

# Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R). Institut d'Investigació Sanitària Pere Virgili (IISPV)

- Internal Review
- Action Plan

INTRODUCTION .....	3
INTERNAL REVIEW .....	5
1. ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION .....	5
2. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE CURRENT PRACTICE (NARRATIVE) .....	7
3. ACTIONS (SEE ACTION PLAN 2021-2024) .....	16
4. IMPLEMENTATION .....	16

## INTRODUCTION

The Pere Virgili Institute for Health Research (IISPV) is the institution that integrates biomedical research of Camp de Tarragona and Terres de Ebre. The IISPV is the instrument provided by the university hospitals of the province of Tarragona (University Hospital of Tarragona Joan XXIII; Hospital Verge de la Cinta de Tortosa; University Hospital Sant Joan de Reus; University Hospital Institut Pere Mata de Reus) and the Universitat Rovira i Virgili, in order to bring together and manage biomedical research and innovation in the territory.

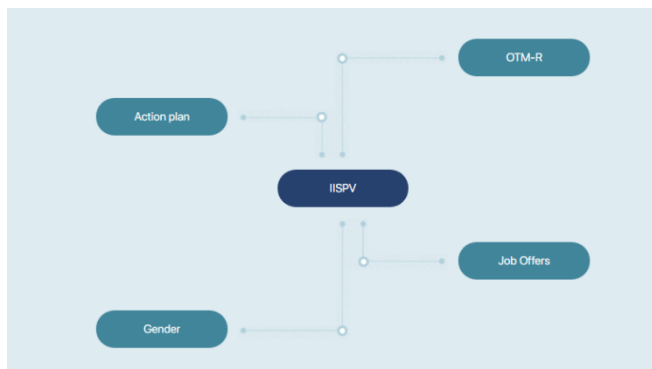


We are an institute that is committed to our society and we promote health research in our territory with the aim of improving well-being and transferring knowledge to patients.

In 2014 the IISPV began its commitment and process to obtain HRS4R certification, obtaining the accreditation and the official European seal in HR Excellence in 2015, as well as having the 2015 Action Plan approved by the European Commission.

The HRS4R is based on the principles established through the European Charter for Researchers, the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and the Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment policy recommended by the European Commission.

This recognition demonstrates that the IISPV complies with the general principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (Charter and Code), and gives full support to its commitment to improve policies and internal procedures.



The IISPV was and is working on the development and monitoring of the HRS4R strategy involving the entire institution (researchers, support staff, management, board of trustees ...).

In October 2017, the IISPV passed the self-assessment process of the HRS4R accreditation, where the main objective was to verify compliance with the commitments acquired in the verification report and assess the results, thus ensuring the quality of the process.

In fact, the same methodology of 2015 has been followed to undertake the gap analysis with the aim of assessing and comparing the results and proposing new actions to improve our human resources policies and practices in line with the Charter & Code. The results of the gap analysis and the new action plan can be found in this document.

## INTERNAL REVIEW

### 1. Organisational Information

<b>STAFF &amp; STUDENTS</b>	<b>FTE</b>
<i>Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research</i>	*112
<i>Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)</i>	*15
<i>Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation)</i>	*42
<i>Of whom are women</i>	*85
<i>Of whom are stage R3 or R4<sup>1</sup> = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor.</i>	*9
<i>Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level</i>	*27
<i>Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level</i>	*23
<i>Total number of students (if relevant)</i>	*3
<i>Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff)</i>	*24
<b>RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)</b>	<b>€</b>
<i>Total annual organisational budget</i>	4.798.000
<i>Annual organisational direct government funding (block funding, used for teaching, research, infrastructure...).</i>	627.000
<i>Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)</i>	2.949.000
<i>Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research</i>	1.222.000

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

*The IISPV is a research centre that was founded in 2005 to bring together the biomedical research of Camp de Tarragona and Terres de l'Ebre.*

*An institution committed to people and to innovation, transfer and progress.*

*We are more than 300 people working in research and we are present in:*

- *Hospital Universitari de Tarragona Joan XXIII*
- *Hospital Universitari Sant Joan de Reus*
- *Hospital Universitari Institut Pere Mata*
- *Hospital de Tortosa Verge de la Cinta*
- *Universitat Rovira i Virgili*

*At IISPV we are committed to the ability of obtaining resources and undertaking quality research, attracting and retaining talent.*

*IISPV health care initiatives are based on scientific reality, innovation and the proximity of people.*

*\*people hired by the institute*

## **2. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice (Narrative)**

### **I. Ethical and professional aspects**

#### **Strengths and weaknesses**

During the last period, work has been undertaken on a new equality plan, the action plan of which is being implemented. This plan was approved by our Board of Trustees in June 2020. At this same meeting, the Board of Trustees approved the following documents that were being worked on: a guide to non-sexist use in the Catalan language and an update on the protocol to prevent and tackle harassment and violence at work.

One of the people on our team has been trained as an equality agent to strengthen this whole area.

With regards to the equality plan, its weakness is that it will have to be reviewed again in order to adapt it to the new regulations that have been recently published by the Spanish Government, Royal Decree 901/2020, of 13 October, which regulates equality plans and Royal Decree 902/2020 on equal pay for women and men. Although we are convinced that it will certainly not be a weakness to have it reviewed and approved again by all the committees and governing bodies of the IISPV but an improvement in itself.

The [Letter of Hypatia of Alexandria](#) (letter of commitment for gender equality) has been signed, which includes 12 commitments to end gender inequality in the research system in Catalonia.

In this area we have also worked with the code of good scientific practice; this was reviewed by internal and external experts and was approved by the Institution's Board in June 2020. It was communicated to and disseminated among all the research staff.

All the Institute's projects must be assessed by the Institute's Ethics Committee before they are started. This is where a group of experts assess all those ethical aspects of the project and this committee has two people from the institution's technical office who can

7 / 21

previously advise the research staff on ethical and data protection issues when drafting the project proposal.

Two of our team members have been trained as data processing experts in accordance with European regulations as well as in ethical matters.

In 2019 the CERCA Institution (Institution comprising of research centres belonging to the Catalan Government), to which IISPV belongs, presented a Code of Conduct that applies to all research centres. In line with the European Commission, CERCA considered it necessary to define a framework of good practices governing scientific activities and the management of the CERCA centres. The IISPV Board of Trustees approved the code, which was distributed to the IISPV community. Moreover, in 2020 IISPV also completed its own Code of Ethics and Conduct, which applies to all the personnel related to the institution. This code was drafted as a result of the implementation of a Compliance system in IISPV for the prevention of criminal risks. IISPV is assessed by CERCA every 4 years, through an external committee with independent international members and members of the institution's Scientific Advisory Board.

### Remarks

The strategic plan, which until now had been a strong weakness in our institution and in previous action plans, had emerged as a major goal to be achieved. Therefore, we would like to explain the great boost we are currently giving it.

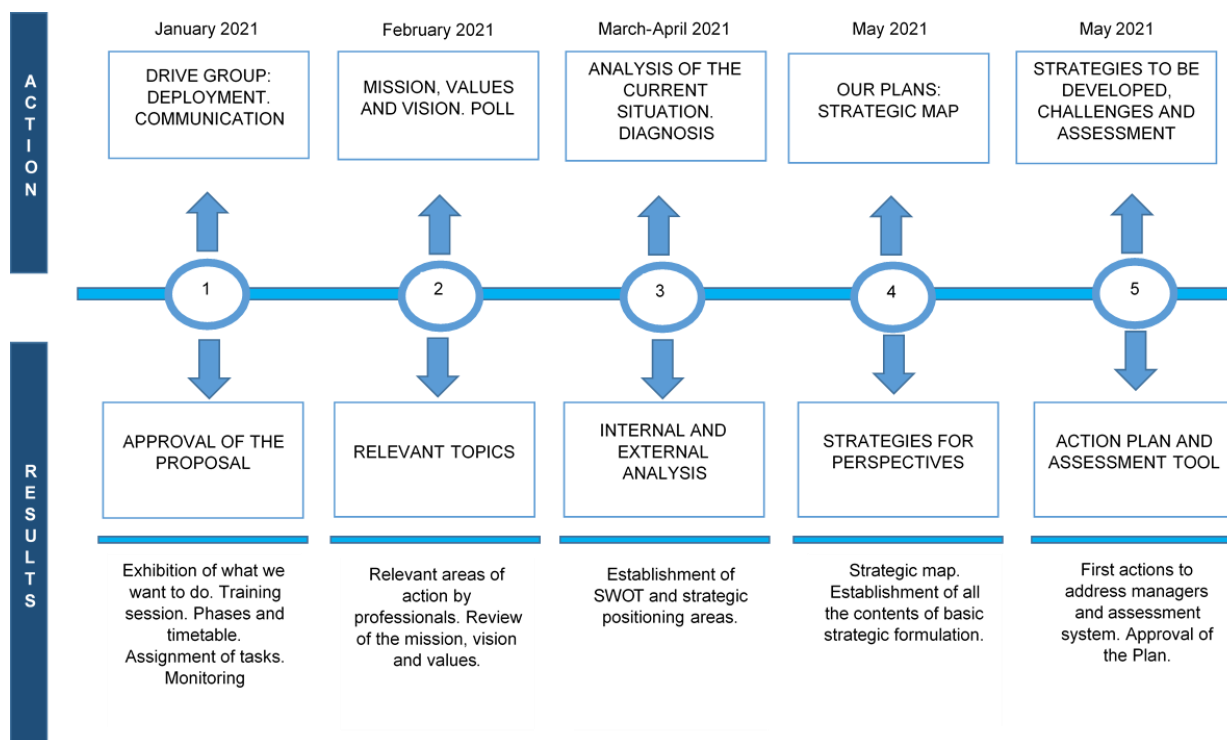
This year, two experts were incorporated into the analysis and drafting of strategic plans in the healthcare field to work on the strategic plan and great progress has been made in the project. A driving group has been created, where one of the people who is part of the driving group is also part of the HRS4R committee to ensure the full integration of the HR strategy in the strategic plan. The graph below shows the different stages in which work is being carried out and their deadlines. The meeting has already been held with different researchers from the institute to discuss the mission, values and vision and



the survey has been sent to all the Institute's staff for internal analysis. Then, this same week, four meetings were held with four different working groups to analyse the Institute's strengths and weaknesses. The strategic areas on which these meetings were based are:

- The professionals
- Organisation and management
- Activities and processes
- Resources

We will continue working from the driving group on the analysis of all the contributions collected in the form of strengths and weaknesses and we will then work on the external analysis of our institution to detect opportunities and weaknesses together with people from different fields (social, political ...) of our environment.



## **II. Recruitment and selection**

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

Since the recruitment plan was approved, work has been undertaken on its implementation and all its steps are being followed in each recruitment and selection process.

In the previous assessment we did not have the formal OTM-R checklist, but during this period, intense work has been undertaken on its application and in developing all the results obtained. This has been a big change for our institution and it has been like an audit for us; the checklist was applied and we drew some conclusions from all the points that led us to develop new processes and procedures. The checklist has now been re-applied and the change has been enormous, reflecting an evolution in the whole recruitment and selection area. As an example, these are some of the documents that are being worked on, the last two of which are already being implemented:

- Interview selection manual
- Competence assessment policy
- Selection committee manual
- Indicators manual (analysis in each call for: the trend in the share of applicants in this call from outside the organisation, the trend in the share of applicants in this call from abroad, the trend in the share of applicants in this call that are women, the total trend in the share of applicants from outside the organisation in all 2019 calls, the total trend in the share of applicants from abroad in all 2019 calls, the total trend in the share of applicants in all calls that are women, the total calls posted on Euraxess/ total calls)

Currently, one of the people leading the HRSR driving committee at the Institution is being trained in HR issues, which includes recruitment and selection. This person will provide support for everything that is required in each recruiting and selection process.

The IISPV has also worked on reviewing the job descriptions for researchers in the different stages (R1-R4) and monitoring the competencies needed and which should be achieved at each stage.

As a weakness, there has been no review and update of job descriptions for the institution's support and administration staff. We also need to work on a review and update of the remuneration policy; this aspect will be worked on in conjunction with the employment agreement explained in the working conditions section below.

### **Remarks**

We are currently working on a support document for research staff that return to our territory to accompany them as much as possible, both professionally and personally, (we want to support them and their family in all administrative and legal procedures, permits, fees...). We have used the Euraxess website as a reference to carry out this document. We will subsequently review our welcome manual to adapt it to the new internal regulations.

### **III. Working conditions**

#### **Strengths and weaknesses**

One of our strengths can be that we have a good work environment and we try to strengthen the conciliation between family and work life at all times as well as continuously working towards gender equality. Due to the situation we are experiencing during the pandemic, in the last year our work has been mostly undertaken through teleworking, a fact that has been very well received by all staff.

Due to this same situation, work has been carried out continuously by adapting working conditions to COVID. Our staff has received training from both external staff and internal experts in the field.

Above all, priority has been given to the safety of staff who have had to continue going to work in person at the Biobank or in the laboratories for some studies and work related to COVID.

Following the recommendations of the interim external assessment, much work has been undertaken and many resources have been devoted to creating a new website for the Institute in order to improve our international visibility.

This new website went live this May. A great deal of space has been devoted to the visibility of the institute and also to our territory so that we can be seen internationally and so that this may lead in influencing a greater attraction of talent.

The complicity of different political institutions in our territory has been sought. A video has also been created in which professionals from our institute that come from other countries explain the strengths of working in our institute and living in our territory.

We are also currently working on a communication strategy for all our HRS4R strategy staff to make sure everyone knows the strategy and all the actions that are being taken. We want to make sure that we reach all research staff but also that our actions and the HRS4R seal are known by the people of our territory.

As a weakness, at this point it should be mentioned that we do not yet have our own labour agreement. As we explained in the previous assessment, as a CERCA centre (research centres in Catalonia) we joined the company ACER (Catalan association of research centres) in order to develop an agreement specific to the sector together with the research institutions in Catalonia. We currently have a draft of a document.

We want to remark that we have begun to carry out the internal study of working conditions, training, etc., as indicated in the previous action plan, but we have not yet completed it because, as we have explained, different issues have had to be prioritised due to the pandemic situation.

With regard to the indicated action of creating a support committee for R1 and R2 research staff, we began to work on the persons who would form part of the committee and the protocols to be followed, and finally we decided to extend this action and create a mentoring committee, on which we are already working on different aspects. This action is reflected in the new action plan 2021-2024.

### Remarks

In this regard, we have put a lot of effort and resources into the Institute's new website in order to have better international visibility and to be able to influence the recruitment of talent. We are currently working to make the entire website available in English and we would be extremely grateful if you could send us a comment on our new website.

## IV. Training and development

### Strengths and weaknesses

The Institute's training committee is fully consolidated; a form is sent annually to all staff to send us their training needs or proposals. We consult with different experts in the subjects chosen by our professionals and the Training Plan is drawn up at the beginning of the year with the entire schedule for courses, workshops, etc.

In the next trainings plans we will emphasize these areas: gender perspective, open access, data processing and social impact.

In addition, the training committee also organises a minimum of four annual seminars, currently online, in which R1 staff present their work and hold joint talks. Each of these seminars is also attended by an external expert who shares their work with our research staff.

We are also working on disseminating the results to the population, involving the participation of citizens in different events, acts, calls and listening to their concerns. We

are working on developing a strategy around social impact together with our communications department.

### Remarks

One of the points that we will include in the new action plan and which we believe is strategic for our institution's future is the creation of a mentoring committee for our research staff.

### Have any of the priorities for the short- and medium term changed?

As we have mentioned, the situation we have experienced and are experiencing due to a global pandemic has meant we have had to slow down and change some lines of work. Much work has been carried out to adapt working conditions to the new situation of COVID. Part of our research staff work with covid samples.

A biosafety laboratory has been set up, processes and procedures have had to be adapted and, above all, training has been provided for COVID.

Priority has been given to the safety of our research staff.

Teleworking has also been applied and there is currently no regulation on it in our institution and work will begin on this issue.

The labour agreement that was initially a short-term priority for us has become a medium-long-term priority, as we have been working on other areas that are more urgent due to the situation and also, as we have described above, we have joined the association of research centres of Catalonia to work together on an agreement for the sector.

Work on the implementation of European Regulation 2016/679 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data has also become a short term priority.

**Have any of the circumstances in which your organisation operates, changed and as such have had an impact on your HR strategy?**

In 2019, the Catalan Government approved an Agreement creating a Strategic Alliance between the research and innovation institutes of the Health System of Catalonia (IRISCAT), with the aim of incorporating a large number of institutes into the alliance (about 19 health research institutions). IRISCAT's mission is to develop a coordinated strategy of the research and innovation institutes of the Catalan health system to make better use of the advantages conferred by the size and high level of standards of Catalan healthcare and research organisations. The areas on which the objectives, lines of action and actions of the Strategic Plan will be defined are: – clinical and translational research – Interinstitutional scientific lines – Internationalisation – Innovation – Scientific-technical services to support research – Administration and management support – RRI (Responsible Research & Innovation). Although IRISCAT was created in 2016 it was not until December 2019 that the Catalan Government formally approved the alliance. Since then the IISPV has participated in many internal meetings between the Health Department and the 7 Catalan Healthcare institutes (ICS), leading to coordinated actions. For example, during the pandemic all IRISCAT institutions developed a common document together with guidelines to go back to work progressively in a safe manner, which contained consensuated measures in order to offer more security and efficiency to the research organisations. This coordination will be extended to all strategical IRISCAT areas, giving IISPV the chance to be able to share and get to know about experiences, policies, etc. from other institutes.

**Are any strategic decisions under way that may influence the action plan?**

The IISPV has been currently awarded a grant from the Generalitat de Catalunya's call for grants for the implementation of unique institutional projects that enable the generation of research excellence, attraction of talent and development of activities for knowledge transfer and added value, by means of the construction, acquisition, habilitation or substantial extension of buildings for R&D infrastructures. This €1,600,000

15 / 21



grant will mainly be used to set up new research laboratories in one of our hospitals, Sant Joan de Reus University Hospital. This will give us more space and new technologies to welcome new researchers to carry out their research at our institution. We therefore believe that this will have a very positive effect on attracting talent. The project will start running this year 2021.

As we have discussed, the pandemic has also influenced some of our decisions and actions. It is specifically due to this that we had to request a 6 month extension for the presentation at this stage of the HRS4R process.

### **3. Actions (see Action Plan 2021-2024)**

## **OTM-R PRINCIPLES**

### **Comments on the implementation of the OTM-R principles**

In the previous assessment we did not have the formal OTM-R checklist, but we had integrated all the principles in the recruitment policy as mentioned in the report of the interim external assessment.

### ***4. Implementation***

### **General overview of the implementation process**

Our organisation has been working towards an open, transparent system based on the merit of the Recruitment Policy. Since we started working on this area, the change has been very significant in our institution with the implementation of the recruitment policy. We carried out the exercise of applying the checklist as if we were in the initial phase and re-applying it now to clearly see the evolution and the change is spectacular. For us the first application of the checklist was like an audit, the checklist was applied and we



drew some conclusions from all the points, which led us to the development of new processes and procedures.

Currently, the recruitment and selection policy is fully implemented in our institution. In addition, a series of documents are being developed and will be implemented shortly (the last two of which are already being implemented):

- Interview selection manual
- Competence assessment document
- Selection committee manual
- Indicators manual (analysis in each call for: the trend in the share of applicants in this call from outside the organisation, the trend in the share of applicants in this call from abroad, the trend in the share of applicants in this call that are women, the total trend in the share of applicants from outside the organisation in all calls 2019, the total trend in the share of applicants from abroad in all 2019 calls, the total of trend in the share of applicants in all calls that are women, the total calls posted on Euraxess/ total calls). The indicators manual has greatly helped us to keep track and it will be expanded.

Currently, one of the people leading the HRSR driving committee at the Institution is being trained in HR issues, including recruitment and selection. This person will provide support for everything that is required in each recruitment and selection process.

Staff calls are drafted in accordance with the “recruitment” and “transparency” principles of the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. Candidates can obtain more detailed information about the selection process. Once the need for a job is detected, the call is drafted with the head of the unit following the models as to whether the profile sought is from R1 to R4. Some of the items listed, among others, are: name of the organisation and unit; title of the job offered, date of incorporation, corresponding

17 / 21

“required” and “desirable” skills; selection criteria, including knowledge and professional experience; the number of positions available; working conditions, workplace, contact information; reference to the OTM-R policy and to the equal opportunities policies of the IISPV, the deadline for the call ... and links to our website so that candidates can obtain more detailed information from the Institution, the territory... Dissemination is through different channels in order to reach the maximum number of people (Euraxess, IISPV, Biocat, RedIris, Regic, Hospitals, University, Colleges of professionals ....).

Communication is maintained with the candidates at all times, so that they can be informed that they have properly submitted their application to the call, in what stage of the selection process they are in and the next steps that will be followed after each stage. The selection committee is formed once in the interview stage. The selection criteria that follow the requirements of the call are then applied, these vary depending on the type of professional profile requested (R1-R4) and which are included in the "European framework for research careers".

Once the selection committee has selected the most suitable candidate for the job, all those who have not been selected will be informed by e-mail and the reasons they have not been selected will be briefly explained and the selected candidate will be notified by telephone, They will then be asked for the necessary documentation to draft the contract and talks will take place with them about their requirements for documentation, residence, relatives ... (most of the time this depends on 'where the candidate lives).

On the day of the candidate's incorporation, they will be received at the Institute following the guidelines in the reception manual.

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

The oversee progress of the process HRS4R Action Plan is the responsibility of the HRS4R Committee, an internal working group at IISPV, which follows up the actions, monitors progress and assesses the indicators of achievement according to the Plan

approved by the EU. All actions and documents discussed and worked on in this committee are subsequently discussed and assessed at the IISPV steering committee and the corresponding documents are approved at the External Scientific Committee and Board meetings. The responsibility for the correct implementation is of the all institution, main the Personnel Department and the Management of the Institution.

We try to ensure that all areas of work are connected, so that people who are on the HRS4R committee are also on the steering committee, ethics committee, data protection committee and HR department. The Committee is made up of 9 people with different expertise, background and affiliation in order to incorporate their views and opinions in the development of internal HR policies and practices. The HRS4R is completely aligned with the organisation's Strategy.

Currently, the HRS4R working group is composed of the following members: R1 researcher (Joan Sabadell), R2 researcher (Anna Rull), R3 researcher (Carolina Serena), R4 researcher (Jordi Julvez), HR support (Alberto López), head of the International projectes (Alba Martí), member of the technical office (Marta Valls), head of biobank (Lluís Gallart) and management (Elisabet Galve).

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

Representatives of the research community (R1-R4) are on the HRS4R committee, together with a person who is part of the Management. We also try to get everyone involved through surveys or direct contact.

As we have mentioned, all the actions are presented to the Steering Committee, and later they are also presented in External Scientific Committee and Board of Trustees meetings, from which we obtain their feedback. In the coming months we will be working on HRS4R's communication strategy to make sure we reach everyone.

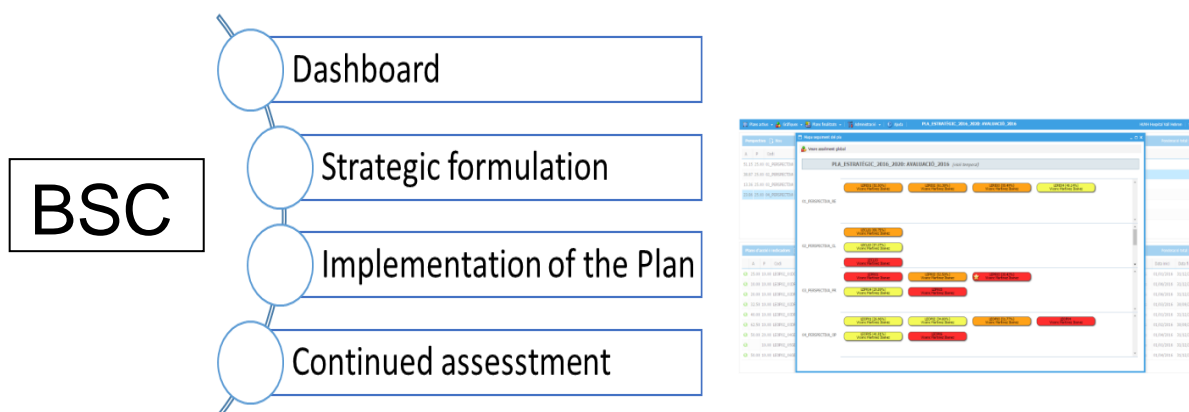
## How do you proceed with the alignment of organisational policies with the HRS4R?

The HRS4R policy is fully integrated in the development of the institution's strategic plan. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on the monitoring, assessment and renewal of the HRS4R seal. In addition, members of the HRS4R committee are also members of the Management Committee and the personnel department.

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

All actions are reviewed through indicators and their evolution is analysed. All actions also indicate who is directly responsible for their implementation. A specific plan is made to follow the corrections of that specific action for any possible deviations.

The BIC Score computer programme, based on the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) methodology, will be implemented in the coming months at the Institution. The BIC Score is a system of strategic planning, management and assessment to help us translate the strategy into operational terms and for the strategy to be an ongoing process with constant feedback and learning as well as ongoing assessment.



**How will you monitor progress (timeline)?\***

Control is carried out through the action plan and the deadlines set in advance. As mentioned above, deviations are analysed, even if they are caused by non-compliance with the deadlines set. We can also keep track of deadlines with the BSC programme.

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

Each action is associated with indicators and at the same time they have a person responsible for them. All actions, indicators and their possible deviations will be reviewed having made the necessary correction plans. Once the aforementioned programme has been implemented, the progress will be analysed through it.

All information and documents produced are also available to the auditors during the on-site visit.

In 2024 we have hardly scheduled any action because we try to leave it free to review completed actions or to be able to act on possible deviations or unforeseen events in the course of actions.