



UNIVERSITÀ DI PARMA

# HRS4R – GAP Analysis

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*This document was prepared by the HRS4R Focus Group of  
UNIPR Researchers and by the HRS4R Working Group*

## PILLAR 1 – ETHICS, INTEGRITY, GENDER AND OPEN SCIENCE

<b>1.Ethics and Research Integrity</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
-/+ partially implemented	<p>The University of Parma's (UNIPR) Code of Ethics provides only limited definitions of fundamental concepts such as integrity and key ethical principles, including honesty, reliability, objectivity, impartiality and independence, open communication, duty of care, fairness, and responsibility towards future scientific generations. Although UNIPR recently introduced guidelines for the responsible use of AI (May 2025), the Code of Ethics has not yet been updated in line with the 2023 European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, which emphasizes the need to address ethical implications of emerging technologies and evaluate their impact on research practices.</p> <p>Communication of the Code to students and researchers is also limited, leaving many unaware of its content and purpose. While institutional mechanisms for promoting research integrity exist—such as a Whistleblowing Platform and the appointment of a University Ombudsperson—these roles are poorly promoted, and it remains unclear whether they can be used to report ethical violations effectively.</p> <p>UNIPR also provides an institutional tool for plagiarism screening, currently widely applied to doctoral theses. Its potential for pre-submission review of scientific articles, however, is less well-known. Expanding awareness and use of this system could further strengthen the university's capacity to ensure high standards of integrity in scientific production.</p>

<b>2.Freedom of Scientific Research</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
+/- almost but not fully Implemented	<p>The University Statute and the guidelines on good practice in research, publication, and dissemination of results clearly emphasize the importance of scientific freedom as a foundation for the quality and integrity of research. However, despite this formal recognition, there is a lack of an operational policy and guidelines that concretely implement these principles. Monitoring and verification system to assess the effective implementation of good practices and ensure the autonomy of researchers is marginal.</p> <p>Furthermore, although the University Strategic Plan, with reference to Objective R4, highlights the importance of basic research, the internal funding system, particularly through the FIL (product quota) mechanism, is heavily oriented towards productivity measured by bibliometrics. Numerical indicators, if not qualitative, should be accessible to enable continuous improvement and ensure a more equitable evaluation of research lines. For researchers entering the academic system, it would be desirable to provide initial financial independence that allows them to develop independent research topics, without being influenced by the priorities of their associate or full researchers. The current approach risks penalizing innovative, long-term, or interdisciplinary research, and makes the initial phase of an academic career more difficult and less attractive, particularly for external researchers or those who do not belong to well-established research groups.</p> <p>Critical issues have also been identified regarding the distribution of funds and participation in internal calls. Decision-making processes can hinder effective research freedom, reducing the variety and originality of funded projects. Furthermore, the composition of commissions and evaluation committees does not always ensure adequate disciplinary and gender representation, a</p>

	<p>factor that can negatively impact the promotion of innovative, critical, and transversal approaches.</p> <p>With regard to the promotion of Open Science, the University is not always able to guarantee adequate resources and training for everyone.</p>
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<b>3. Open Science</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
-/+ partially implemented	<p>In 2020, the University of Parma adopted the Guidelines "Good Practice in Research and the Publication and Dissemination of Results" to ensure transparency, accessibility, and responsible sharing of scientific results. However, the principles defined in the guidelines are not reflected in concrete actions by the University to support researchers. Specifically, there is a lack of a policy on the free dissemination of results through green OA (Open Access) and on the management of research data according to FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) principles. Adequate support for archiving and publishing datasets produced as part of research activities is also lacking, which represents a significant obstacle to data sharing and re-usability, in line with European standards. Researchers are also poorly aware of the benefits and obligations of open science practices (particularly regarding diamond OA publication methods and open peer review).</p> <p>Finally, a policy for citizen science and trained personnel to support researchers for projects that involve the active involvement of citizens in scientific processes are missing</p>

<b>4. Gender Equality</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
-/+ partially implemented	<p>An analysis of the most recent data collected by UNIPR in its Gender Reports highlights a continuing gender imbalance, requiring concrete action to address the problem. The distribution of faculty and researchers across the different stages of their academic careers reveals a significant gender gap, especially in senior positions. This imbalance is also reflected in scientific leadership opportunities, with a significant underrepresentation of women among Principal Investigators of research projects across all disciplinary fields. University governance reflects this trend: as of May 2025, all departmental director positions are held by men, and women are almost entirely absent even among elected faculty. This gender inequality, unfortunately consistent with the national trend, appears even more critical given the lack of systematic measures aimed at addressing it. Implemented actions are often fragmented and inconsistent, as in the case of compensating for leave (parental, maternity, or sick leave), in assessments for research funding or academic positions. Furthermore, there is a lack of structured guidelines to promote work-life balance, a factor that disproportionately impacts women, who are often also burdened with caregiving duties. Some good practices—such as the opening of the Childhood Center and dedicated spaces for families, or the excellent work done by the Guarantee Committee (CUG) in raising awareness about gender-based violence and harassment—represent positive signs. However, these initiatives need to be strengthened and made systemic, promoting concrete actions in university and departmental regulations, such as the introduction of minimum gender quotas on committees, specific career support for young female researchers, and the introduction of internal contact points who can effectively monitor objectives and best practices. Only with a comprehensive</p>

	and coherent approach it will be possible to overcome the remaining inequalities and ensure equal opportunities in academic and scientific careers
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<b>5.Embracing Diversity</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
-/+ partially implemented	<p>UNIPR has taken important steps toward a more equitable and inclusive academic environment, in line with the European Charter for Researchers. However, the analysis reveals some critical issues that hinder the full implementation of the principle of inclusion and diversity. In terms of inclusivity, two University bodies stand out: the Guarantee Committee (CUG) and the Inclusion Center (CAI). One of the main gaps is the lack of a structured network of contacts for the CUG, while for the CAI, these exist only for degree programs. The creation of a coordinated network accessible to doctoral students, grant holders, researchers, and technical-administrative staff would be essential to strengthen the accessibility and effectiveness of the services offered. Furthermore, the institutional websites of the CUG and CAI are poorly usable, with content that is out of date, unclear, and not always compliant with digital accessibility standards.</p> <p>A further critical element is the lack of a comprehensive mapping of architectural barriers present in university spaces, which hinders effective and inclusive mobility management.</p> <p>Furthermore, critical issues remain related to the limited use of English in institutional communications and official documentation, resulting in the exclusion of international workers. The lack of support tools for international workers (and students) also represents a barrier to inclusion, as does the lack of financial support for national health insurance.</p> <p>The newly approved Regulation of the CAI has explicitly extended its scope of intervention to additional categories, such as research fellows, grant holders, visiting professors and contract staff. It will therefore be essential to ensure wide-ranging, inclusive and multicultural communication also addressed to these groups. At the same time, the impact on the Centre will need to be carefully monitored, particularly with regard to a potential increase in users, with specific attention to the Psychological Counselling Service, which is already under significant pressure, especially during teaching and examination periods.</p>

<b>6.The researcher</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
+/- almost but not fully Implemented	<p>The professional conduct of researchers and public employees is governed by national regulations that define their duties, responsibilities, and operating procedures. Presidential Decree 62/2013, known as the Code of Conduct for Public Employees, establishes fundamental principles such as diligence, loyalty, impartiality, transparency, and the prohibition of conflicts of interest, which also apply to university professors and researchers. The latter must operate in compliance with the National Research Programs (PNR), maintaining a professional and responsible attitude, and requiring periodic reporting of their activities. Law 240/2010 and subsequent decrees strengthen the principle of accountability, requiring universities to justify the use of public funds and ensure efficiency and transparency. Violations of these regulations result in disciplinary sanctions and can jeopardize financial advancement, which is no</p>

	<p>longer automatic but depends on the positive evaluation of teaching, scientific, and managerial commitment.</p> <p>UNIPR has adopted a Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Good Practice in Research and Publishing, which promote responsible and transparent conduct and provide clear guidelines for scientific integrity. However, there are no structured and systematic mechanisms in place for the ongoing training of all academic staff on these issues, particularly for positions such as grant holders, RTDs, and non-tenured research collaborators.</p> <p>With regard to the valorisation of intellectual property, the University Regulation on patents provides a solid regulatory framework for the protection of inventions and the promotion of their valorisation, in line with the institutional policies supporting technology transfer. There is growing awareness, including among researchers at the early stages of their careers, of the opportunities offered by the system for the protection and exploitation of research results. Further dissemination, training and support actions, promoted in synergy with the Technology Transfer Office, may strengthen knowledge of the Regulation and of the available support channels, fostering increasingly informed and widespread participation in valorisation processes.</p> <p>The University's commitment to open science is mainly realized through its participation in the CRUI transformative contracts, which allow authors to publish open access without direct financial burden. Despite this, information disparities persist regarding access to these resources, with access still limited by the academic community. A policy on open science, data management according to FAIR principles, and citizen science are lacking.</p> <p>Within the broader strategic framework, the University Strategic Plan 2025–2030 and the PIAO 2025–2027 include references to the enhancement of human capital, research quality, and the creation of public value. In summary, UNIPR has a regulatory and strategic framework to support researchers in adhering to ethical standards and promoting open science, but there is room for improvement in implementation, systematic training, and equitable access to resources and opportunities. Strengthening these aspects would allow the University to consolidate its commitment to responsible, open, and high-quality research.</p>
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<b>7. Free circulation of researchers</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
+/- almost but not fully Implemented	<p>At UNIPR, the principle of free circulation of researchers, enshrined in the European Charter for Researchers, finds multiple concrete applications that demonstrate the University's commitment to promoting mobility as a strategic lever for scientific excellence, professional growth, and internationalization. Mobility, both incoming and outgoing, is encouraged through diversified actions, initiated and coordinated by various Organizational Units, which oversee regulatory, administrative, and promotional aspects.</p> <p>The Reception, Mobility, and International Students Unit plays an important role in promoting internationalization and supporting the mobility of both faculty and students. However, difficulties have arisen in managing administrative support for incoming staff, especially regarding visas, housing, health insurance, etc..</p> <p>Regarding the outgoing mobility of permanent staff, the University publishes specific calls for research stays abroad; however, the availability and regularity of these calls require greater consolidation and visibility. Regarding incoming mobility, regulations and calls for applications dedicated to Visiting Professors are in place, providing a clear regulatory framework for hosting foreign faculty</p>

	<p>and researchers, in line with national regulations and an international perspective. The University also promotes the recruitment of scholars from abroad pursuant to Article 1, paragraph 9, of Law 230/2005, and contemplates forms of collaboration through agreements, alternating work experience, and study leave, in accordance with current legislation. These already formalized tools offer a comprehensive framework that facilitates professional mobility, although there is room for improvement in terms of concrete implementation and involvement of all levels of academic staff. Indeed, it is highlighted that to date the outgoing mobility of research fellows and non-permanent post-doc staff does not have a regulatory framework and operational tools comparable to those provided for doctoral students or permanent staff.</p> <p>For doctoral students, the Postgraduate Training Unit ensures systematic implementation of the principle of free movement through regulations updated in accordance with Ministerial Decree 226/2021 and clear international mobility policies. The page dedicated to doctoral student mobility clearly outlines the opportunities offered and how to access them, ensuring this category of researchers fully participates in internationalization processes, including through agreements and co-supervision programs.</p> <p>The European and International Research Support Unit, while not directly responsible for mobility flows, plays a crucial role in strategic planning and promoting actions that strengthen the internationalization of research. In this regard, the organization of the Bootcamp for Postdoctoral Fellowships is particularly significant. This initiative aims to welcome young foreign researchers and stimulate international interaction in the early stages of their academic careers.</p> <p>The following initiatives implemented by the University in recent years to promote the mobility of academic staff and technical-administrative personnel engaged in research activities are also noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a University call for proposals to promote the international mobility of professors and researchers, approved by Board of Directors resolution CDA/26-06-2025/255, aimed at supporting research activities and the development of international networks and collaborations.</li> <li>– a University call for proposals aimed at supporting the international mobility of professors and researchers in order to strengthen their capacity to successfully compete in European funding calls under the first pillar of Horizon Europe.</li> </ul>
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<b>8.Sustainability of Research</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
+/- almost but not fully implemented	<p>UNIPR has undertaken a structured and conscious path toward integrating environmental, social, and economic sustainability into its institutional policies, including those related to research. The work of the Sustainable University Group, in collaboration with the "Building and Infrastructure" Management Area and the Energy Efficiency Coordination Office, has led to the definition of concrete operational objectives for mitigating environmental impact, such as improving building efficiency, promoting sustainable mobility, and circular waste management. These actions provide a favorable framework for ensuring more sustainable environmental conditions for research, even if they are not always specifically designed for the scientific context.</p> <p>In the area of Third Mission, the University is actively committed to addressing the needs of the local community, contributing to sustainable development that also includes promoting research from a social and environmental perspective. In this sense, sustainability is interpreted not only as an ecological principle, but</p>

	<p>also as social justice and cohesion, areas in which the work of the University Social Justice Coordination Board (TAGSO) is integrated.</p> <p>The Sustainability Report, published biennially and now in its fourth edition (the latest for 2022/2023), is an important reporting and transparency tool, but also an opportunity for internal reflection on the alignment of research activities with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).</p> <p>However, the policies implemented, although advanced from the perspective of the institution's environmental governance, have not yet translated into operational guidelines explicitly designed for the daily practice of scientific research, for example in terms of reducing the laboratories' environmental footprint, sustainability of the resources used, green criteria in instrument procurement, or project-related mobility.</p> <p>The University's membership in the Network of Universities for Sustainable Development (RUS) represents an important strategic lever, which could be further enhanced to promote a culture of sustainability in research design, through training sessions, exchanges of best practices, and self-assessment tools.</p>
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**PILLAR 2 – RESEARCHERS ASSESSMENT, RECRUITMENT AND PROGRESSION**

<b>9. Researchers' assessment</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
<p>-/+ partially implemented</p>	<p>At the University of Parma (UNIPR), the evaluation of researchers is governed by both national legislation and internal policies that aim to ensure transparency, accountability, and quality in academic performance. Nationally, Law 240/2010 and the work of ANVUR set the framework for assessing research and teaching, with key mechanisms such as the VQR (Research Quality Evaluation) and ASN (National Scientific Qualification) determining institutional funding and academic progression. Locally, UNIPR has established a well-structured evaluation system through its Evaluation Unit, the Research Committee, and support units for bibliometric analysis and research monitoring.</p> <p>Despite this solid foundation, several gaps emerge when current practices are assessed against the principles of the European Charter for Researchers. The most prominent issue is the heavy reliance on quantitative metrics, such as bibliometric indicators, which dominate evaluations at the expense of qualitative, peer-driven assessments. Although area committees provide some disciplinary nuance, there is no systematic or transparent process that captures the contextual richness or originality of research contributions.</p> <p>Another key weakness is the limited recognition of research impact beyond academia. Current systems reward traditional academic outputs while largely ignoring contributions to society, policy, innovation, or knowledge transfer. Similarly, non-traditional research outputs—such as software, datasets, patents, or engagement activities—receive little or no attention in evaluation processes. This narrow definition of research excellence risks overlooking valuable contributions, especially in interdisciplinary or applied fields.</p> <p>The lack of incentives for open science also stands out. While UNIPR adheres to ethical standards and authenticity checks, practices such as open access, data sharing, and preregistration are not systematically encouraged or rewarded. This leaves researchers without motivation to align with European open science objectives.</p> <p>In some areas, progress has been made: evaluations at UNIPR do take into account disciplinary differences and offer some flexibility in applying criteria. However, transparency about how these criteria are used could be</p>

	<p>strengthened. Similarly, while gender equality and inclusion are formally respected, there is potential to further embed inclusiveness into research evaluation, for instance by promoting diversity in research teams.</p> <p>An important gap remains in the absence of formal training for evaluators. Without dedicated education on ethical assessment, open science, inclusiveness, and responsible research metrics, the risk of inconsistent or outdated evaluation practices persists.</p> <p>In conclusion, while UNIPR has established effective evaluation mechanisms, greater attention to qualitative peer review, broader research impacts, recognition of diverse outputs, open science, and evaluator training is necessary to fully align with the values of the European Charter for Researchers</p>
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<b>10. Recruitment</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
<p>-/+ partially implemented</p>	<p>The legislative and regulatory framework of UNIPR partially reflects what is expressed in the principle, highlighting a series of strengths but also significant gaps.</p> <p>The openness and transparency of selection processes are ensured through the publication of calls for applications on official channels such as the Official Journal, the website of the Ministry of University and Research, the University's institutional portal, and the European platform Euraxess. Candidates are compared according to criteria formalized in the regulations for the various academic and research roles. However, it is noted that explicit reference to the principles of the European Charter is absent from the regulations governing the recruitment of doctoral students, research fellows, and contract researchers. Furthermore, the lack of complete English translations of the regulations and calls for applications effectively limits accessibility for an international audience, thus hindering full compliance with the principles of openness and internationalization.</p> <p>Another critical point concerns the publication of job ads on Euraxess, where information is often partially incomplete, making it difficult for candidates to identify opportunities that match their profile.</p> <p>Regarding the promotion of non-linear or multidimensional career paths, the picture appears fragmented. Some regulations, such as those for tenure-track researchers, introduce mechanisms to encourage mobility and diversification of experience, reserving a portion of positions for candidates from different institutions. However, it is not possible to submit narrative or results-oriented CVs, as suggested by the Charter. While there are no automatic penalizing mechanisms, regulatory silence on these aspect risks perpetuating an academic culture still tied to linear and conventional career models.</p> <p>Attention to the principles of equal opportunity and diversity is present but not uniform across the regulations. For example, calls for tenure-track researchers emphasize the need to ensure gender balance on evaluation committees, but similar provisions are not found in calls for doctoral students or research fellows. There is no specific training program aimed at raising committee members' awareness of the principles of fair recruitment, implicit bias, or the founding values of the European Charter for Researchers. In the absence of targeted training or guidelines, the risk of unintentional evaluation bias or indirect discrimination remains high.</p> <p>Regarding the clarity and completeness of information in the calls for applications, the University appears to adhere to recommended best practices, describing the required activities, minimum requirements, scientific field, and</p>

	contractual conditions in sufficient detail. However, when analyzing the issue of evaluating results versus seniority or the linearity of career paths, critical issues emerge that are more related to the national context than to specific University decisions. Specifically, the requirement for National Scientific Qualification (ASN) for access to professorships is a structural element that favors traditional and continuous academic careers, effectively penalizing candidates with interrupted or less linear career paths. While modifying this mechanism is beyond the scope of local expertise, the University could nevertheless consider internal selection methods that are more focused on the quality of results rather than mere curricular continuity.
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<b>11.Selection</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
+/- almost but not fully implemented	<p>UNIPR has adopted a comprehensive set of regulations for the recruitment of researchers, professors, and grant holders. These regulations, for the most part, demonstrate attention to the formal aspects of transparency and procedural fairness, but still present some critical issues with respect to the full implementation of the principles promoted by the Charter.</p> <p>The selection procedures for the various categories of academic staff are governed by clear and detailed regulations that require the publication of calls for applications and the specification of evaluation criteria, which are subsequently made public along with the selection results. Evaluations are expressed both numerically and verbally, thus ensuring a certain degree of transparency in the decision-making processes.</p> <p>Regarding candidate evaluation, the regulations require the application of the criteria established by ministerial decrees (Ministerial Decree 243/2011 for fixed-term researchers and Ministerial Decree 344/2011 for full- and associate professors), which impose high, internationally recognized quality standards. However, the system remains heavily anchored to quantitative parameters, such as the number and consistency of publications, which risks penalizing those who have had career interruptions. The committees are required to take into account periods of maternity leave or other justified absences, but the committees have broad discretion, which does not guarantee uniform protection for candidates with non-linear career paths.</p> <p>The committees are composed primarily of external faculty members with expertise relevant to the scientific field or subject area covered by the call, thus ensuring a high level of technical and scientific evaluation. The principle of gender equality is present in the composition of the committees, including faculty members, RTDs, and ETDs, but not for research fellows and doctoral students. To date, there is no requirement or established practice for specific training for committee members regarding the principles of fairness, impartiality, or combating unconscious bias. The lack of such training may limit the effectiveness of formal measures, exposing the procedures to the risk of implicit discrimination or the reproduction of academic stereotypes.</p> <p>A positive aspect is the possibility of conducting interviews, where applicable, both in person and remotely, which introduces a certain flexibility that can favor the participation of candidates with complex personal or logistical situations, including international researchers.</p> <p>Overall, while UNIPR demonstrates a strong commitment to regulating selection processes, clarifying criteria, and formalizing outcomes, critical issues emerge related to the lack of attention to diversity of academic paths, the lack of training for examiners, and the absence of mechanisms capable of</p>

	concretely valuing results and skills beyond the mere quantity of scientific output. Furthermore, the lack of bilingual documentation limits accessibility for international candidates and potentially weakens the European dimension of recruitment processes.
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<b>12. Career progression</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
-/+ partially implemented	<p>The implementation of the "Career Advancement" principle outlined in the European Charter for Researchers faces structural and regulatory constraints that significantly reduce the University's scope for independent action. It is important to first distinguish between advancement in carrier , which occurs exclusively through public competition, and financial advancement, the connection between which and research evaluation is currently unclear and poorly formalized.</p> <p>One of the central aspects of the European principle is the objective of ensuring fair, independent, international, and quality-based evaluation of the work of researchers and faculty. This objective appears, in the current context, far from being achieved. Academic career progression is governed by procedures established at the national level, such as the National Scientific Qualification (ASN), which is a mandatory step for accessing associate or full professorships. This mechanism is intrinsically biased toward traditional and linear disciplinary paths, ultimately systematically penalizing profiles with interdisciplinary or non-continuous experience.</p> <p>At the local level, the only formal internal evaluation tool is the distribution of research fundings based on the research products. The most prominent issue is the heavy reliance on quantitative metrics, such as bibliometric indicators, which dominate evaluations at the expense of qualitative, peer-driven assessments. Although area committees provide some disciplinary nuance, there is no systematic or transparent process that captures the contextual richness or originality of research contributions.</p> <p>The "Outstanding Researcher Award", started in 2025 could be improved to better contribute to the career development and/or recognition.</p> <p>Alongside these considerations are the issues of gender equality and equal opportunities in accessing academic career paths. While no direct discrimination has emerged in the formal rules of competitive examinations, evident imbalances remain in the concrete possibilities of accessing preparatory positions—such as fixed-term Type A research contracts or tenure track—for individuals, particularly women, who are in critical phases of their lives, such as motherhood or caring for family members. The precarious nature of these positions, combined with the lack of support or compensation, continues to represent a substantial obstacle to equal access and the diversification of academic profiles. Furthermore, current evaluation procedures for advancement lack mechanisms capable of recognizing and valuing non-linear career paths or skills developed outside of the strictly academic sphere.</p> <p>Finally, a key critical point concerns the lack of openness to evaluations conducted by external or international experts during career progression. Currently, internal evaluations do not include, either in triennial reports or in salary progression procedures, the systematic involvement of external evaluators who could ensure greater objectivity and consistency with European standards. The absence of such a mechanism contributes to a self-referential, opaque, and not always meritocratic system.</p>

**PILLAR 3 - WORKING CONDITIONS AND PRACTICES**

<b>13. Working conditions, funding and salaries</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
-/+ partially implemented	<p>In recent years, UNIPR has demonstrated a growing commitment to enhancing the working conditions of its academic and research staff. This commitment is reflected in a range of initiatives aimed at fostering organizational well-being, promoting health and safety, and recognizing and valuing individual contributions. A robust regulatory framework, governing fixed-term research contracts, career progression for permanent staff, and third-party activities, provides a solid foundation for transparency and consistency. These regulatory measures are complemented by actions promoted by the Guarantee Committee (Comitato Unico di Garanzia – CUG) and the University’s Strategic Plan, which emphasize inclusion, sustainability, and the centrality of individuals.</p> <p>Despite these positive developments, the analysis identifies several critical issues and areas for improvement in relation to the standards set forth in the European Charter for Researchers. One of the most pressing concerns is employment stability, a challenge largely shaped by the national legislative context. Non-permanent positions, such as postdoctoral researcher and fixed-term researchers, continue to be characterized by uncertain career trajectories, lacking a clearly defined path toward tenure. This precariousness affects not only the personal and financial security of researchers but also the continuity and quality of research, which requires long-term commitments and stable working conditions to yield meaningful outcomes.</p> <p>Access to welfare services also presents significant challenges. Although various initiatives and resources are available, many services remain poorly publicized, difficult to access, or inadequately tailored to the specific needs of researchers—particularly those in precarious roles. Key elements are entirely absent, such as participation in the European pension scheme RESAVER, which is essential for ensuring the portability of pension rights for internationally mobile researchers. Work-life balance initiatives and psychological support services, while present, require greater investment and visibility to have a tangible impact on researchers’ quality of life.</p> <p>Training and professional development represent another area of concern. The availability of training opportunities for non-permanent researchers is often fragmented and lacks a coherent framework for personal and professional growth. As a result, early-career researchers have limited access to the transversal skills increasingly required to navigate the complexities of modern research and to improve career prospects both within and beyond academia.</p> <p>Internal communication and feedback mechanisms also show room for improvement. Information regarding rights, opportunities, and participation in decision-making processes is sometimes fragmented and unclear, contributing to a sense of detachment between governance structures and staff—particularly among those in precarious positions. Enhancing participation and ensuring recognition of the University’s diverse constituencies would benefit from more effective and transparent channels of communication.</p> <p>Challenges persist in the internationalization of services. The predominant use of Italian in many sections of the institutional website, official documents, and University communications poses a significant barrier for international researchers, limiting their inclusion and ability to fully engage in academic life. This language barrier also hinders the University’s capacity to attract</p>

	<p>international talent, which is increasingly vital to strengthening its position within the European academic landscape.</p> <p>The adequacy of spaces and infrastructure for teaching and research remains a concern. In certain facilities, the lack of suitable spaces continues to impede daily research activities, negatively affecting organizational well-being and the quality of academic work. From a financial perspective, while acknowledging the constraints imposed by national regulations, there is a clear need to reflect on remuneration policies, particularly regarding the misalignment between salaries, the cost of living, and European standards. Although this issue may be difficult to address at the level of a single institution, it nonetheless warrants a strong and proactive institutional stance.</p> <p>Finally, the absence of systematic and well-publicized procedures for protection in cases of conflict or discrimination is a critical concern. While the University has shown a commitment to equal opportunities, a widespread culture of awareness regarding rights and available protection mechanisms is still lacking, leaving individuals potentially isolated in situations of vulnerability. In conclusion, while the University of Parma is aligning its policies with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers, the analysis underscores the need for both structural and cultural reinforcement of policies related to working conditions, funding, and remuneration. Particular attention should be devoted to supporting the most vulnerable groups, including researchers with disabilities and international staff, in line with a vision of inclusion, sustainability, and enhanced quality of working life.</p>
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<b>14.Stability of employment</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
<p>-/+ partially implemented</p>	<p>Like many Italian universities, UNIPR operates within a regulatory and financial framework that poses significant challenges to fully realizing the objectives of this principle, particularly in relation to non-permanent academic positions.</p> <p>The postdoctoral landscape is marked by structural fragility. The absence of medium-term planning for the recruitment and retention of postdoctoral researchers generates uncertainty for both individuals and research groups. The availability and duration of these positions often rely heavily on external, competitive, or private funding sources, whose inherent unpredictability undermines scientific continuity and long-term research planning. In this context, transitions between contracts are frequently irregular and fragmented, leading to interruptions that can negatively impact productivity, motivation, and, in many cases, the ability to remain within the academic system. This situation is further exacerbated by the persistently high proportion of fixed-term positions relative to opportunities for stabilization, highlighting a structural imbalance between a small number of permanent roles and a majority of precarious ones. Some local initiatives, such as the FIL Azione D program, have represented positive steps toward providing funding opportunities for postdoctoral positions. However, these measures remain limited in scope, both in terms of the number of beneficiaries and their distribution across disciplines. A broader institutionalization and expansion of such initiatives could help enhance the stability and continuity of research careers, offering greater autonomy and reducing the overreliance on external funding calls.</p> <p>Another factor influencing perceptions of fairness and security is the disparity between R1 researchers (doctoral candidates) and R2 researchers (postdoctoral fellows and research grant holders) compared to permanent staff. Differences in access to resources—such as travel funding and ancillary</p>

	<p>benefits (e.g., parking, library services) —can foster a sense of inequality within the academic community. For non-permanent researchers, limited or no access to research funding significantly hinders the development of an independent and competitive academic profile at both national and international levels.</p> <p>Moreover, doctoral scholarships at the University of Parma are set at the national minimum wage, which reduces the institution’s attractiveness to prospective candidates, particularly those from abroad.</p> <p>Overall, the picture that emerges is one of a system that, despite commendable initiatives and increasing attention to the recognition of research staff, continues to face substantial challenges in ensuring job stability, contractual continuity, and equitable access to rights and opportunities for all researchers, regardless of their employment status.</p>
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<b>15.Contractual and legal obligations</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
+/- almost but not fully implemented	<p>At UNIPR, institutional regulations concerning working conditions and training are publicly accessible via a dedicated webpage equipped with a category-based search function, facilitating user navigation and consultation (<a href="https://www.unipr.it/regolamenti">https://www.unipr.it/regolamenti</a>). This level of accessibility represents a clear strength, enabling researchers, faculty, and administrative staff to independently consult the rules governing academic and professional life, including documents related to intellectual property rights and the University’s policies on ethics and conduct.</p> <p>However, despite this commitment to transparency, a significant limitation arises from the language barrier: the vast majority of regulatory documents are available exclusively in Italian. This restricts access to essential information for international researchers, potentially undermining their full understanding of rights and responsibilities and detracting from the University’s image as an inclusive and internationally oriented institution.</p> <p>Training opportunities offered by the University also warrant further attention. The Training and Organizational Well-being Unit (U.O. Formazione e Benessere Organizzativo) actively promotes the development of staff competencies and professional growth, in alignment with institutional strategies and the University’s broader commitment to organizational well-being. The current training portfolio, delivered via the “Elly-Formazione” e-learning platform, covers key topics such as ethics, legality, data protection, and workplace safety. These courses represent a valuable investment in cultivating a responsible and informed institutional culture, consistent with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers.</p> <p>Nonetheless, the current offering lacks dedicated training pathways on other equally critical topics for researchers, such as intellectual property management and engagement with sponsors or funding bodies.</p>

<b>16.Dissemination and exploitation of results</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
+/- almost but not fully implemented	<p>UNIPR has progressively developed a regulatory and operational framework that addresses many of the areas outlined in the European Charter for Researchers. Nonetheless, several critical gaps remain, indicating that this principle is currently only partially implemented.</p> <p>In the area of open science and open access, the University provides guidelines and tools such as the IRIS repository, which is mandatory for all publications</p>

	<p>and compliant with European standards. However, the absence of a binding institutional policy mandating open access, along with the lack of systematic and compulsory training programs on open science, data sharing, and publication licensing, limits the widespread adoption of these practices. Without a strong institutional culture in this domain, awareness and engagement with open access remain low. Moreover, there are no incentive mechanisms or formal recognition for researchers actively involved in open science, nor are these activities integrated into recruitment or career advancement criteria.</p> <p>In the area of protection and valorisation of research results, UNIPR presents a solid and well-structured regulatory and organisational framework. The Patent Regulation and the Guidelines for the Management of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) clearly define the procedures for managing industrial and intellectual property rights, the mechanisms for safeguarding research outcomes, and the procedures for the valorisation and economic exploitation of inventions.</p> <p>The moral and economic rights of inventors are guaranteed in compliance with the applicable legislation, and the criteria for ownership and co-ownership in cases of collaboration with external entities are clearly established. Support and guidance functions for researchers are provided by the Technology Transfer Office (TTO) and the competent bodies, which offer assistance during the filing, protection, negotiation, and valorisation phases of research results.</p> <p>However, there remains a need for an integrated and publicly accessible strategy for the management and communication of intellectual property and valorisation policies, in order to ensure greater transparency, coherence, and visibility towards all internal and external stakeholders. Although the Patent Regulation provides for reward mechanisms for inventors and regulates the distribution of revenues, there are currently no equivalent recognition or incentive mechanisms for researchers involved in the establishment of spin-offs or in other technology transfer activities. Furthermore, although the IRIS platform represents a useful interface for collecting and disseminating information on patents and spin-offs, it is not yet used in a systematic and homogeneous manner to ensure effective and coordinated communication of valorisation outcomes.</p> <p>The University's commitment to public engagement has gained momentum in recent years. In 2025, the first "FAPE" call was launched to support public engagement initiatives. Despite this progress, institutional guidelines that structurally promote and recognize the involvement of civil society in research, such as co-design processes and citizen science, are still lacking. Similarly, training in science communication, which is essential for making research accessible to non-specialist audiences, remains largely absent from the current training offer.</p>
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**PILLAR 4 -RESEARCH CAREERS AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT**

<b>17. Valuing diverse research careers</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
-/+ partially implemented	At the core of this issue lies the objective of recognizing and valuing the diverse profiles and individual career choices of researchers, moving away from the perception of academia as a standardized path where excellence is measured uniformly across identical criteria. The current system, however, tends to impose a homogeneous distribution of workload, particularly in teaching, without adequately supporting those who wish to contribute more significantly

	<p>in specific areas such as international research or third mission activities. Existing regulations allow for teaching load reductions only in connection with clearly defined institutional roles, and do not offer flexible mechanisms to acknowledge or reward differentiated professional trajectories.</p> <p>Another notable gap is the absence of adequate tools to identify and map the skills, interests, and areas of excellence within the academic community. A systematic mapping process could serve as a foundation for personalized development pathways and foster collaboration among individuals with complementary expertise, which currently remains fragmented. In this regard, one of the most evident shortcomings is the lack of structured mentoring or tutoring programs that could promote intergenerational dialogue, skill-sharing, and support for early-career researchers or visiting scholars. An internal mentoring initiative, potentially extended to Alumni, could facilitate knowledge exchange and contribute to a more open and collaborative academic environment.</p> <p>With respect to international mobility, the University actively encourages mobility periods for doctoral candidates, including financial support through increased fellowships. In 2025, a dedicated call was introduced to support mobility for tenured staff; however, its accessibility remains limited. At present, no institutional programs exist to support the mobility of postdoctoral researchers.</p> <p>Technology transfer and entrepreneurship also present critical challenges. While some funded projects have promoted these dimensions in recent years, they remain fragmented and largely tied to specific PNRR calls, lacking continuity over time. Furthermore, these initiatives are predominantly focused on STEM disciplines, often excluding researchers in the humanities and social sciences, who face difficulties in having their entrepreneurial or applied research projects recognized and supported. This narrow approach risks marginalizing part of the academic community and limiting opportunities to explore non-traditional career paths or to build meaningful connections between research and the socio-economic landscape.</p> <p>In summary, while UNIPR is increasingly aware of the importance of recognizing diverse academic careers, the current system remains too rigid and fragmented to fully support the development of differentiated and inclusive career pathways.</p>
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<b>18. Career development and advice</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
-/+ partially implemented	<p>In recent years, UNIPR has introduced a range of initiatives and tools aimed at fostering an environment that supports both academic and non-academic career development, particularly for R1 researchers and, to a lesser extent, R2 researchers.</p> <p>The University offers dedicated orientation and job placement services, which serve as valuable resources for students and early-career researchers seeking professional opportunities. Initiatives such as UNIPR4Talents, which also targets PhD candidates, and the inaugural PhD Job Day held in 2025, reflect a growing institutional focus on facilitating the transition from academic training to professional careers, including those outside academia. Similarly, the SEED program, which promotes entrepreneurship, and innovative PhD programs that encourage direct engagement with industry, contribute to expanding career pathways and strengthening the connection between advanced education and the productive sector.</p>

	<p>From a regulatory standpoint, doctoral programmes' academic boards include the role of the supervisor, a key figure responsible for guiding PhD candidates throughout their academic and research journey. However, this structured support does not extend to researchers at more advanced career stages, such as postdoctoral fellows. For these groups, there is no institutionalized mentoring or tutoring system to support the development of scientific competencies and career planning.</p> <p>While the University offers targeted training in areas such as European grant writing and entrepreneurship (occasional initiatives or part of a structured programme?), there is currently no structured program covering essential topics such as research ethics and integrity, open science, or scientific writing. This gap deprives early-career researchers of critical tools needed to build a robust and responsible academic profile.</p> <p>Moreover, the absence of a formal individual career development plan represents a significant limitation. There is no system in place that enables researchers to define growth objectives, monitor progress, or identify skills to acquire or strengthen over time. Establishing personalized development pathways within a shared institutional framework would be a key step toward transforming the academic experience into a more intentional and guided process.</p> <p>Finally, there is a notable lack of awareness regarding the rights and principles outlined in the European Charter for Researchers. No systematic channels currently exist to ensure that researchers are informed about the ethical and professional standards that should guide their careers; to date, there is also no formal practice of disseminating the Charter, for example by attaching it to employment contracts.</p>
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<b>19. Continuous professional development</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
<p>-/+ partially implemented</p>	<p>UNIPR has established a solid foundation for supporting researchers, particularly in the early stages of their careers, through well-defined doctoral regulations, active doctoral schools, and a regulatory framework that clearly outlines roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>However, the analysis reveals that the implementation of this principle remains incomplete and fragmented. Notably, there is no structured, continuous training program that systematically supports researchers throughout the various stages of their careers. Existing initiatives tend to be isolated or narrowly focused, lacking an overarching framework that ensures coherence, accessibility, and alignment with researchers' evolving needs.</p> <p>One of the most pressing gaps is the absence of comprehensive training in transversal skills, which are essential for a well-rounded academic and professional trajectory. Key areas such as competitive project design, project management, intellectual property, technology transfer, and science communication are not yet integrated into a coordinated training offer accessible to all research staff. Similarly, training in core academic competencies, such as innovative teaching methodologies, is limited, despite their importance for researchers in their educational roles.</p> <p>Another limitation is the lack of a system for recognizing and validating acquired skills. There is currently no mechanism to formally acknowledge informal learning or experience gained through interdisciplinary or cross-sector mobility. The absence of a digital portfolio or portable certification system restricts</p>

	<p>researchers' ability to fully leverage their professional development, both within the University and in the broader job market.</p> <p>Overall, while UNIPR has launched several promising initiatives and is increasingly aware of the importance of supporting researchers' professional growth, it still lacks an integrated and strategic vision in this area. Where continuous training exists, it is neither systematic nor tailored to different career stages, and it is not fully embedded in professional development or evaluation processes. This situation hinders the full implementation of the European Charter's principles and may limit both individual career progression and the University's overall competitiveness.</p>
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<b>20. Supervision and mentoring</b>	
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>GAP / Impediments</b>
<p>-/+ partially implemented</p>	<p>Supervision and mentoring are essential components in ensuring the quality of research pathways and the professional development of early-career researchers. At UNIPR, a clear regulatory framework governs doctoral supervision, as outlined in the Doctoral Regulations and supported by the "Doctoral Charter," which defines the rights and responsibilities of both supervisors and doctoral candidates. Each PhD student is assigned a supervisor within the first year, with the option to appoint a co-supervisor for interdisciplinary research projects. Formal annual evaluations are conducted to structure and monitor the progress of study and research activities. However, no equivalent guidance or framework currently exists for postdoctoral researchers. While this regulatory structure aligns with many of the standards set by the European Charter for Researchers, several critical gaps limit its practical effectiveness in fostering a healthy, equitable, and professionally supportive environment. One of the most significant shortcomings is the absence of dedicated training for supervisors. Although supervisors may possess strong scientific credentials, they are not systematically trained in key areas such as research group management, mentoring practices, effective communication, and conflict resolution. This can result in inconsistent supervisory experiences, particularly for doctoral candidates navigating the most challenging phases of their programs.</p> <p>There is currently no formal limit on the number of doctoral students or postdoctoral researchers assigned to a single supervisor, nor is there a minimum guaranteed amount of time dedicated to supervision. These factors can lead to imbalances that affect the quality and timeliness of support provided to junior researchers. Moreover, supervisory and mentoring roles are not adequately recognized within academic career progression frameworks, rendering these activities secondary to more traditional indicators of scientific productivity.</p> <p>Another limitation is the absence of formalized tools to support the shared definition of goals and expectations within the supervisor–doctoral student relationship. Instruments such as Career Development Plans or Supervision Agreements, which could help establish clear objectives, timelines, and modes of interaction, are not currently in use.</p> <p>Conflict management between doctoral students and supervisors is largely informal, relying on the goodwill of individuals or ad hoc interventions by program coordinators. There is no institutionalized third-party figure or ombudsperson to whom students can turn in cases of difficulty or dispute, leaving them potentially vulnerable.</p>

	<p>Further gaps exist in terms of internationalization and accessibility. Not all information related to doctoral programs and supervision is available in English, which poses a barrier to international recruitment and the full inclusion of foreign doctoral candidates. Finally, while support services such as the Listening and Inclusion Centre (“Centro di Ascolto e Inclusione”) are available, they are not yet sufficiently integrated into the daily academic experience of early-career researchers.</p>
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