and survey results. The Human Resources Department provided updated statistics on the composition of the workforce, recruitment processes, and training activities. Individual consultations were held with the individuals responsible for specific measures (e.g., the staff member responsible for the intranet and Flowio implementation, the Institute's secretary responsible for intellectual property, the head of the grants department regarding mobility, and the public relations manager for communications activities).

Fourth, the draft internal evaluation was submitted for comment to the steering committee, whose members include the director, the deputy directors, and representatives of the Institute Board. Their comments were incorporated before the document was finalized.

The conclusions of the internal evaluation were ultimately communicated to the research community via the list-MBU, thereby ensuring transparency and inviting any final comments. This multi-level process ensured that the internal evaluation was thorough, evidence-based, and reflective of the collective experience of the institute's community.

How have you involved the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?*



Detailed description and justification (max. 500 words)

The research community was involved in the entire process of implementing HRS4R at several levels. From the very beginning, researchers at all career stages (R1–R4) were represented in both the working group and the steering committee, ensuring that the decision-making process took into account the diverse perspectives of doctoral students, postdocs, established researchers, and leading scientists.

Regular communication is the cornerstone of stakeholder engagement. From the start of the entire process, all employees have been kept informed on an ongoing basis via the list-MBU email distribution system. Key milestones, such as the publication of the OTM-R rules, the adoption of the Code of Ethics, the establishment of the ombudsman position, the launch of the new intranet, and the approval of the new Code of Conduct, were announced through this channel. In addition, public meetings were held in the Institute's lecture hall to present the current status of the HR Award project and facilitate direct questions and discussion. In November 2023, a joint meeting of the working group and the steering committee was held in the lecture hall, followed in June 2024 by another public meeting where the recruitment methodology for the OTM-R program was discussed. Another public meeting took place in May 2025 and provided an update on the status of the HR Award.

Anonymous surveys were a key tool for gathering feedback. Human resources surveys were launched in December 2023 and December 2024, allowing all employees to express their views on the changes brought about by the HR Award. The GET survey from October 2025 (the results of which were published in December 2025) focused on equal opportunities and working conditions. A combined GET/HR survey was launched in June 2026. The results of these surveys were analyzed and used to adjust the action plan and institutional policies.

Specific stakeholders were consulted to provide input on concrete measures. Laboratory directors were consulted regarding the draft onboarding plan for new employees (March 2025), a workshop on pay transparency (May 2026), and online recruitment platforms. The new employee handbook was updated based on a specialized questionnaire sent to employees in May 2024. The Gender Equality Team meets once a month, and its minutes are published on the intranet in both Czech and English. Doctoral students have become involved through a newly established doctoral student club, which organizes its own conference and plans retreats.

Employees finally had the opportunity to submit comments directly to members of the working group or the steering committee at any time during the implementation process. This "open-door" approach, combined with formal feedback mechanisms, ensured broad and sustained engagement.

Do you have an implementation committee and/or a steering group regularly overseeing the progress?*



Detailed description and justification (max. 500 words)

Yes, the implementation of the HRS4R action plan is overseen by a two-tier governance structure consisting of a steering committee and a working group, which have been in operation since the process began in 2023.

The Steering Committee is responsible for strategic oversight and decision-making. It consists of the institute's director, deputy directors, the secretary, a representative of the Institute Council, and senior researchers. The Steering Committee coordinates the implementation of HRS4R principles, approves key documents and policies, and ensures alignment with the institute's overall strategy. Its members largely overlap with those of the Director's Council, which meets every two weeks. This overlap ensures that HRS4R-related matters are regularly discussed at the highest level of management and integrated into the Institute's day-to-day operations. The Steering Committee reviews background materials and proposals submitted by the working group, defines objectives, and proposes ways to achieve them. It also makes key strategic decisions, such as the commitment to implement the EU Directive on Transparency of Remuneration in collaboration with Deloitte or the establishment of new organizational units.

The working group consists of representatives from across the institute's community, including researchers at various career stages (R1–R4), human resources staff, administrative staff, members of the PR and IT departments, and members of the gender equality team. The working group is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the action plan. It drafts documents, monitors progress against the timeline, identifies potential risks, and proposes corrective measures. The working group meets regularly—at least once a quarter, and more frequently if necessary—to assess progress, discuss challenges, and coordinate activities. Its members are in daily contact with other staff members, continuously analyzing risks and proposing steps to address them. The working group also plays a key role in gathering feedback from the research community through surveys, informal discussions, and consultations.

The institute's director regularly reports on progress in the HRS4R process to the Institute Council, which meets once a month, and also shares this information through the Director's Advisory Board. In 2026, a new Deputy Director for the HR Award, Assoc. Prof. Ing. Kateřina Valentová, Ph.D., was appointed to serve as the contact person for the HR Award, further strengthening the coordination and visibility of this process.

This management structure has proven effective in ensuring both strategic direction and operational implementation. The overlap in the responsibilities of the steering committee and the director's council ensures that the HRS4R project is not treated as a standalone project but is integrated into the institute's regular decision-making processes.

Is there any alignment of organisational policies with the HR award? For example, is the HR award recognised in the organisation's research strategy or overarching HR policy?*



Detailed description and justification (max. 500 words)

Yes, the HR Award principles are closely aligned with the institute's organizational policies and are increasingly recognized as an overarching framework for the institute's human resources strategy.

At the strategic level, the HRS4R action plan has been formally approved by the director and the institution's Board and is considered a key component of the institution's development strategy. The implementation of the Charter's principles is not viewed as a separate project, but as an integral part of the institution's management. The Director's Council, which is the main executive body, regularly discusses matters related to human resources recognition, and the institution's Board, the highest advisory body, approves key documents resulting from the action plan—including new attestation regulations, OTM-R rules, and the establishment of new organizational units.

At the strategic level, several key organizational documents were adopted or revised in direct response to the commitments arising from the HR Award. The Code of Conduct and the Code of Ethics, adopted from CAS and published on the intranet, are now part of the mandatory orientation for all employees, completion of which is confirmed via the Flowio platform. The OTM-R Selection Procedure Rules and the detailed recruitment methodology have become binding internal documents that govern all recruitment processes. The new attestation regulations, approved in November 2025, reformed the attestation system for all researchers (R2–R4). The rules for working from home, issued in November 2024, established transparent and binding conditions for remote work. The internal regulation on the safe employment of pregnant women, nursing mothers, and minors, published in June 2026, filled a gap in the institute's regulatory framework beyond the scope of the Labor Code. The new job catalog for non-research staff (effective February 1, 2026) introduced a uniform classification system and transparent pay grades.

At the operational level, the Flowio platform was gradually implemented to digitize administrative processes including vacation requests, business trip approvals, purchase orders, and acknowledgments of internal policies, which directly supports the goal of streamlining administrative procedures. The new intranet (launched in May 2026) provides bilingual access to all key documents, manuals, and work-related information. Training and development activities have been expanded to include workshops focused on managerial skills, seminars on preparing ERC grant applications, e-learning courses, and training on gender equality in research.

The Gender Equality Plan, available on the website and the intranet in Czech and English, is implemented and evaluated annually by the Gender Equality Team. Its principles are reflected in OTM-R's recruitment policies, the composition of selection committees, and support measures for employees returning after a career break (the TRySK project, the Academy of the Future).

In short, the HRS4R principles are not merely "recognized" in the institute's strategy, they actively shape it. This alignment is evidenced by the transformation of the initial weaknesses identified in the GAP analysis into concrete organizational policies that now guide the institute's day-to-day operations.

How has your organisation ensured that the proposed actions would be also implemented?*



Detailed description and justification (max. 500 words)

From the very beginning, the HRS4R project has enjoyed strong support from the institute's top leadership. The director is a member of both the steering committee and the working group, and he personally supported and championed the action plan. This commitment at the highest level was essential to ensuring that the proposed measures were not only planned but also actually implemented. From the very beginning, a dedicated coordinator (Assoc. Prof. Jiří Gabriel, DrSc.) was appointed, and in March 2026, this role was strengthened by the appointment of Assoc. Prof. Ing. Kateřina Valentová, Ph.D., as Deputy Director for the HR Award, thereby further embedding this process within the institute's management structures.

The main mechanism for ensuring implementation is a clear division of responsibilities. Each of the 30 measures in the action plan was assigned to a specific responsible unit or individual: the director, deputy director, secretary, human resources department, institute council, laboratory heads, gender equality team, or public relations department. These responsible individuals are accountable for carrying out the measures assigned to them within the specified timeframe. The working group coordinator maintains a detailed progress tracking spreadsheet, which has been continuously updated since January 2023 and records every step taken, every document published, and every communication sent. This provides a transparent and verifiable record of progress.

A two-tier governance structure – a steering committee and a working group – ensures both strategic oversight and operational coordination. The steering committee, whose membership partially overlaps with that of the director's board, ensures that HRS4R activities are integrated into the institute's regular management processes. The Director reports regularly on progress to the Board of the Director (every two weeks) and the Institute's Council (every month). This means that the implementation of HRS4R is consistently on the agenda of the Institute's highest decision-making bodies.

Resources have been allocated to support implementation. Since the fall of 2023, the Human Resources Department has been reinforced with additional English-speaking staff. The Public Relations Department was reinforced with a new coordinator in early 2025. Where necessary, external expertise was utilized: the organization KONSENT collaborated on a methodological guide to support social security; the consulting firm Deloitte was commissioned to analyze pay transparency; the NORA Information Center for Gender Issues is assisting with a questionnaire for a gender audit; and Euromanagers are supporting an analysis of participation in European framework programs.

The working group takes a proactive approach to risk management. It assesses progress against the schedule, identifies potential delays, and proposes corrective measures. In the event of delays—for example, regarding mobility rules or formal stability analyses—these delays are documented, and revised timelines or alternative approaches are discussed with the responsible parties and the steering committee.

Finally, the research community itself serves as the driving force behind implementation. Regular surveys of staff provide feedback on the effectiveness of the measures taken, and any identified shortcomings or concerns are incorporated back into the action plan. This creates a feedback loop that ensures continuous improvement and accountability.

How are you monitoring progress (timeline)?*



Detailed description and justification (max. 500 words)

Progress is tracked through a multi-level system that combines regular reporting, systematic documentation, and ongoing feedback from stakeholders.

At the operational level, the working group coordinator maintains a comprehensive spreadsheet for tracking work processes, which has been continuously updated since January 2023. This document records, for each of the 30 measures, the planned timeline (by quarter/semester), the current status, and all specific actions taken: dates of document publication, email communication with employees, training sessions, the launch of surveys, and meetings. This chronological record makes it possible to immediately identify actions that are proceeding according to plan, have been completed, or are at risk of delay.

The working group conducts a formal review of progress against the action plan, discusses the status of each action, identifies potential risks, and proposes corrective measures. The results of these reviews are presented to the steering committee, which provides strategic guidance and adjusts priorities as needed. The overlap between members of the Steering Committee and members of the Director's College (which meets every two weeks) and the Institution's Council (which meets monthly) ensures that progress within HRS4R is constantly visible at the highest levels of the Institute's management.

Specific milestones are tracked using verifiable indicators. For example, the publication of a document on the intranet is confirmed by a screenshot or a link; the launch of a survey is documented by the date the email was sent to the MBU mailing list; training sessions are recorded via attendance sheets and participant lists; and the adoption of a new regulation is evidenced by its publication in the Institute's official records and, where applicable, its approval by the Institute's Council. These indicators provide objective evidence of progress that can be independently verified.

Employee surveys serve as an additional monitoring tool. Annual questionnaires from the Human Resources Department, conducted in December 2023 and December 2024, directly assessed employees' awareness of and satisfaction with the changes implemented as part of the HR Award program. The results were analyzed and communicated to the steering committee and, in summary form, to all employees. Any identified shortcomings, such as a lack of awareness regarding a specific support channel, were addressed through targeted communication or additional measures.

The Deputy Director for HR Award, appointed in March 2026, has taken on the role of coordinating and overseeing the monitoring process and ensures that all responsible parties are aware of their deadlines and that documentation is properly maintained.

In cases where deadlines were not met—for example, regarding complex mobility rules or formal stability analyses—these instances are explicitly recorded in the workflow tracking table and in the internal audit, with revised deadlines set and responsible parties designated to complete these tasks.

How will you measure progress (indicators) for the next assessment?*



Detailed description and justification (max. 500 words)

Progress for the next evaluation will be measured using a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators, based on the established monitoring framework, which will, however, be refined to capture the results and impact of the measures implemented, rather than merely their completion.

The main indicator will be the completion and publication of several measures that are still in the process of being implemented: comprehensive mobility rules, an updated directive on intellectual property policy, a mentoring module for early-career researchers, a formal analysis of the stability of working conditions, and a new compensation model in accordance with the EU Directive on Transparency of Remuneration. Each of these measures will be assessed according to a specific indicator defined in the action plan; typically, the publication of the relevant document on the intranet in both Czech and English.

Employee awareness and satisfaction, as measured through regular anonymous surveys (HR survey, GET survey), will continue to be a key indicator. The next round of surveys will include questions specifically designed to assess whether employees are aware of and use the support channels established during the first phase of implementation (e.g., ombudsman, contact persons, ethics committee), whether they perceive that the OTM-R principles are being applied in practice, and whether they feel that working conditions have improved. Trends in satisfaction scores will be tracked across individual surveys.

Quantitative data will be collected to measure the impact of specific measures: the proportion of job openings advertised through international channels; the proportion of selection committees with balanced representation of women and men; the number of employees utilizing flexible work arrangements (working from home, part-time work); the number of training sessions organized and the number of participants; the number of e-learning courses completed; the number of grants awarded for returning to work; the number of cases handled by the ombudsman; and the average duration of employment, analyzed by career stage and contract type.

Process metrics will assess the integration of new policies into day-to-day operations. These include: the percentage of new employees who have completed the onboarding process (confirmed via the Flowio platform); the percentage of employees who have confirmed via Flowio that they are familiar with key internal regulations; the number of certifications conducted in accordance with the new certification code; and the use of electronic forms versus paper forms in administrative processes.

Feedback from specific stakeholders will be collected through targeted consultations. Doctoral and postdoctoral students will be surveyed on their satisfaction with career development support; international employees will be surveyed on the availability of information in English and the quality of integration support; and laboratory heads will be consulted regarding the effectiveness of the new employee onboarding plan and the Flowio platform.

External benchmarking indicators will be used when available. The institute will participate in benchmarking initiatives within the personnel platform of the Czech Academy of Sciences and will compare its progress with similar institutions that have received the HR Excellence in Research Award.

Finally, the outcome of the external evaluation itself will serve as a key indicator: the evaluators' assessment of the institute's progress will provide independent confirmation of the effectiveness of the measures implemented.

How do you expect to prepare for the external review?*



Detailed description and justification (max. 500 words)

Preparations for the external evaluation will be coordinated by the Deputy Director for the HR Award, in close collaboration with the working group and the steering committee. The institute will prepare for the external evaluation through a structured, evidence-based process that builds on the experience gained during the internal evaluation.

We will compile a comprehensive portfolio of evidence documenting the implementation of individual measures in the action plan. This will include: published versions of all key documents (screenshots from the intranet, PDF copies); a chronological record of communication with employees (emails, newsletters); attendance records and materials from training events; survey questionnaires and their results; minutes from relevant meetings (Institute Council, Director's Board, Working Group, Gender Equality Team); and statistical data on staff composition, recruitment, and working conditions. At the core of this evidence portfolio will be a workflow tracking table, which has been continuously updated since January 2023 and provides a verifiable timeline of all implementation steps.

We expect that the external evaluation will include an on-site visit. We will prepare a visit itinerary that will include: a presentation by the director and the HR Award team summarizing the institute's strategy, progress made, and key results; a tour of the institute's facilities, including the laboratories on the main campus in Prague-Krč and, if possible, one of the remote sites (e.g., Třeboň or Nový Hrádek); and a meeting between the evaluation committee and representatives of the research community. These meetings will be organized so that the evaluators can speak with researchers at various career stages (R1–R4), administrative and technical staff, members of the gender equality team, and the ombudsman and contact persons. The goal is to provide the evaluators with a comprehensive view of the institute's culture and practical experiences with the implementation of the HRS4R program.

Prior to the site visit, we will inform all employees about the external evaluation process, its purpose, and the opportunity it offers them to share their views with the evaluators. The process will be explained in a separate email sent via the MBU mailing list, and a public meeting will be held to answer questions. We will emphasize that honest and constructive feedback is welcome and that the external evaluation represents an opportunity to identify areas where further improvement can be achieved.

Approximately one month before the external evaluation, the working group and the steering committee will conduct a final internal review to verify that all documentation is complete, that all responsible parties are prepared, and that any remaining issues have been resolved.

Additional remarks/comments about the proposed implementation process (max. 1000 words)

The implementation of the HRS4R action plan at the Institute of Microbiology has been a transformative process. Detailed evidence of progress under each of the 30 original actions is provided in Section 3 above; the new actions proposed for the 2027–2029 cycle (Actions 31–38) are also listed there. This section therefore focuses on broader reflections, lessons learned, and the strategic outlook.

Reflections on the process. The single most important factor in the success of the implementation has been the consistent, visible support of the Institute's top management. The Director has personally championed the HR Award from the outset, senior figures from research and administration have served on the Steering Committee, and in March 2026 a Deputy Director was appointed specifically for the HR Award. This embedding of HRS4R into the regular governance structure – the Director's Board and the Institute Board discuss it routinely — has been critical in preventing the process from becoming a peripheral administrative exercise.

Culture change. Beyond the measurable indicators, the HRS4R process has catalyzed a cultural shift. The Institute now has a functioning ombudsperson, trained contact persons, a Code of Conduct acknowledged by all employees, transparent OTM-R recruitment, binding home office rules, a new Attestation Code, and a welfare infrastructure that did not exist three years ago. These are not merely documents on the intranet; they are lived practices that shape daily working life.

Challenges and adaptations. As detailed in Sections 2 and 3, external developments — the EU Pay Transparency Directive, the amendment to the Higher Education Act, the NIS2 cybersecurity requirements, and the growing share of project-based funding — have placed additional demands on the Institute. The strategy has been to treat these not as disruptions but as catalysts: the pay transparency requirements, for example, accelerated the collaboration with Deloitte and the overhaul of the Job Catalog, while the doctoral funding reform prompted faster conclusion of agreements with partner universities. The Institute's willingness to engage external expertise (KONSENT, Deloitte, NORA, Euromanagers) has been instrumental in handling these challenges without overburdening internal capacity.

Looking ahead. The next phase will shift from initial implementation to consolidation and evidence-based evaluation. The mechanisms now in place—surveys, the Flowio platform, the intranet—will be used not only to monitor compliance but to measure impact. The Welcome Office and Buddy system (Action 31), the mentoring program (Action 34), the outboarding process (Action 33), and the formalization of the data steward role (Action 36) represent the next generation of measures that address gaps identified during the current phase. The new Gender Equality Plan (2027 onwards), currently being prepared with NORA, will provide a renewed framework for gender equality. Together, these actions will deepen the integration of the Charter principles into the Institute's culture and prepare the ground for the external review and beyond.