

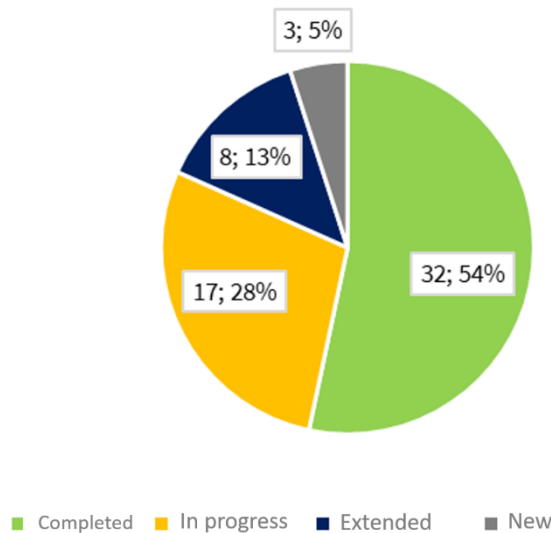
Since obtaining the HR Excellence in Research award in 2022, 54% of Nantes Université's [revised 2024-2027 HRS4R action plan](#) has been completed. In March 2024, the European Commission also validated the [2024 interim internal review](#) submitted by Nantes Université. The on-site evaluation is scheduled for March 2027. A look back at this year's achievements and the changes that Nantes Université will be making in line with the suggestions for change made following feedback from the internal review and the adoption of the new European Charter for Researchers.

Nantes Université* deployed an [initial action plan for 2022-2025](#), which was subsequently revised to produce the revised action plan for 2024-2027, comprising 60 actions. The institution's approach is part of the European HRS4R (Human Resources Strategy for Researchers) framework and aims to improve the practices and working conditions of researchers and teacher-researchers, in line with the European Charter for Researchers and the Recruitment Code for Researchers.

*Excluding member institutions

HRS4R actions implementation – July 2024

(in numbers and in %)



In June 2024, 54% of the actions had been completed (March 2023: 38%), 28% were being rolled out (March 2023: 38%), 13% of the actions had been extended (March 2023: 2%) and 5% had not been initiated (March 2023: 12%).

The 5% (3 actions) that have not yet been started represent actions yet to be developed in 2025 and 2026. Several actions that were due to end in 2023 have been extended to 2024, due to a lack of resources and recruitment difficulties. The remaining actions are currently being discussed with a view to their implementation.

Here is an overview of the year's achievements, with 11 actions implemented.

Area 1: Supporting researchers in their careers (11 actions - 4 actions completed)

Since last year, 4 actions have been completed. Passing the “Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches” (Authorisation to supervise Research) was simplified by clarifying the selection criteria set up by the doctoral schools ([action 3.1](#)), as was communication about the possibility of taking a teaching course for doctoral students with teaching responsibilities ([action 3.2](#)). The duties of new teacher-researchers are now limited for the first three years after their appointment, to enable them to devote themselves to research activities and not to administrative management or training activities ([action 5](#)). Finally, as part of the EUniWell alliance, a digital service offering from doctorate to emeritus on career support linked to skills ([Research Training Academy](#)) has been developed, based on the existing training catalogues in the partner institutions ([action 31](#)).

Area 2: Promoting a culture of ‘responsible research’ (10 actions - 1 action completed)

A new action was carried out under this heading, defining and implementing data protection governance and strategy (RGPD), particularly in the field of research. This has resulted in the setting up of a registration register for health research and the appointment of a Data Protection Officer (DPO) who is an active member of the Ethics Committee ([action 7](#)).

Area 3: Ensuring clarity and transparency in HR practices (7 actions - 3 actions completed)

The [OTM-R policy](#) is a recruitment policy that is open, transparent and based on merit in the sense of valuing career paths and skills. This is an essential point in the HRS4R approach, as it aims to provide strategic guidelines for human resources policy, particularly in Nantes Université’s recruitment policy for the posts of teacher-researcher, post-doctoral researcher, doctoral researcher and research engineer, open to permanent and contract staff. Nantes Université drew up and drafted the OTM-R recruitment charter in conjunction with the members of the steering committee and the technical committee. This was the result of a working group with teacher-researchers and administrative staff to confirm and/or redefine the priorities of the OTM-R policy ([action 28.1](#)). In coordination with the COPIL, the priorities and existing procedures were consolidated in order to draft the institution's OTM-R policy ([action 28.2](#)). Lastly, the OTM-R policy was distributed to the university's research professors and staff ([action 28.3](#)).

Area 4: Recognising and valuing the diversity of career paths (12 actions - 2 actions completed)

Management guidelines have been created and updated to allow for every possibility of promotion, and at equivalent notice, priority will be given to the gender least represented in the professorial corps (national re-structuring provision to promote the careers of research professors) ([action 16](#)).

Courses in English have been developed at university level and this training offer has been communicated to foreign teacher-researchers (TRITON project, OMIST project, courses offered entirely in English such as the GEOPLANET Masters) ([action 17.5](#)).

Area 5: Develop a facilitating and open working environment (20 actions - 1 action completed)

One action was carried out in line with the actions implemented the previous year in terms of training, which was to clarify the training offer for doctoral students and staff by proposing training by skills or by type of subject and to change the tool to ensure better readability of the AMETHIS offer for doctoral students and GEFORP for staff ([action 25.1](#)).

Conclusion:

Nantes Université is continuing to roll out its revised 2024-2027 action plan, while at the same time implementing the new Researcher's Charter (adopted in December 2023 by the European Commission), as well as the suggestions for changes following validation of the interim self-assessment by the European Commission.

→ [Find out more about Nantes Université's HRS4R process](#)

Strengths identified by the European Commission in the implementation of the action plan, following validation of the interim internal report:

Firstly, the European Commission emphasised the quality of the progress made in the human resources strategy since the award of the label.

Since then, the university has continued to promote gender equality and fight against discrimination through its gender equality action plan and its listening and reporting unit (in the event of sexist and sexual violence, harassment or discrimination), the web page on the subject has been translated into English and a legal officer was appointed in 2023.

An action plan for open science was adopted in May 2023, based on the national framework agreed as part of the National Plan for Open Science (PNSO2). Open science is also being developed as part of the EUniWell European alliance, of which Nantes Université is a member.

The Commission highlights the progress made in implementing the OTM-R policy and its useful tools and materials, in particular a guide made available to recruitment and selection committees listing useful resources to facilitate recruitment (e.g. 'Between' software).

The career development provisions (programmes, resources, training courses) were also identified as a strong point. Also highlighted was the offer made available as part of EUniWell (e.g. Research Training Academy).

Points for attention and suggestions for modifications from the European Commission and adaptation by Nantes Université:

The Commission's first suggestion was to introduce an indicator to estimate the time that will be freed up for research as a result of the simplification of administrative procedures under action 32. At its meeting on 12 July 2024, the members of the COPIL emphasised that the simplification of research is underway at national level. In this context, the COPIL is currently questioning the feasibility of setting up such an indicator, as well as the scope of the term "administrative procedures" and the need for everyone to reach a consensus.

The Commission also suggests ensuring that the OTM-R policy is properly implemented. Nantes Université's revised action plan already includes actions dedicated to the development of the OTM-R policy, most of which were carried out this year. Only the quality control of the OTM-R policy remains to be implemented. To this end, the project team has organised an exchange with a European expert to help identify the relevant indicators for quality control.

It is also recommended more collaboration with the member institutions of Nantes University (Centrale Nantes, CHU Nantes, Inserm Grand Ouest, Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture, Ecole des Beaux-Arts), with EUniWell - European University alliance for Well-being and link with COARA (Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment) after the signature. This is already the case thanks to the working group with the HRS4R project managers and referents from HRS4R-labelled institutions that are members of Nantes University.

The university's new HRS4R project manager is also coordinating the HR working group for EUniWell, thus facilitating links between the two European projects. As far as COARA is concerned, Nantes Université is beginning its membership procedure and links will need to be established.

According to the Commission, Nantes Université should also move towards communication in English as a standard, in the context of HRS4R but also to operate effectively within the EUniWell alliance. An action is planned (action 17.2) and a recruitment procedure has been launched within Nantes Université to meet this demand.

The European Commission stresses the difficulty of appointing mentors for teacher-researchers at the start of their careers. The action planned in the action plan and under discussion is to implement a mentoring system at Nantes Université (action 4.1 - drafting a mentoring charter/guide). A working group is planned to ensure the quality of this system and to reach a consensus.

In conclusion, the Commission's suggestions have already been taken into account in the action plan, have naturally been corrected, or are currently under discussion.

Changes to the Charter and the Code: the latest indications from the Commission

On 10 June 2024, the HR Excellence in Research module (e-tool) was launched as part of the Talent Platform. It implements the HRS4R process within the framework of the new Researchers' Charter.

Institutions that begin work on a new HR phase (initial, implementation or renewal) after the introduction of the Talent Platform's HRS4R module will do so solely within the framework of the new researchers' charter. Nantes University is entering its renewal phase (due March 2027).

“More specifically, the recommendation aims at:

- “Improving researchers’ overall working conditions and environment, ensuring a work-life balance, and countering precarity
- promoting adequate social protection measures, with a particular focus on early-career researchers
- fostering inter-sectoral mobility and a real flow of talents among sectors by equipping researchers with transversal skills, in addition to strong research skills and contributing to addressing the market demand for highly-skilled talents
- addressing persisting inequalities in research careers (e.g. based on gender, age, ethnic, national or social origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, language, disability, political opinion, social or economic condition) and market challenges (e.g. lack of intersectoral mobility opportunities)

The recommendation also revises the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, dating back to 2005, and encourages all organisations employing or providing funding for researchers to endorse the new “European Charter for Researchers” thereby introduced.

Finally, the recommendation frames the profiles of researchers under four profile groups and suggests examples of occupations across these profiles. Additionally, it brings forward the significance of research managers’ and research technicians’ careers and their key role in the performance of high-level research and innovation.”¹

¹ Press release 989/23, Council of UE: « Council reaches political agreement on how to keep, attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe », 8/12/2023. *This press release was modified on 21 December 2023 to add the texts of the Council recommendation.* Consulted 03/07/2024

APPENDIX

Changes introduced by the 2023 European Charter for Researchers

N.B.: This interpretation does not reflect that of the European Commission.

The new charter (adopted by the recommendation of 18 December 2023) is divided into 4 new pillars (1- ethics, integrity, gender and open science, 2- evaluation, recruitment and career development of researchers, 3- working conditions and methods, 4- careers in research and development of talent) comprising 20 principles incumbent on researchers, employers, funders and political decision-makers.

It also recognises the different categories of researcher from R1 to R4, which in our French system corresponds to:

- R1 - First Stage Researcher (e.g. doctoral students)
- R2 - Recognised Researcher (e.g. postdoctoral researchers)
- R3 - Established Researcher (e.g. lecturer-researchers)
- R4 - Leading Researcher (e.g. university professors)

R1 and R2 are also identified as ‘early career researchers’ and R3 and R4 as ‘experienced researchers’. ‘Employers and funders’ will be identified in this appendix as “institutions”.

We will come back to the changes in the new European Charter for Researchers compared to the 2005:

Principle n°1 – ethics and research integrity

The ethical principles are clearly set out: « **honesty; reliability; objectivity; impartiality and independence; open communication; duty of care; fairness and responsibility for future science generations.** These are the foundations of responsible and trustworthy research free from undue influence (including foreign interference and conflict of interest). They are a prerequisite for achieving excellence, and they underpin the responsibility of researchers to guard against biases and methodological shortcuts. »

Ensuring the importance of **good practice in all research environments and stages**: « training and capacity building on research integrity; research processes and policies embedding research integrity; data, publication, dissemination, review, evaluation and editing policies. Equally, mechanisms to identify, report and deal with research misconducts should be put in place. »

All the research stages are mentioned to **avoid plagiarism and comply with intellectual property rules**: « conception, preparation of funding applications and the development and delivery of results. ».

As part of the values of integrity, the charter includes the **responsibility of thesis and internship supervisors** to guarantee: « **safe, inclusive and gender equal** research environment for all involved and especially when discrimination, sexual or moral harassment, hindrance to learning or research work, or unjustified personal appropriation of data or results occur ».

Principle n°2 – Freedom of Scientific Research

The scope of freedom of research has been extended to include: « (...) the freedom to define research questions, (...) to identify methods by which problems are solved, (...) to choose and develop theories, (...) to question accepted wisdom and bring forward new ideas and (...) to associate in professional or representative academic bodies. Researchers should have the right to disseminate and publish the results of their research including through training and teaching. ».

Researchers must, of course, recognise the **limits to their freedom of research within legal constraints**.

Principle n° 3 – Open Science

The new charter now includes the **principle of “open science”**: « [...] share their results openly, e.g. Through open and FAIR-Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable data, open access publications, and open software, models and algorithms. » (For more details, see the Charter)

Researchers are required to **involve citizens** in the various stages of implementing research projects in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), as well as the social sciences.

Principle n°4 – Gender Equality

The previous version of the charter guaranteed **equal and balanced representation of women and men at all levels** of staff in research, teaching and innovation.

The new charter encourages the **fight against gender-based violence, as well as harassment**.

Change must take place **at institutional level** and through the introduction of « Gender Equality plans or similar, that allow for proper reporting of infringements and include monitoring and evaluation systems, are adequate mechanisms to promote gender equality. »

While placing greater emphasis on **work-life balance** for both men and women.

Principle n°5 – Embracing Diversity

The previous charter provided for a **principle of non-discrimination**. The new version reaffirms this principle and stresses the need to take into account the **diversity of people (in the broadest sense) in all aspects and stages of research** in order to enrich it and support its results.

The charter also points out that this principle must be taken into account **at every stage of a career** (from recruitment to promotion), avoiding « unconscious biases ».

Principle n°6 – Researcher

The new charter provides for “**non-linear careers and multi-career paths**”, “**intersectoral careers and interorganisational career mobility**” and “**hybrid paths**” (combining different sectors) and all types of mobility to be valued at the same level as linear careers.

It also defines the profile of a researcher as a professional who “(...) are engaged in the conception or creation of new scientific knowledge based on original concepts or hypotheses”.

Principle n°8 – Sustainability of Research

It is now the responsibility of institutions to **promote sustainability in their research activities**. The new Charter also refers to the European Green Deal, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the “MSCA Green Charter” (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions).

It is important that this aspect is supported by the institutional culture, and through training and mentoring.

Principle n°9 – Researchers’ Assessment

This principle is now much more detailed to enable **the performance of the researchers and the company to be assessed**:

- “Be based on qualitative unbiased judgement provided by peers and pertinent experts, supported by the responsible use of quantitative indicators;
- reward quality and the various potential impacts of research on society, science and innovation;
- recognise a diversity of outputs, (...) a diversity of activities, (...) and a diversity of practices (...);
- ensure that researchers’ activity meets high standards of ethics and integrity (...);
- use assessment criteria and processes that respect the variety of research disciplines and national contexts;
- Support a diversity of researcher profiles and career path, and value individual contributions, but also the role of teams, collaborative work, and inter-disciplinarity;
- ensure gender balance, gender equality, equal opportunities and inclusiveness.”

(For more details, see the Charter)

Principle n°10 – Recruitment

As in the case of evaluation, the principle of recruitment is much more detailed, requiring the institutions to guarantee an **OTM-R policy** (open, transparent and merit-based recruitment policy). This principle once again refers to valuing different career paths, guaranteeing **excellence, equality and diversity** at all stages of recruitment. This policy is a requirement of the HRS4R approach.

The institutions have a number of obligations:

Include in the **job description**:

- A full description of the knowledge and skills required
- Working conditions
- Entitlements
- Career development prospects
- Outline of timetable.

Inform candidates (before selection) of the:

- Recruitment process
- Selection criteria
- Number of positions available
- Career development prospects

Inform the members of the selection committee of the:

- Principles of fair recruitment
- Training requirements for fair recruitment

Institutions must not penalise career breaks or variations in the chronological order of professional experience.

Principle n°11 – Selection

As far as selection is concerned, the Charter reiterates the need **consider the overall experience of candidates**. Selection committee members should **be trained to avoid bias and prejudice**.

Selection committees are required to take into account

- Overall potential
- Creativity
- Degree of independence

And ensure within the committee

- Gender balance
- Diversity of members (different sectors, disciplines, countries - if possible)

And to evaluate and select members on the basis of their expertise, skills and experience.

Following the selection process, candidates who are **not selected should be informed of the strengths and weaknesses of their application**.

Principle n°12 – Career progression

Once again, the charter emphasises the **diversity of career paths, mobility, intersectoral and consider the overall potential** (creativity in research, research results, their activities, behaviour and mobility).

The charter encourages the establishment of “A **transparent, structured, inclusive and gender-equal** career accession and progression system is needed (...)” and “the development of **tenure-track-like systems** (...)”.

As regards **collaboration between authors** (co-authorship), this **should be valued** in the course of development, and training and workshops should therefore be offered, particularly to researchers at the start of their careers (on ethical practices, the framework for collaboration between authors, understanding individual contributions and their rights and responsibilities).

Principle n°13 – Working conditions, fundings and salaries

It is now up to the institutions to have working conditions that also enable them to meet their responsibilities in terms of **care, health and safety**, without this having an impact on their careers. Institutions must also **promote mental health and physical well-being, and prevent sexual and gender-based violence and harassment**.

Directors and managers should take the lead in **ensuring a good research environment** for their teams.

As far as **social security** is concerned, the charter gives more examples of benefits such as pension rights, old-age and survivor's benefits, disability benefits, and benefits in the event of accidents at work and occupational illnesses.

There is also a need for **information on the rights and obligations** of researchers, taxation, social protection rights and national pension rights.

Principle n°14 – Stability of employment

The charter gives **examples of how to achieve job stability**, such as capping the number of fixed-term contracts for all researchers, and if this is the case, they should be supported in their career development and continuity. The charter recommends greater use of permanent contracts.

This Charter recommends that “specific measures in support” be put in place **to remedy the precariousness of employment among R1 researchers (PhD students)**.

To achieve this, the charter recommends providing:

- Social protection
- Working conditions similar to those of other researchers
- Adequate income

But also:

- Requiring tasks related to their field
- Recognise all types of mobility

For **R2 researchers (PhD researchers)**, “**clear rules and explicit guidelines**” for their recruitment and appointment (maximum duration and objectives).

The status of PhD researcher should be intended as a **transitional period**, after which the researcher's career can develop (fixed-term contract or tenure).

Informing researchers at the start of their careers about **career prospects** (transparent, predictable and training opportunities).

Principle n°15 – Contractual and legal obligations

Institutions “should provide copies of [national, sectoral or institutional regulations governing training and working conditions] **in english**”.

Researchers should now take precautions to overcome **cyber-attacks**.

Principle n°16 – Dissemination and exploitation of results

Institutions should provide access to training, funding and appropriate infrastructure to support researchers.

The practice of open science should be valued at the time of:

- Recruitment
- Career development
- Evaluation of the funding programme

The Charter encourages institutions to establish a strategy for rewarding researchers at all stages of their research activity by guaranteeing intellectual property rights through an intellectual asset management strategy (creation, management, ownership, use of assets), even in the case of joint ownership of intellectual property rights.

The strategy should include provisions on intellectual property and the right of access to it by others.

Principle n°17 – Valuing Diverse Research Careers

The charter recognises a cross-cutting issue in its new version with the **promotion of diversity in careers**, particularly with regard to different types of mobility (e.g. international, interdisciplinary, virtual, etc.), contributions and their potential impact, activities (e.g. teaching, peer review, mentoring, etc.) and practices (e.g. open science, etc.) (for more details - see the charter).

Institutions have a duty to **inform and promote this 'culture of diversification'**, particularly among researchers at the start of their careers.

Principle n°18 – Career Development and Advice

Institutions should support researchers to “develop an **individual career plan** to identify the **necessary training and research required** to attain their career goals”. This condition should also apply to researchers on fixed-term contracts. Researchers are also responsible for their own career development.

Principle n°19 – Continuous Professional Development

Throughout their careers, institutions should support the **development of knowledge and skills, professional retraining and mobility** in all its forms, and **encourage researchers' entrepreneurial skills**. Researchers must be proactive in this process. The means to achieve this now include “collaboration within a team and the respective networks”.

As far as doctoral training is concerned, institutions must now ensure the interoperability of these courses and the practice of Open Science. Generally speaking, the training of researchers at the start of their careers should be given particular attention. (See European framework: ResearchComp).

All ways (formal or informal) of acquiring skills should be recognised when validating skills (e.g. training, mobility). (For more details: see the charter).

“(…) the training and mentoring of early-career researchers [should be] counted as part of their teaching commitment.”

Principle 20 – Supervision and Mentoring

“The necessary training, tools and evaluation mechanisms should be put in place” to ensure that **experienced researchers and team leaders** guarantee a **fair and non-discriminatory environment**, free of biases and create a **healthy, motivating environment that promotes well-being**.

The charter also refers to the CSIA guidelines on supervision and its provisions on:

- Integration
- Research support
- Career development of researchers
- Mentoring
- Well-being
- communication
- Conflict resolution
- Training and professional development of thesis/internship supervisors

The charter sets out the responsibilities of thesis supervisors and experienced researchers in providing early career researchers with supervision, mentoring and appropriate career guidance, and in supporting them in:

- Access to information
- Relevant training
- Research and career development
- Sharing experience and values
- And create an environment of trust and confidentiality