

Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HS4R)

**INSPIRING ERA online event on ERA action 4:
how to make research careers
more sustainable and attractive**

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Certificatomania – pros and cons

Certificates of any kind generally cost money (certification costs).

Certificates demand work, i.e. time, i.e. more money.

Certificates can generate direct benefits (e.g. in the context of proposals).

Certificates can generate a less tangible, certainly less easily quantifiable, benefit in the form of reputational gains, including increased visibility, *employer branding* etc.



HRS4R – pros and cons

Certificates of any kind generally cost money (certification costs).

HRS4R imposes *no* direct costs.

Certificates demand work, i.e. time, i.e. more money.

Yes, undeniably, but one can hope for massive synergy effects, e.g. that a lot of the time will be spent on things one would have addressed anyway.



HRS4R – pros and cons

Certificates can generate direct benefits (e.g. in the context of proposals).

As the HR Excellence in Research award (which is the outcome of a successful HRS4R process) is an EU certificate, the most direct benefits pertain to EU projects, where the “Model Grant Agreement” explicitly mentions the basic documents of HRS4R.

Certificates can generate a less tangible, certainly less easily quantifiable, benefit in the form of reputational gains, including increased visibility, *employer branding* etc.

That is indeed more difficult to measure and more a strategic, rather than merely tactical, decision of institutions depending on their size and visibility.



HRS4R – pros and cons

The HR Excellence in Research award is indicative, in my view, of

- a commitment to internationalisation and especially international recruitment;
- a commitment to achieve best practice procedures and professionalisation in all aspects of HR for researchers;
- a commitment to not lose sight of a focus on research; and
- a commitment to the common values of the EU and ERA.

In my view, those image boosters are most welcome in particular for an institution like ours: mid-size (14,400 students); youngish, as universities go (founded only in 1972); regionally centred and not located in a big city (Siegen has 100,000 inhabitants).



The HRS4R Process

Endorsement Letter

Gap Analysis (using a template) regarding

- Charter for Researchers
- Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers

Action Plan (using a template)

Interim reports, renewal phases ... *ad infinitum*



Recognize Yourself!

The biggest gain, in my view and that of all the other *aficionadas* and *aficionados* of HRS4R I have ever met, bar none, is not the prospect of (more) money from Horizon (nice though that is), but something less tangible:

You are really going to gain a deeper understanding of your own institution: the strong points; the mediocre points; and perhaps even some others.

Structures are complex. I am the head of a postgraduate centre (helping doctoral and postdoctoral researchers up to and including term-limited junior professors), but there are other stakeholders in HRS4R: the HR Department, naturally; the International Office; the Equal Opportunities Office(r); the Research Service; even the Patent Scout.



Recognize Yourself!

Even a hyperactive, extrovert, oversharing networking maniac cannot, of their own accord, be aware of all the relevant things going on at their institution. HRS4R is the tool to do it, to bring everyone concerned together in a more systematic way to work on a common living document and improve it continuously.

All our institutions are continuously working on HRS4R-relevant stuff *anyway*, regardless of HRS4R.

There are laws and compliance rules; there are funding programmes; there are other certificates; there are priorities of our own organisations or those to which they belong. Put all this together, and you have a sizeable HRS4R-relevant Action Plan at all times!



What Do You Need?

You need a person – the HRS4R Manager – who loves to do that; it helps if they not just read and understand, also but write and speak, English with ease or indeed pleasure, otherwise they might have a hard time of it.

Identification with their institution, with academic/scientific ideals, and with the European idea, certainly helps ...

You also need the commitment of the leadership (rector or rectorate, director or directorate, chancellor or chancellery, chairperson or board, whatever they are called). The EU wants to see this, and the HRS4R Manager also may need this to stiffen their back if they run into obstacles of any kind.



What Do You Need?

You need a Steering Committee including important stakeholders.

But the EU does not want a top-down process, but explicitly expects bottom-up mechanisms, the systematic involvement of researchers, of all career stages, R1 to R4. Preferred tools are surveys, individual or group interviews, and focus group discussions. That is not always easy. Researchers have little time for such things (there are a lot of questionnaires to fill out and sessions to attend as it is), and those who do find the time persistently are, perhaps, not really those whose opinion you want overrepresented in your sample ...



OTM-R

In Germany, at least, OTM-R is a particular hurdle: the

Open,

Transparent, and

Merit-Based

Recruitment of Researchers

If I have the time, I will

- explain in which way this presents a hurdle; and
- explain how we are dealing with this.



Many thanks for your attention!

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