

Action Plan

Case number: 2023RO111493**Name Organisation under review:** Institutul National de Cercetare-Dezvoltare pentru Fizica Materialelor**Organisation's contact details:** Atomistilor 405A, Magurele, Ilfov, 077125, Romania

1. Organisational Information

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

STAFF & STUDENTS	FTE
Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research *	206
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality) *	32
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation) *	25
Of whom are women *	107
Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor. *	78
Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level *	73
Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level *	55
Total number of students (if relevant) *	-
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff) *	294

RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)	€
Total annual organisational budget	12,510,974
Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)	200,000
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)	10,753,172
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	1,557,802

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

Institutul National de Cercetare-Dezvoltare pentru Fizica Materialelor (English name is National Institute of Materials Physics-NIMP) is a self-funding government research organization. Its mission is:

- The preparation, characterization and study of the physical properties of new materials connected to high technology products and devices
- The development of analytical techniques and methods applied in materials science
- Training of young scientists, PhD and MSc students, students and technicians
- Supply the public institutions and companies with the Institute's R&D know-how and expertise
- Collaboration with the universities and other higher education establishments
- Development of international collaboration, especially based on EU funded projects

2. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice

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

Ethical and professional aspects *

Strengths and Weaknesses (max. 800 words)

NIMP is an elite research institute in Romania, recognized both nationally and internationally for its highly specialized human resource and performant research infrastructure. The institute adhered to the highest ethical standards in the research activity, in conformity with the national legislation (law 183/2024, which replaced the old law 206/2004) and European good practices. It has an internal ethical code (see <https://infim.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/REGULAMENT-ETICA.pdf>, translated in English and available at <https://infim.ro/en/hrs4r-2/>) and a working ethical commission.

The main strength is that all the researchers follow the ethical rules, in the last 10 years being one single case to judge for the ethical commission (see <https://infim.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/decizia-comisiei-de-analiza.pdf>).

As mentioned above, the internal ethical code is available both in Romanian and English languages. Therefore, the peoples from abroad willing to compete for vacant positions at NIMP can inform themselves about the ethical rules in the institute. Moreover, in agreement with the rules from the national Code of Work (law 53/2003, art. 242), each organization should have an internal regulatory code that contains the rules and procedures necessary for a correct and transparent working environment. NIMP has such an internal regulatory code, both in Romanian and in English (the English version can be found also at <https://infim.ro/en/hrs4r-2/>).

At present, there is no visible weakness regarding the ethical and professional aspects. All the personnel were informed about the internal rules and procedures at the moment of signing the individual work contract. All these documents were negotiated with the representatives of the syndicate of researchers and administration services. Any modification is communicated to all the personnel by e-mails in the NIMP network and explained in internal meetings of the laboratories and services that are part of NIMP. At research laboratory level, meetings are organized periodically (usually every 2 weeks) to discuss the research activities but also to inform all the members about decisions of the upper management of NIMP or about changes in the internal rules and regulations.

We underline again that any changes impacting the HR policy are not taken arbitrarily by the top management of NIMP, but are discussed first in the governance bodies of NIMP: the directorate Committee, involving the General, Scientific and Economic Directors, heads of research laboratories, president of the Scientific Council and president of the Syndicate; Scientific Council, formed by 21 persons democratically elected by the research personnel; Administration Council, that is nominated by Ministry Order and is formed by the General Director, President of the Scientific Council, representatives of Ministries of Research, Innovation and Digitization, Work and Social Security and Public Finances, as well as other 2 specialists, in total 7 persons. One can see the all the personnel is represented in the negotiation process: the research personnel through the Scientific Council and heads of laboratories, administration and auxiliary personnel through the Economic Director and the representative of the syndicate.

Depending on the amplitude of the change to internal rules and procedures, imposed in some cases by changes in the laws and regulations (Government Decisions) at national level, the negotiation phase may take several months. In this phase, the proposed changes are discussed in meetings involving all the personnel, suggestions are accepted and discussed at management level, and the final adopted changes are communicated and explained to all personnel. At the end, the internal rules and procedures become obligatory for all the personnel working at NIMP, and have to accepted under signature as part of the individual work contract.

Recruitment and selection *

Strengths and Weaknesses (max. 800 words)

The main strength is that NIMP has implemented in the last 10 years an open, transparent and merit based recruitment plan. There are specific rules and regulation for employing researchers of different degrees, starting from assistant researcher up to equivalent professors or principal investigators, as well as engineers working as auxiliary personnel in R&D activities (see <https://infim.ro/en/rules-and-regulations/>, for the research personnel, these rules and

procedures are translated in English and available at <https://infim.ro/en/hrs4r-2/>; for engineers a new procedure has to be adopted in the next year, to comply with the new law 183/2024 that abolished former positions of engineer for technological development and introduced positions for research engineers). The new law differentiates now between hiring new personnel on vacant positions and promoting already employed personnel on a superior position. Minimum modifications are foreseen in the internal rules and procedures when the general methodologies for hiring and promotion will be adopted by Government decision. The new law 183/2024 explains the equivalence between the Romanian hierarchy of researchers (scientific researchers rank I, II, III and simple scientific researcher) and the nomenclature used in EU (R4, R3, R2, R1, see <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/europe/career-development/training-researchers/research-profiles-descriptors>). In Romania there is a position, assistant scientific researcher (ACS) that is not present in the EU nomenclature, and that refers to peoples having bachelor or master degree and that are not yet enrolled as PhD students. For hiring ACS, the most promising candidates are selected based on the results in the high education institution, a presentation of their bachelor or master dissertation and an interview. The selected candidates are employed for limited term and have to follow training courses, with examination after 6 months. After this first filter, the successful candidates start to work in research under the supervision of a senior researcher. After two years they present their results and a decision is taken if the contract end or is transformed in a permanent one. For R1, R2, R3 and R4 specific rules apply, in agreement with national regulations for R3 and R4 (new law 183/2024 and Ministry Order 6129/2016), and internal rules and procedures for R2 and R1 (see more explanations in the document entitled “**Recruitment and Selection Policy of Personnel at the National Institute of Materials Physics (Institutul National de Cercetare-Dezvoltare pentru Fizica Materialelor in Romanian, acronym in English is NIMP)**”, available at <https://infim.ro/en/hrs4r-2/> together with internal rules and procedures for hiring/promoting researchers). The required level of expertise is detailed in the advertise for the open position. The main criterion for hiring/promotion is the merit, considering all aspects of a research career (publications, highlights of the most important results, PI in projects, training abilities for young researchers, international visibility, citations, invitated lectures, prizes, etc.). All these procedures are functioning well and the governing bodies of the institute are satisfied with the results, including the fact that more and more researchers from abroad are attracted to work in the institute, especially from the less developed countries in Africa, Asia or countries that are not member of EU.

The new law 183/2024 clarify also the post-doc level in Romania, which corresponds to Scientific Researcher rank III (CS III-obligatory to have a PhD title) or to a Scientific Researcher (CS) holding a PhD title. The new law sets also the number of members in the evaluation/selection commissions to 5 for R3 and R4 (CS II and CS I in Romania, see articles 21(3) and 22(2), out of which 3 members are from outside NIMP. For R1 and R2 the commissions are set to 4 members in the internal rules and procedures for hiring/promotion, one being from outside NIMP. The commissions are proposed by the Scientific Director, approved by the Scientific Council and the Administration Council, and nominated by decision of the General Director. Although no gender balance is imposed by the law, NIMP has taken care that at least one member of the commission is female (on average were 2 members at the last three exams for promotion or competitions for hiring).

The main weakness is that the announcements advertising the open positions published on the NIMP's web page are only in Romanian, this aspect will be corrected in the future and the announcements will be published both in Romanian and English. However, we are obliged to publish announcements on Euraxess also, and these announcements are in English also, see for example <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/group/6102/nodes>).

Other weaknesses: the 3 years limit for limited term contracts (see https://www.codulmuncii.ro/titlul_2/capitolul_6_1.html); complicated procedures to obtain visas and work permits for researchers coming from outside EU; the absence of independent members (not employed in the institute) in the Scientific Council, to have an objective view over the recruitment procedures.

Working conditions *

Strengths and Weaknesses (max. 800 words)

The working conditions are nearly excellent in NIMP. The working environment is friendly and encouraging cooperation between the staff members. A collective work agreement is negotiated every 2 years between the institute top management and the representatives of the union of researchers, including the salaries and other benefits. There is also a procedure to evaluate the professional performance of the researchers, already accepted and working very well for more than 10 years. The evaluation is performed in the first quarter of each year, considering the results of the previous 3 calendar years (it is considered that the research work has many unknown variables, e.g. the calendar for project calls, the number of publications, patent requests, conference participations, other activities, one year can be with better results than another, therefore the performance is weighted for a period of three years to allow a proper and correct evaluation). The procedure is based on criteria and quantitative indicators and thresholds, taking into considerations all the aspects of the research activity (ability to attract funds, publication number and the scientometric indicators of the journals where the work was published, citations, patent and patent applications, other activities with impact on the institutional evaluation results). The indicators are refined periodically, after negotiation with the research personnel represented by the Scientific Council. The last version, translated in English, is available at <https://infim.ro/en/hrs4r-2/>. The results of the evaluation reflect in bonuses to salary for the next 12 months, until the next evaluation. A similar procedure is in place for the auxiliary and administration personnel.

Another strength is the equilibrated gender balance with almost equal numbers of female and male researchers. The males are somewhat dominant at R3 and R4 level (the average age is also higher, reflecting somehow the mentality of the past, when more males were working in research), while female are dominant at R1 and R2 level. However, this situation will change in the coming years, considering that many of the male researchers at R4 and R3 level will retire, while many of the females at R1 or R2 level will promote to higher positions. The institute cannot impose gender quota; this will be totally against a merit based selection. What can do the institute is to organize periodically, preferably yearly, promotion exams for those fulfilling the required criteria and thresholds for promotion on a superior position.

The institute has a good IT infrastructure, ensuring email and internet access to all employees. The IT infrastructure is periodically updated and is served by 4 specialized persons.

The institute ensures very good working conditions for disabled persons (ramps, elevator). Also, is taking care of female or male researchers with child, or having in care other persons, ensuring flexible working hours, including remote work from home when necessary (these facilities are stipulated in the collective work contract and in the internal regulatory code, available at <https://infim.ro/en/hrs4r-2/>). Sabbatical leave is also possible for up to 12 months, without affecting the position at NIMP (the individual work contract is suspended for the period of sabbatical leave).

Each new employee is instructed on the safety rules in the institute, as well as with specific safety rules that apply to the working place, if necessary (e.g. working with lasers or with cryogenic equipment). Periodic safety trainings are held by a persons nominated by the top management of NIMP to take care with the implementation of the safety and security rules in NIMP.

Another strength is that NIMP is ensuring periodic medical tests (these are imposed by the national Code of Work), to assess the health status of the personnel. The costs are supported by NIMP and helps the employees to detect in time potential health problems that may aggravate if not correctly tackled.

Efforts were made to separate the experimental labs from offices. Now, all the researchers have places in offices, each one having a desktop or laptop to work. The offices are separated from the experimental labs, avoiding in this way potential health problems produced by long exposure to noise for example, produced by vacuum pumps. Of course, any researchers going to labs to perform experiments has to obey the specific safety rules for that specific lab (e.g. wearing noise protections on the ears or protection glasses for lasers).

In conclusion, we think that NIMP has taken all the measures to ensure very good working conditions for the personnel. We do not see any weakness for this issue.

Training and development *

Strengths and Weaknesses (max. 800 words)

NIMP is not part of a higher education institution. Therefore, in principle, there are no teaching obligations except those of the PhD supervisors associated to the doctoral schools of the Bucharest University. However, training activities are included among the obligations of the senior researchers. As mentioned above, all the newly employed assistant researchers has to follow a set of internal courses addressing basic knowledge in the field of condensed matter physics and materials science, including principles of the main experimental methods used in the institute.

The career path is known by all researchers, from the moment when they apply for an open position in the institute, including the rules and regulations to promote from one stage to another. The speed of promotion is a personal choice and depends very much on the individual effort to achieve, sooner or later, the thresholds for the next stage. One has to mention that the new law for researchers, 183/2024, has eliminated the obligation to spend a number position on a certain research position before applying for a superior one. Now, to be hired on R3 and R4 positions, or to promote on these positions, the candidates have to fulfill the minimum thresholds established by Ministry Order 6129/2016, plus the supplementary criteria and thresholds established by each research institution in agreement to their profile and goals for excellence. It is clear that institutions seeking excellence in research will ask for higher thresholds than the minimum ones imposed at national level if they want to hire the best experts in their envisaged research fields. The management of the institute take care to ensure for everybody equal chances for promotion, supporting submission of project proposals, implementation of the won projects, professional development by access to relevant literature (NIMP is part of the ANELIS+ consortia, who ensure access to scientific literature at national level, NIMP covering some co-funding quota), through specific training activities, and by organizing each year promotion exams according legal documents mentioned above and local rules and regulations approved by the management of the institute (see <https://infim.ro/en/hrs4r-2/> and <https://infim.ro/reguli-si-reglementari/>).

Depending on available funding sources (e.g. the Core Program or the projects won in the frame of the program supporting the institutional excellence), NIMP is encouraging the researchers, especially the young ones, to go for short work stages abroad. Longer term stages for PhD studies or post-doc positions are also encouraged but cannot be financially supported by NIMP. If a young researcher is successful in applying for a PhD or post-doc position in another institution in Romania or abroad, usually the costs are supported by the host institution. However, the successful person retains the position at NIMP for the period of the stage abroad (but not longer than 5 successive years), with the work contract suspended.

Weaknesses: there is no specific plan for activities envisaging the professional development, even the possibility of such a plan is mentioned in the collective work agreement. Another weakness is the reduced interest for mobility. Historically speaking, a large brain drain was registered during 1990-2000 period, when

many skilled researchers have left the country due to very low salaries. Some of these researchers returned after 2005-2006, when the working conditions in research started to improve and the incomes become decent. They are now the senior researchers. After adhering to EU, the interest for PhD studies abroad decreased, even for post-doc positions. Young researchers prefer to follow PhD studies in Romania and then follow a research career in universities or research institutes, especially considering that the infrastructure has been considerably improved and the salaries in many research organizations are competitive with average salaries in other EU countries.

We can conclude that NIMP ensures conditions and funding, when available, for training and professional development. A plan will be conceived each year, in agreement with the collective working contract and after negotiation with the syndicate leaders. All the foreseen training and development activities will be discussed with envisage personnel for acceptance, becoming part of the individual work agreement. However, we have to strongly underline the following aspects:

- 1) NIMP cannot impose training courses or work stages to any researcher if the researcher does not want to go, even if the training is in her/his interest and for the benefit of NIMP, which cover the costs; such behavior can be considered an infringement of the work agreement and can be subject of a disciplinary inquiry if the refuse is not fully justified;
- 2) NIMP cannot be held responsible if refuses someone request for a training and development activity based on the lack of funds. In such cases, the irrespective person can support the costs with the engagement of NIMP to reimburse the costs when the fund are available in the same calendar year.

3. Actions

The Action Plan and HRS4R strategy must be published on an easily accessible location of the organisation's website.

Please provide the web link to the organization's Action Plan/HR Strategy dedicated webpage(s):

<http://www.yoursite.com>

Please fill in the list of all individual actions to be undertaken in your organisation's HRS4R to address the weaknesses or strengths identified in the Gap-Analysis. The listed actions should be concise, but detailed enough for the assessors to evaluate the level of ambition, engagement and the expected implementation process. The institution should strive to provide a detailed plan, not just an enumeration of actions.

Note: Choose one or more of the principles retrieved from the GAP Analysis.

Proposed ACTIONS

Principles:

(X) 1. Research freedom (X) 2. Ethical principles (X) 3. Professional responsibility (X) 4. Professional attitude (X) 5. Contractual and legal obligations (X) 6. Accountability (X) 7. Good practice in research (X) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results (X) 9. Public engagement (X) 10. Non discrimination (X) 11. Evaluation/ appraisal systems (X) 12. Recruitment (X) 13. Recruitment (Code) (X) 14. Selection (Code) (X) 15. Transparency (Code) (X) 16. Judging merit (Code) (X) 17. Variations in the chronological order of CVs (Code)

(X) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code) (X) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code) (X) 20. Seniority (Code) (X) 21.

Postdoctoral appointments (Code) (X) 22. Recognition of the profession (X) 23. Research environment (X) 24. Working conditions (X)

25. Stability and permanence of employment (X) 26. Funding and salaries (X) 27. Gender balance (X) 28. Career development (X) 29.

Value of mobility (X) 30. Access to career advice (X) 31. Intellectual Property Rights (X) 32. Co-authorship (x) 33. Teaching (x) 34.

Complains/ appeals (x) 35. Participation in decision-making bodies (x) 36. Relation with supervisors (x) 37. Supervision and managerial

duties (X) 38. Continuing Professional Development (X) 39. Access to research training and continuous development (x) 40.

Supervision

Action no. and name	GAP Principle(s)	Timing (at least by year's quarter/semester)	Responsible Unit	Indicators/Target(s)
ACTION 1 Data management plan and procedure for storing and sharing data.	(3) Professional responsibility	2 nd semester 2025	Legal Department; Scientific Council IT Department	One server will be purchased and allocated for the storage of the experimental data and other sensitive data of NIMP. A Data Management Plan will be conceived explaining the procedure to store primary experimental data, who has access to those data and in which conditions KPIs -one written DMP and one data manipulation procedure, available both in Romanian and English; -8 informative meetings, one for each laboratory.
ACTION 2 Procedure for evidence of the research projects	(4) Professional attitude (10) Non-discrimination	2 nd semester 2025	Scientific Council IT Department	One procedure to formally approve, monitor and archive projects. KPIs - one written procedure in Romanian and in English; - 8 informative sessions, one in each laboratory
ACTION 3 New position fiches. Nomination of a commission to analyze disciplinary issues.	(5) Contractual and legal obligations (19) Recognition of qualifications (20) Seniority (21) Postdoctoral appointments (22) Recognition of the profession	2 nd semester 2025	HR Officer; Legal Department	Updated position fiches for researchers. Disciplinary measures against those who do not obey the internal regulations, according the law and collective work agreement. A commission will be nominated to analyze the disciplinary issues. KPIs -6 Job Descriptions -1 disciplinary commission

ACTION 4 Procedures to handle results with IPR potential; procedure to protect personnel data in agreement to GDPR rules.	(7) Good practice in research (31) Intellectual Property Rights (32) Co-authorship	1 st semester 2026	Administration Council; HR Officer; Legal Department	Procedure to handle research output with IPR potential; GDPR procedure KPIs -one procedure to handle the research outputs with IPR potential; -one procedure to protect personnel data in agreement with GDPR rules.
ACTION 5 Newsletters.	(9) Public engagement	2 nd semester 2025	PR responsible	A newsletter will be posted on the webpage every 3 months, with the most interesting results and activities from the previous trimester. Most important results and activities will be advertised on media channels (FB, YouTube and similar); KPIs -4 newsletters per year; -at least 8 posts per year on social media channels -a dissemination commission
ACTION 6 Selection of honorary members in the Scientific Council.	(11) Evaluation/ appraisal systems	1 st semester 2026	Administration Council; Scientific Council	Selection of independent members from Romania and abroad in the Scientific Council. They will help in framing the institutional development plan, with a HR policy in line with best practice at EU level (Charta and Code). KPI -at least 6 honorary members
ACTION 7 Open position advertised in Romanian and English	(15) Transparency (16) Judging merit (19) Recognition of qualifications (20) Seniority (21) Postdoctoral appointments (22) Recognition of the profession	1 st quarter 2025	HR Officer	Advertising the open positions both in Romanian and in English on NIMP's webpage. The announcements on EURAXISS are already in English. KPI -number of advertisements for one specific position
ACTION 8 Yearly plan with actions for professional development.	(28) Career development (29) Value of mobility (38) Continuing Professional Development (39) Access to research training and continuous development (30) Access to career advice (33) Teaching (36) Relation with supervisors (40) Supervision	4 quarter 2025	Direction Committee; Scientific Council	A Plan for Professional Development (PPD) will be conceived, in agreement to the collective work contract. This will contain: possible work stages, training courses for researchers but also for administration, access to relevant literature through ANELIS+. KPIs -about 5 person-months per year for work stages, depending on available funding; -4 training stages on average, involving about 12-15 persons

	(16) Judging merit (18) Recognition of mobility experience			
ACTION 9 Report on OTM-R policy implementation status.	All Gap principles	2 nd quarter 2026	Direction Committee; Scientific Council	Annual Report on OTM-R policy, summarizing: new hiring/promotions (how the procedures were applied, if there were problems encountered and how these were solved); if there were problems in implementing the principles from Charta and Code and how these were tackled; actions for disseminations, IPR, public engagement, etc. KPI -one report on OTMR policy implementation status -one questionnaire regarding the perspective on the research career within NIMP
ACTION 10 Ethics and professionalism standards	(2) Ethical principles (3) Professional responsibility (4) Professional attitude (6) Accountability (10) Non-discrimination (27) Gender balance	2 nd semester ¹ 2025	Ethics Commission	Researchers should adhere to ethical standards maintain accountability and commit to good scientific practices KPIs -1 annual training in ethics principles -1 annual research misconduct report
ACTION 11 Optimized researchers working conditions	(12) Recruitment (24) Working conditions (23) Research environment (25) Stability and permanence of employment (26) Funding and salaries	4 quarter 2025	Direction Committee; Scientific Council	Fair, transparent recruitment based on merit is currently implemented. Research working conditions, especially from an infrastructure point of view, are improved regularly. KPIs -annual open positions -working satisfaction survey with 90% satisfaction rate as target.
ACTION 12 Implement regular and comprehensive training programs on ethical standards and regulatory compliance for all employees.	(2) Ethical principles (17) Variations in the chronological order of CVs (14) Selection	4th quarter 2025	Direction Committee; Scientific Council; Ethics Commission	Regular updates to the internal regulations and guidelines KPI -1 training session per year; - understanding of ethical standards
ACTION 13 Update the internal procedures related to internal complains	(34) Complain/ appeals (10) Non discrimination	1 st quarter 2026	Procedure Development Committee Legal Department HR Department Ethics Committee	Regular updates to the internal regulations and guidelines KPI -1 info session per year
ACTION 14 Establish a	(35) Participation in decision-making bodies	2 nd quarter 2026	Procedure Development	Improve the mentor-student/young researcher relationship by supporting through trainings and

procedure for mentor activities and design structured training programs to support their development.	(36) Relation with supervisors (37) Supervision and managerial duties (38) Continuing Professional Development (39) Access to research training and continuous development (40) Supervision		Committee Legal Department HR Department	communication programs. Improve the scientific output of the students/young researchers KPI -1 training program -1 survey on feedback mentor-student/young researcher relationship
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Note: Add as many actions as needed.

The establishment of an Open Recruitment Policy is a key element in the HRS4R strategy. Please also indicate how your organisation will use the Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment Toolkit and how you intend to implement/are implementing the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit- Based Recruitment. Although there may be some overlap with a range of actions listed above, please provide a short commentary demonstrating this implementation. If the case, please make the link between the OTM-R checklist and the overall action plan. (max. 1000 words) *

OTM-R policy of NIMP can be found at <https://infim.ro/en/hrs4r-2/>. Our organization has implemented an Open, Transparent and Merit based recruitment strategy. The related rules and regulations are available on the institutions web site (<https://infim.ro/en/rules-and-regulations/> in Romanian and <https://infim.ro/en/hrs4r-2/> in English)). Clear OTM-R procedures and practices for all types of positions are established (<https://infim.ro/en/rules-and-regulations/> and <https://infim.ro/en/hrs4r-2/>). The selection commissions involved in the recruitment/promotion process for R3 and R4 are nominated obeying the provisions from the law 183/2024, namely they are formed of 5 members, 3 being from outside NIMP. For R1 and R2 the commissions are formed of 4 members, 1 from outside NIMP. The commissions are assisted in their work by the HR inspector and the legal advisor, they check that the dossiers of the candidates contain all the documents requested by law, and that the commission has followed the procedure. The commissions are proposed by the Scientific Director, approved by the Scientific Council and Administration Council, and nominated by the General Director. The appeal commission has 3 members and is nominated by the General Director following the same procedure as for selection commission. Gender balance is also considered when nominating the commissions, having at least one female member. Open positions are advertised NIMP's webpage (normally in Romanian, but will be also in English for the future), on Euraxess (Romanian and English), and in national journals if requested by law (only in Romanian). All the documents relevant for the candidates are translated also in English (collective work contract, internal regulatory code, rules and procedures for hiring, promotion, evaluation of the professional performances, ethical code), and all the candidates are informed about these documents before signing the individual work contract. Once the contract is signed, it means that the irrespective person has adhered to all these internal procedures and has to obey them. The institution, through the HR department succeeds in keeping the administrative burden at a minimum for the candidate, according to law 183/2024 (no additional proofs/qualifications, translations, nr of copies etc are required). There are clear guidelines for selection committees, which help to judge 'merit' in a way that leads to the best candidate being selected (law 183/2024, ministry order 6129/2016, internal rules and regulations available at <https://infim.ro/en/rules-and-regulations/> and <https://infim.ro/en/hrs4r-2/>). A system involving Administration Council, Direction Committee and Scientific Council is used to assess whether OTM-R delivers on its objectives.

We remind here that the old law 319/2003 for researchers stipulated that any position in research system has to be occupied by open competition, whatever the candidates are already employed in NIMP or not, making no difference between new hiring and promotion of already employed personnel. The new law 183/2024 has clarified these aspects, making a clear distinction between new employees on open positions and promotion of already employed personnel on superior positions. The criteria and minimum thresholds are, however, the same. According to the new law, the open positions are advertised on the webpage, on EURAXESS and in a national journal, the candidates having 30 days to submit the full dossier to NIMP. The advertising has to contain a clear description of the job, of the

expected skills and expertise and on the working conditions. The candidates can obtain all the necessary information from NIMP's webpage (<https://infim.ro/en/hrs4r-2/>) or from HR office. The selection commission analyze the dossiers and interview the candidates, giving marks according to the internal rules and procedure. The best candidates are recommended for employment, with the mention that for R3 and R4 the dossiers have to be approved by some national bodies called the National Commission to Attest the University Titles, Diploma and Certificates (CNATDCU) and the Consultative College for Research, Development and Innovation (CCCDI). These bodies only check if the law was respected and the minimum thresholds were fulfilled, they cannot change the order established by the selection commission. R3 and R4 titles are granted through Ministry Order while R2 and R1 are granted by decision of the General Director. 6 competitions were organized in the last 7 years, the next one being foreseen for the first half of 2025. No appeals were formulated.

Some 16 researchers from abroad work at present at NIMP: 6 are R4, employed 75 % FTE for limited time contracts as PIs on PNRR projects; other 2 are R3 employed part time on PNRR projects; the other 8 are full time employees at NIMP, out of which 6 are with permanent positions. We think that these numbers are a good evidence that the OTM-R policy implemented by NIMP was successful.

As shown above, NIMP OTM-R policy is well aligned with the HRS4R strategy, with a good overall assessment regarding the matter. However, there are some actions needed in order to completely check all the points from the OTM-R checklist:

- i) We will improve the policy to share the news of job openings on social media (e.g. LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram) as well as content promoting institute updates that give inside into research developments.
- ii) Independent members will be included in the OTM-R process as honorary members of the Scientific Council; the Government Decision 1006/2015, stating the organizational and functional rules of NIMP stipulates that the Scientific Council is formed by employees of NIMP (art. 28(2)). However, it does not specifically interdict the involvement of researchers from outside NIMP as honorary members.

The supervision of the recruitment process will be administered by the HR department or designated staff. The supervision and recruitment efficiency will be checked periodically by external HR-audit performed by a leading company in the field.

HR department and/or designated staff will gather analyze qualitative and quantitative data relevant to the recruitment process (HR-metrics including recruitment, retention, training and employee satisfaction, performance and productivity). The data will be used to adapt the OTM-R accordingly.

- iii) The open positions will be advertised bilingually (English/Romanian)
- iv) A feedback form for both successful and unsuccessful candidates which will focus only on skills (it may include suggestions from the selection committee on how they can improve their overall performance) will be implemented.

If your organisation already has a recruitment strategy which implements the principles of Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment, please provide the web link where this strategy can be found on your organisation's website:

URL: *http://www.yoursite.com*

4. Implementation

General overview of the expected overall implementation process of the action plan: (max. 1000 words)

In line with the HRS4R guideline, NIMP has proposed 9 actions with their associated tasks for the implementation of Action Plan. During the time leading up to the HR Award application, key members were identified who would be involved in the document development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes.

A Steering Committee was appointed by the General Director, including: 1) Scientific Director-is the person proposing the members of the selection commissions and, usually, is the president these commissions for all recruitment procedures, 2) Economic Director-is signing the work contracts, taking care of the financial aspects and other material benefits, 3) Director of CIFRA-CIFRA, acting as an independent unit inside the institute (see the Government Decision 1006/2015); it has to follow the same recruitment rules as NIMP, 4) President of the Scientific Council-the Scientific Council is the governing body conceiving the internal recruitment rules and regulations, respecting the legal documents in force at national level, law 183/2024 and Ministry Order 6129/2016, 4) HR Inspector-it is the secretary of the selection commission and is preparing the contracts and implements any changes in the work contract, 5) Legal Adviser-is taking care that all the recruitment procedures and rules established at the level of the institute are following the national legislation in the field of work conditions and relations. All the above persons have direct implications in the recruitment and selection process, as described in the previous paragraph about OTM-R policy at NIMP. Their involvement in SC was discussed and approved both in the Scientific Council and in the Administration Council.

The General Director has nominated by decision 118/2023 a Working Group (WG) composed of academic (R1- R4) and administrative staff, which has as duties, gap analysis and OTM-R evaluation of the current situation and afterwards the development of the Action Plan, which was approved by the SC. The working group members have knowledge of rules and regulation that applies research environments, training, working conditions, ethics committees, and recruiting in alignment with HRS4R principles.

The WG is formed by 4 R4, 3 R3, 1 R2 and 1 person from administration. These were nominated by laboratories and administrative personnel, after meetings with all the employees. The WG contains also representatives of the syndicate, 1 R4, 1 R2, 1 R1 and 1 from administration, representing thus the 4 main syndicate groups (senior researchers R3 and R4, equivalent postdocs R2, PhD students R1 and ACS, and administration. Therefore, the selection of WG was transparent and involved all the personnel categories from NIMP.

As stated above, NIMP already has an OTM-R policy, see <https://infim.ro/en/hrs4r-2/>. This was framed first time in 2010 and was periodically upgraded to obey the national rules and constrains, as well as to promote the good practices learned from institutions abroad, with recruitment and selection using open, transparent and merit based procedures and selection criteria. For the upgrades, the Scientific Council nominated special commissions who conceived a draft of the internal rules and procedures, supervised by the HR inspector and legal adviser that complies the national laws and rules at that time. The draft was then discussed in meeting of the research laboratories and administration services, who amended the draft if necessary. All the amendments were discussed in the Direction Committee and in the Scientific Council, who adopted by vote the final version of the rules and procedures for recruitment and selection/promotion, as well as for the criteria and indicators used for the evaluation of the professional performance. The final approval is in the Administration Council, the top governing body of NIMP as established by Government Decision HG 1006/2015. The last update of the rules and procedures for recruiting and selection/promotion is from 2019. A new update is expected in the next 6 months, following the new law of researchers 183/2024. In fact, the WG nominated by the General Director's decision 118/2023 has the following tasks:

- To permanently review and upgrade the internal rules and procedures for recruitment, selection/promotion and evaluation of the professional performance;
- To assist and validate the yearly evaluation of the professional performance and to respond to appeals related to this subject;
- To assist the implementation of the gender equality plan (7 of the WG members are females, from a total of 13);
- To conceive procedures for Open Science and Data Management Plan
- To conceive a yearly plan for professional development.

All the draft produced by this WG are then discussed in the laboratory meetings and in meetings of the administrative services. No one is left aside and all the groups are involved in the negotiation of the new rules and procedures having in mind that these have to be open, transparent and merit based.

The SC will ensure that the initiatives are implemented promptly and evaluate progress for the following two years after the European Commission approves the plan of action.

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

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

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

The Working Group met every month to work on the documents and to implement recommendations and corrections suggested/required by the Steering Committee, and to address the critics from the initial assessment of the HRS4R evaluation committee. The final form was checked by the legal adviser for conformity to the national legislation.

The Steering Committee assisted the Working Group, making recommendations to enhance or to correct the documents for HRS4R in agreement to Charta and Code and following the critics and recommendation from the initial assessment. When the documents were finalized, they were presented to the top management body of the institute, the Administration Council, who adopted them by decision signed by the President of the Administration Council and General Director of the institute.

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

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

We underline again that NIMP implemented OTM-R policy. Selection criteria and thresholds were refined in the last 10 years, and are now accepted by the entire research community in NIMP, especially the rules for evaluating the professional performance. As mentioned several times, all the aspects were discussed in the research laboratories and administrative services. No change was performed without consultation and all the changes approved were communicated to the personnel.

NIMP aims to ensure active involvement of the research community, encompassing its principal stakeholders, in the implementation process. Recognizing the significance of broad participation and diversity of perspectives, the NIMP has developed consultation mechanisms that include surveys, meetings in research labs, administrative services, syndicate groups, one to one discussions between management members and personnel, seminars, training programs, and e-mail announcements. Similar mechanisms will be used in the future also.

The HRS4R button on NIMP's website serves as a central repository, providing updates on the rules and procedures as well as on their implementation progress. Additionally, regular articles in the national press and on the NIMP website offer insights into ongoing developments related to HR strategy. Human resources procedural changes are implemented in an inclusive manner, ensuring that all stakeholder groups are informed and provided with opportunities to provide feedback. Internal consultations and feedback sessions with the research community and stakeholder enable improvement of the implementation of processes.

The composition of the Steering Committee and working group (which involve researcher R1-R4 and administrative staff) reflects the institution's commitment to diversity, ensuring that all voices are heard in the implementation process. Also, a HRS4R questionnaire regarding the perspective on the research career within NIMP was distributed among all research positions from R1 to R4 and administrative staff. The HRS4R questionnaire result is attached to the application and also available on HRS4R section on the website (<https://infim.ro/hrs4r/>). The evolution of the questionnaire results will be followed.

In essence, the NIMP's approach to involving the research community and its stakeholders in the implementation process is characterized by transparency, inclusivity, and a commitment to diversity.

How do you proceed with the alignment of organisational policies with the HRS4R? Make sure the HRS4R is recognized in the organisation's research strategy, as the overarching HR policy.

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

The principles from EU Charta and Code for researchers are available on NIMP's web page at <https://infim.ro/en/hrs4r-2/> under the name "Useful links", thus are available to all personnel. Moreover, these were discussed in internal meetings at laboratory level. Most of those principles were already implemented in the OTM-R policy of NIMP, as described in pervious sections. The few principles that were not fully implemented will be addressed by the action plan proposed

above. In any case, the personnel of NIMP will undoubtedly become more informed about the new regulations and procedures as a result of the consultations that will occur throughout the action plan's implementation.

Efforts to implement the HRS4R process will be sustained by the management team (SC) and the collective decision-making bodies such as the Scientific Council and the Administration Council. Revision of the relevant policy documents, guidelines and codes will be made, if necessary. We mention again that the legislation impacting the R&D&I sector in Romania is subject of some changes as recommended in the PSF report in 2021. NIMP cannot be held responsible if some of the rules and procedures imposed by law at national level, regarding recruitment and selection of HR in research, are not fully in line with the principles of Charta and Code. The R&D&I system in Romania is relatively complicated, with 3 main pillars: universities, national institutes (like NIMP) and Romanian Academy. Universities and Romanian Academy have separate laws of organization and functioning. What NIMP can do is to implement OTM-R policy at its level, respecting the principles from Charta and Code, and obeying in the same time to national regulations for the R&D&I system.

How will you ensure that the proposed actions are implemented?*

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

The proposed actions are implemented by the Steering Committee who is directly involved in the development of the Action Plan. This action plan enters into implementation following top management body of the institute (President of the Administration Council and General Director of the institute) approval. SC will promptly address any requirements that may arise during the implementation phase to include additional members in the working groups that develop rules and regulations. SC will organize periodic meetings to review and deliberate on the advancements of the implementation process.

The indicators or objective must be entirely met before an action can be declared finished and completely implemented. We have chosen attainable and practical objectives and indicators so as to prevent any modifications to the action plan. We will, however, make every effort to strictly conform to the proposed action plan. Furthermore, the levels of implementations can be better comprehended with the aid of survey results incorporated into the actions, therefore survey will be periodically run in order to ensure a good implementation of the proposed actions.

How will you monitor progress (timeline)?*

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

To monitor the progress, the implementation team will hold regular meetings.

Regular SC meetings will be held to deliberate on forthcoming actions, milestones, coordination and monitoring action implementation (at least every six months, and more frequently if required). Moreover, annually, the Head of the SC will inform the Administration Council about the statement of progress.

To ensure the successful and timely completion of each task, a comprehensive checklist will be established, outlining the activities and corresponding timeline. In accordance with the action, quarterly meetings will be planned by the Working Group, to assess progress and guide subsequent actions as required.

KPI.

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

Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

The progress will be evaluated using the indicators that are explicitly outlined in the action plan. To ensure tasks are advancing successfully, the Working Group may establish additional quantifiable sub-indicators that correspond to those specified in the action plan. In order to assess the adherence to the Action Plan's specified timeline, evaluations will be conducted at the quarterly meetings and four seminars. Prominent members of the Steering Committee will be tasked with overseeing the effort and suggesting modifications to account for setbacks and delays.

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

NIMP does not start from zero in implementing an open, transparent and merit based recruitment and selection process. Many of the actual peoples occupying top management positions have worked for many years in research organization abroad and tried to implement the good practices learned there when came back at NIMP. The decisive years were 2008-2010, with re-organization of the research laboratories, selection of new heads, and implementation of new rules and procedures for hiring and promotion, based only on personal merit. Also, a new evaluation of the professional performance was negotiated with the syndicate and the researchers, then implemented starting with 2010. All these rules and procedures were periodically refined to respond to changes in the

national regulations or to eliminate drawbacks signaled by the research personnel. The last update was in 2019 and a new one is foreseen for the first half of 2025, following the provisions of the new law 183/2024.

In any case, the OTM-R policy implemented by NIMP in the last years can be considered a success. About 100 peoples were hired since 2010, most of them in the research labs, including some 10 researchers from Romanian diaspora and some 16 peoples from abroad. Aside of new employees, NIMP is organizing promotion exams/competitions periodically (almost every year) so that many of those who were employed in 2020 as ACS now have promoted to R2 and even R3 positions. We mention that for R3 and R4 there is a set of minimum criteria and thresholds that have to be fulfilled for promotion, valid at national level and approved by Ministry Order 6129/2016 (still valid). Each research organization can supplement the criteria and thresholds to ensure that the best candidates are selected. For ACS, R1 and R2 the recruitment, selection and promotion criteria and thresholds are set by NIMP. The rules and procedures for NIMP are discussed in the laboratory meetings, then discussed and approved in the Scientific Council and Administration Council. Their correct application is supervised by the management bodies, HR inspector and legal adviser, who have to validate the results of employment/promotion exams/competitions.

The professional performance is evaluated yearly based on the results obtained in the previous three full calendar years. The evaluation considers ALL the aspects of the work performed by a researcher (ability to attract funds, publications, citations, patenting, exploitation and valorization of the research's results, prizes, international visibility, mentoring, involvement in other activities for the benefit of NIMP, etc.). All these are converted into points, the evaluation resulting in a hierarchy based on which bonuses to the salaries are applied. All the researchers are informed about the evaluation procedure and knows the benefits if they are on top of the hierarchy.

Taking into consideration all the aspects mentioned above, we feel that there are only a few aspects that need to be addressed in the action plan: 1) conceiving a data management plan for the primary experimental data and other sensitive data; 2) conceiving a procedure to monitor all the projects at the level of Scientific Council, without impeding the freedom of researchers to apply for funding at different calls; 3) reinforce the internal regulatory code and nominating a commission to take care of disciplinary actions against those who do not respect the internal rules; 4) conceiving a procedure for protection of personnel data and a procedure to decide which data may be subject to IPR applications; 5) conceive a plan for professional development; 6) improve the actions for public engagement (e.g. by newsletters and posts on social media); 7) select honorary members in the Scientific Council to help NIMP in keeping good practices in the strategic development, including HR policy; 8) publish the open positions in Romanian and English; 9) yearly monitoring of OTP-R policy, with all its aspects.