INSTITUTE
FOR RESEARCH
IN BIOMEDICINE

IRB
BARCELONA

HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY FOR RESEARCHERS (HRS4R)

ACTION PLAN 2024 - 2026

"Committed to excellence, talent development and a responsible research culture"

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HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

Introduction

IRB Barcelona is a leading biomedical research institute that was founded in 2005 by the Government of Catalonia and the University of Barcelona. A member of the CERCA system and BIST, and accredited four times as a Severo Ochoa Centre of Excellence, the Institute brings together over 500 professionals from more than 45 nationalities. Its research is structured around three major scientific challenges—Cancer Science, Aging and Metabolism, and Mechanisms of Disease—and supported by nine core facilities and eight administrative departments.

In 2014, IRB Barcelona was awarded the "HR Excellence in Research" logo by the European Commission, in recognition of its commitment to improving researchers' working conditions, career development, and recruitment processes, in line with principles of the European Charter and Code.

This HRS4R Action Plan (2024–2026) builds on the progress made during the previous period (2020–2023) and reflects the Institute's continued efforts to foster a transparent, inclusive, and dynamic research environment. This Action Plan was developed with input from internal committees, external advisory boards, and the IRB community—together with the recommendations provided in the EC Consensus Report and by external experts.

Key priorities for this new cycle include:

- **Enhancing Communication & Visibility**: Strengthening internal and external communication strategies, with a focus on Open Science and researcher engagement.
- **Supporting Postdoctoral Researchers**: Developing tailored initiatives to enhance the postdoctoral experience and improve career prospects.
- **Fostering Digital Transformation**: Advancing the digitalization of HR and institutional processes to improve accessibility and efficiency.
- **Promoting Career Development**: Offering structured support and resources for professional growth, open to all research and support staff.
- **Embedding Ethics & Research Integrity**: Addressing emerging trends in the EU policy landscape, such as AI, gender equity, and societal responsibility in research.

The HRS4R Action Plan (2024–2026) is also fully aligned with IRB Barcelona's Strategic Action Plan, which defines the Institute's vision for excellence, innovation, and impact for the 2024–2026 period.

With this renewed plan, IRB Barcelona reaffirms its long-term commitment to creating an environment where researchers can thrive, contribute to science at the highest level, and deliver benefits for society.

Method

To ensure that the new HRS4R Action Plan (2024–2026) reflects the current needs and aspirations of IRB Barcelona's community, the Institute adopted a comprehensive and inclusive methodology grounded in internal reflection, stakeholder participation, and external guidance.

The process began with a **SWOT analysis (Q-4, 2023)**. This provided a strategic diagnosis of the Institute's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats across four key axes: *Science*, *Talent*, *Internationalisation* and *Impact, among others*. It served as the foundation for identifying areas of action and growth.

To ensure broad participation, IRB Barcelona designed a multi-layered consultation process that included:

- **A global satisfaction survey,** launched in December 2023, addressed to all scientific and administrative staff, was conducted as part of the Institute's Administration Evaluation process (held every five years).

- **Focus groups conducted by an external expert in organisational development** (January 2024). These thematic sessions were organised across categories and professional profiles (PhD students, postdocs, core facility staff, research support, group leaders, etc.) to gather qualitative insights and foster open dialogue.

- **Targeted discussions with internal committees and boards**, such as the Equality and Diversity Committee, Postdoctoral/PhD Council, and Committee for Research Integrity, among others, to assess the impact of previous actions and identify emerging needs.

- **Semi-structured interviews** with selected individuals from different departments to explore specific topics in depth, such as onboarding, research integrity, and team dynamics.

The process ensured that the voices of all institutional layers were taken into account. By combining **quantitative data** with **qualitative insights**, the Institute was able to define a realistic and ambitious plan that is both aligned with its Strategic Action Plan (2024–2026) and anchored in the European principles of responsible research.

ACTION PLAN

I. Ethics, Integrity, Gender, and Open Science

C&C Principles (40 &20)	Action	Owner[1]	Timeframe	Indicator
1-3, 5-8 2, 3, 5*	Development of a Data Management best practices and institutional framework.	ITS COFIP INN LEG	Q1 - 2024 to Q4-2026	- Data Management Policy in place. - Percentage of the total workforce that received the initial formal communication of the policy. - Number of training sessions and dissemination activities organised. - Number of people who participated in the training sessions and dissemination activities.
1-4, 7-8 1-3,16*	Development of an Open Science Policy	ITS COFIP INN LEG	Q4-2025 to Q1-2026	- Open Science Policy in place. -Percentage of the total workforce that received the initial formal communication of the policy. - Number of training sessions and dissemination activities organised. - Number of people who participated in the training sessions and dissemination activities.
1-4, 6-7, 24 1, 2, 3, 5*	Development of an AI (Artificial Intelligence) Policy	ITS COFIP INN LEGAL HRA	Q4-2025 to Q1-2026	-Policy in place. -Specific needs the policy considers and addresses. -Percentage of the total workforce that received the initial formal communication of the policy. - Number of dissemination activities organised.
5, 15, 23, 34 5, 10, 11, 12, 14*	Development and implementation of the new intranet to boost internal communication within the Institute.	FCM IT	Q1-2025	- Number of visits the site receives. - Number of documents, forms, policies, and procedures published on the intranet.
1-3, 5-8, 16, 18-19, 23-24, 26, 28, 30-31, 38-40 1-5, 6-10, 16-19*	Creation of the first draft of guidelines & best practices for hosting visitors and trainees.	HRA	Q1-2026	- Document in place.
2-4, 10, 23-24, 27, 35 4, 6, 7, 9-12, 14, 15,19*	Development of a New Gender Equality Plan (GEP) (4th version)	EDC HR H&S	Q1 to Q4 - 2025	- Quantitative & qualitative assessment. - Desktop analysis, gender indicators, focus groups, etc. - Gender Equality Plan in place. - Number of dissemination actions of the GEP. - Number of actions to be implemented in the 4th GEP.

C&C Principle	Action	Owner	Timeframe	Indicator
2, 4, 10, 23, 34 4, 9, 10-12, 14, 15,19*	Review of the Sexual Harassment Policy.	EDC HR H&S	Q2-2025	- Number of inductions conducted. - Number of participants in the training actions.
2, 4, 10, 23 4, 9, 15, 19, 20*	Development of an Inclusive Language Guide.	EDC HR FCM	Q3 - 2024	- Use of the Inclusive Language Guide. - Number of dissemination activities and training actions organised. - Number of participants in dissemination activities and training actions.
2, 4, 10, 23 4, 9, 15, 19, 20*	Development of an LGTBIQA+ Plan.	EDC HR H&S	Q3 2025- Q1 - 2026	-LGTBIQA+ Plan in place. -Number of participants in the training actions and events. -Number of dissemination activities. -Number of participants/members of the Queer Group. - Number of actions to be implemented in the 1st LGTBIQA+ Plan.

II. Researcher Assessment, Recruitment, and Progression				
C&C Principle (40 & 20)	Action	Owner[1]	Timeframe	Indicator
10-21 6-11*	Improving recruitment by exploring new pathways to broadcast open positions.	HRA	Q1-2024	- Inventory of the new recruitment portals and platforms used. - Number of applicants received by age, gender, position, and job portal.
3, 10-21, 39 10, 11*	Training and development of recruitment tools for the People Dept., including competency-based interview training and other new recruitment methods/tools.	HRA	Q1-2024 to Q4-2026	-Number of training actions organised. -Inventory of the new methods and tools implemented.
11, 12-21, 23 10,11*	Improvement of Onboarding Practices (Onboarding starts with the 1st contact sending the CV and ends 6 months after joining IRB Barcelona).	HRA	Q4-2024	-Number of participants in the focus groups. -Analysis of the data collected (number of improvements, most frequently requested…). - Percentage of onboarding completion.
28, 38, 39 10-12*	Training in AI techniques for content creation.	HRA FCM INN	Q1 - 2024	- Satisfaction survey. - Number of participants attending the training action.

28, 31-38 9-11*	Signature of the CoARA Agreement (Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment-CoARA).	COFIP INN HRA	Q4-2025 to Q4-2026	- Funding secured from the COARA Boost second call for cascade funding (THRIVE project). - Internal report on internal research assessment practices. - Number of participants in focus groups and workshops to assess research assessment practices. - Publication of the CoARA Action Plan.
31-33, 37 7,10-11*	Creation and development of an Office for the Attraction and Retention of International Talent (OARIT).	HRA COFIP	Q1-2024 to Q4-2026	- Development of OARIT project. - Number of international newcomers hired. - Number of activities and events organised.
30-34, 36-37 10-11,13*	Enhancement of the Predoctoral Programme by securing new co-funding.	HRA COFIP INN	Q3-2025	-Number of PhD Student positions. supported by the new co-funding. -Number of PhD Students hired annually.

III. Working Conditions and Practices				
C&C Principle (40 &20)	Action	Owner[1]	Timeframe	Indicator
9, 10, 23, 27, 35, 30 4, 5, 13, 14*	Development of awareness campaigns on Intersectionality.	EDC FCM	Q4-2025 to Q4-2026	- Number of participants attending the training actions. - Number of tools and actions implemented after the training actions. - People reached by the campaign.
10, 23-24, 27 4, 5,13-15*	Planning and development of actions to raise awareness of the importance of work-life balance and promotion of a work-life balance model.	HRA EDC	Q1-2024 Q2-2026	- Work-life balance guide in place - Number of participants attending the training actions. - Number of people reached by the campaign. - Satisfaction psychosocial survey.
10, 23-24, 27 4, 5,13-15*	Development of a Parental Leave Guide following the new law.	HRA EDC	Q1-2026	- Guide in place. - Number of dissemination activities. - Number of long-term parental leaves per year.

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15, 24, 34 10-13*	Digitalisation of the HR internal procedures and forms, and implementation of a channel for anonymous complaint submission.	HRA IT	Q3-2024 to Q1-2026	-Number of digitised forms and procedures. -Number of platform users. -Number of complaints received through the channel.
24-25, 39 12, 13, 18, 19*	Implementation of an HR tool.	HRA	Q3 to Q4 - 2026	- Analysis of the efficiency of core HR processes. - Percentage of active users who utilize specific key features of the tool.
9, 11, 15,23, 24, 34-35 4, 13*	Launch of the Psychosocial Survey.	HR H&S	Q3-2024 to Q2-2025	- Percentage of members participating in the survey. - Percentage of people who perceive the 9 psychosocial factors unfavourably.
24, 26, 39 13, 15*	Implementation of a yearly training session on taxes and payroll.	HR H&S	Q1-2024 Q1-2025 Q1-2026	-Number of courses organised. -Number of participants. -Satisfaction survey.
21, 28, 38, 40 13, 18*	Reinforcement of the recognition of the Postdoctoral Community	AO POST C	Q4-2024	- New committee in place - Number of meetings held.
21, 28, 38, 40 12-14, 18, 19*	Development of a Career Development Model to support Postdoctoral Researchers (R2).	AO POST C	Q1 to Q4 - 2026	-Number of staff trained to conduct a CDP (Career Development Plan) -Number of meetings held with the Postdoc Council. -CDP model in place.
15, 16, 20, 22, 24 13, 18, 19*	Design of the Professional Career Development Model for all positions.	HR	Q4-2025	-Policy & professional classification in place. -Number of dissemination activities.
14, 16-17, 19 4, 5, 13, 14*	Implementation of the institutional support grant for child/family care during work-related travel.	EDC HR	Q3-2025	- Number of employees who benefit from this support.
14, 16, 17, 19 4, 5, 13, 14*	Enhancement of the support for Group Leaders during pregnancy & early parenthood.	EDC HR	Q3-2025	- Number of Group Leaders who benefit from this support.
17, 21, 24 7,13-15*	Updating of the Sabbatical Policy.	HR INN COFIP LEG	Q4-2025	- Policy in place.

IV. Research Careers and Talent Development				
C&C Principle (40 &20)	Action	Owner[1]	Timeframe	Indicator
22, 24, 28, 30, 38, 39 1, 3, 6, 18, 19*	Enhancement of Yearly Training Plan.	HRA	Q4-2024 Q1-2025 Q1-2026	-Number of courses organised per year. -Number of participants per gender, age, and position. -Satisfaction survey.
8, 9,18, 29 7, 18, 19*	Design and implementation of IRB Barcelona Ambassador Programme.	HRA FCM	Q4-2026	- Number of possible participants. - Number of possible events in which the ambassadors could potentially. participate.
28, 30, 38-39 17-20*	Design and implementation of an IRB Barcelona Mentoring Programme to promote R1 (Mentees) career progression (R2 Mentors) & participation in the BIST Mentoring Programme.	POST C PhD C AO	Q2-2024 Q2-2025 Q2-2026	- Number of mentees and mentors at IRB Barcelona. - Satisfaction survey. - Number of participants in the training actions and events.
15, 22, 24,28, 38-39 13, 18, 19*	Revision of the Training Policy.	HR	Q4-2024	- Survey to detect needs. - Training in KPIs.
9,24, 30, 38-39 18-20*	Organization of the Postdoc Careers and Networking Day.	POSTC AO	Q4-2024 Q4-2026	- Number of participants. - Satisfaction survey.
9, 24, 28, 30, 38-39 18-20*	Promotion of knowledge sharing and collaboration with other institutions.	HRA INN COFI P	Q4-2024 Q4-2026	- Number of participants in the events. - Number of collaborations. - Satisfaction survey.
1, 4, 8, 12, 15, 20, 22 2,18-20*	Consolidation of Interest Groups.	COFIP	Q1-2024	-Number of interest groups. -Number of participants in the interest groups. -Number of participants in the seminars.
7-9, 13, 15,22 18-19*	Implementation of the Core Connect initiative.	CF	Q2-2024	-Number of training actions. -Number of meetings held. -Number of participants attending the meetings and the retreat. -Number of seminars organised. -Number of participants in the seminars.

Action Owner[1]:

AO: Academic Office
COFIP: Competitive Funding and International Promotion
CRI: Committee for Research Integrity
EDC: Equality and Diversity Committee
FCM: Fundraising, Communication and Marketing Department
H&S: People and Health & Safety Office
HR: People Department
HRA: People & Academic Office
INN: Scientific Innovation and Tech Transfer
IT: Information Technology
LEGAL: Legal Department
POST C: Postdoc Council
PRE C: PhD Council
CF: Core Facilities