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Renewal Phase Assessment With Site Visit - EC Consensus Report

Case number

2020ES567206

Name Organisation under assessment

Institut de Recerca Biomèdica de Lleida, Fundació Dr. Pifarré (IRBLleida)

Organisation's contact details

Av. Rovira Roure, 80, Lleida, Lleida, 25198, Spain

Submission date of the Internal Review

11/02/2022

Submission date to the European Commission

10/02/2023

Detailed assessment

a. Quality assessment

The quality assessment evaluates the level of ambition and the quality of progress intended by the organisation. If any statements have prompted a "no" or "partly" in the evaluation, please provide recommendations:

	YES / NO / PARTLY	Recommendations
Has the organisational information been sufficiently updated to understand the context in which the HR Strategy is implemented?	Yes	there was some confusion re. the number of staff, which was clarified during the site visit
Does the narrative provided list goals and objectives which clearly indicate the organisation's priorities in HR-management for researchers?	Yes	
Has the organisation published an updated HR Strategy and Action Plan been updated with the actions' current status, additions and/or modifications?	Yes	
Is the implementation of the HR strategy and Action Plan sufficiently embedded within the organisation's management structure (e.g. steering committee, operational responsibilities) so as to guarantee a solid implementation?	Yes	
Is the OTM-R policy in place and publicly available?	Yes	

During the transition period special conditions apply:

Institutions having started the HRS4R implementation prior to the publication of the OTM-R toolkit and recommendations by the European Commission (2015) may not have prioritised actions implementing the OTM-R principles yet. In this case, they should not be penalised but strong recommendations should be made to address these principles appropriately.

Does the internal assessment of the institution give rise to any issues you wish to explore in more detail during the site visit? (max 1000 words)

There were quite a few questions on the data, indicators and action status which were all clarified during the site visit.

Which elements of the HR strategy and Action Plan would you like to focus upon during the site visits? (max 1000 words)

OTMR, Training & development, HRS4R commitment, researcher involvement, status of some particular actions.

b. SITE-VISIT BASED Assessment

Please provide a brief answer to the following questions:

Note: Click on each question to open the editor.

1. Does the site visit confirm the impression made by the written self-evaluation report? ▼

- Yes**
 No
 Partly

2. What have been the benefits of implementing an HR Strategy in the organisation under review? How do you judge its overall impact and achievements? ▼

see below

3. How do you judge the organisation's **level of ambition** with regard to its HR strategy for researchers, taking into account the initial state of play? ▼

see below

4. How do you judge the organisation's efforts to ensure the implementation of the Charter and Code principles regarding the **Ethical and Professional Aspects of Researchers**? ▼

Considering the scientific areas and the type of research carried out by IRB, the institution gave great attention to the direction of the Ethical and Professional Aspects of Researchers, fully including researchers in the process. .

5. How do you judge the organisation's efforts to ensure the implementation of the Charter and Code principles regarding the **Recruitment of Researchers**? Is an **OTM-R policy** in place? ▼

This is one of the themes that the IRB has strongly focused on and many activities were planned in this area. The OTM-R policy on Recruitment and Selection is in place and published in 3 languages (Catalan, Spanish and English) and the information on the website is accessible and user friendly. Recruitment will remain a point of attention in an increasingly competitive environment.

6. How do you judge the organisation's efforts to ensure the implementation of the Charter and Code principles regarding the **Researchers' Working conditions and Social Security**? ▼

The staff very much appreciate the efforts made by IRB Lleida in this area as well as the opportunity for addressing problems or issues when they occur.

7. How do you judge the organisation's efforts to ensure the implementation of the Charter and Code principles regarding **Researchers' Development and Training**? ▲

The institution has a good program of training courses available for researchers based on the active detection of needs of researchers, and the availability of funds.

The list of courses is available on the institutional website.

Please list one or more elements of good practice that you would recommend to other organisations – either in terms of action or in terms of coordination/process. (max 500 words)

The quality-driven and collaborative, supportive approach, the efforts to make the work environment pleasant for every, the attention given to work-life balance and the efforts put into internal communication are unique selling points which can be rare in competitive research environments.

Strengths and weaknesses

On the basis of the information submitted and taking into account the organisation's national research context, how would you as an assessor judge the HR Strategy's **strengths and weaknesses?** (maximum 1000 words)

see below

If relevant, please provide suggestions for modifications or revisions to the (updated) HR strategy: (maximum 2000 words)

Action plan feedback:

The action plan submitted by IRB Lleida to the European Commission provides an basic overview of initiatives currently undertaken, but without very much detail. The site visit was necessary in order to provide context and clarification. For the next submission phase, when no site visit will accompany the desk-based assessment, it will be necessary to provide more detail. This will also benefit the transparency of the actions publicised on the website and will demonstrate the institute's commitment to creating a professional and welcoming work environment. For example: some actions are a 'statement' without clearly identifying what objectives are envisaged. The status of some actions is unclear or vague, and no reason is given why certain weaknesses are not addressed. There is a great opportunity here to promote the IRB Lleida's unique selling points as an employer.

General Assessment

Which of the below situations describes the organisation's progress most accurately? Tick the right situation regarding the award renewal application:.

Accepted



Pending **minor** modifications



Pending **major** revisions



Explanation

- **Accepted:** The organisation is progressing with appropriate and quality actions as described in its Action Plan. **There is evidence that the HRS4R is further embedded. The next assessment will take place in 36 months.**
- Pending **minor** modifications: The organisation is, for the most part, progressing with appropriate and quality actions as described in its Action Plan, but could benefit from alterations as advised through the Assessment process. **There is some evidence that the HRS4R is further embedded. The institution is requested to submit within 2 months a revised file taking into account the recommendations of the assessors.**
- Pending **major** revisions: The organisation is not deemed to be implementing appropriate and quality actions and this raises some concern for the future efforts to implement actions closely aligned to the Charter and Code. **There is a lack of evidence**

that the HRS4R is further embedded.

The institution is requested to submit within 12 months a revised file taking into account the recommendations of the assessors.

Until then, the HR Award will be put as "pending".

General Recommendations

If any of the above statements have prompted a "no" in the evaluation, please provide suggestions of modifications in the form below.

- If the general assessment is "pending minor modifications" the recommendations are split into:
 - Immediate mandatory recommendations (to be implemented for award renewal, resubmission within 2 months)
 - Other recommendations (to be carried out during the award renewal phase).
- If the general assessment is "pending major revisions" the recommendations are split into:
 - Mandatory recommendations (to be implemented for award renewal, resubmission within 12 months)
 - Other recommendations

Recommendations *

Each of the assessors have been charmed by IRB Lleida's dedication to provide a professional and caring work environment in a demanding, strategic and competitive operational context. We have identified quite a number of strengths and unique selling points. During the interviews we have also identified a number of challenges and opportunities that IRB is facing or may encounter in the near future.

Challenges:

- Being a small centre in a smalltown in Spain, IRB Lleida experiences first-hand the difficulty of attracting & retaining talent. Some very good changes inspired by the OTM-R principles have been implemented, but considering the competitive research environment, this will continue to remain a point of attention and additional investments will continue to be necessary, e.g. keeping regular contact with alumni, paying candidates' travel expenses to attend selection interviews in person and experience the welcoming work environment first-hand,...
- The performance pressure & competition in science is high and will continue to remain so. IRB Lleida nurtures a collaborate climate with good work-life balance, which is very precious. For this reason, it will remain a challenge to convince (potential) research staff, funders and governments that they can be competitive and deliver quality - without losing their unique and valuable climate.
- The group of early-stage researchers is a transient community. IRB Lleida puts effort into communicating their HRS4R internally but this will require sustained efforts whenever new researchers come in.

Opportunities:

- The strategic approach taken by IRB Lleida creates some opportunities to further strengthen the HR Action plan. For example the interest in increasing technology transfer activities could be enhanced by aligning the strategic plan with training & development initiatives, such as fostering collaboration with industry, exchanges of researchers between academia and industry, and training researchers in entrepreneurial skills.
- By investing more strongly in international collaboration & networks, IRB Lleida might be able to keep their focus on high performance and create new opportunities for attracting talent through strong alliances. This can make IRB Lleida a more attractive partner for Horizon Europe projects, MSCA Cofund fellowships, etc.
- The postdoc phase was highlighted as a career phase for which little funding is available. IRB Lleida could consider taking a more proactive role in promoting themselves as host institution for MSCA postdoctoral individual fellowships
- IRB Lleida already invests strongly in internal and external communication. Additional benefits could be gained from investing in a stronger visibility as a scientific partner or future employer, with a targeted approach. Again, the international collaboration and networks could be beneficial here

If the organisation deserves to be commended on their ambition, their actions, evidence of good practice and/or their implementation process, please provide a commentary supporting this. (max. 2000 words)

The assessors like to congratulate IRB Lleida for their approach to the HRS4R award process and would like to express their appreciation for the **following strengths**:

- The reflection and action plan submitted electronically were informative and compiled with honesty.
- The presentations given during the site visit were very clear, structured, and informative, and helped to gain a good picture of IRB Lleida.
- After a period of change and uncertainty, the current management shows a dedication to an overall strategic approach, embedding and fully supporting the institute's HR strategy. The HR Excellence Award committed ins integrated in various committees and initiatives within the institute, ensuring a direct or indirect involvement of early stage to experienced researchers. Currently, the process is attentively monitored by the steering group and various committees, fully supported by the Director and an enthusiastic management team and operational team.
- IRB Lleida is selective about its investments and services in order to maximise their return. For example the consideration given to the type of funding that is most necessary to fill the gaps in current career stages, illustrates their approach of complementarity alongside the university and the hospital regionally and government grants nationally.
- The researchers point out that many improvements in support, provision and strategy were felt over the last few years. This new direction was already visible in the progress reported in the institute's renewal submission, and became even more visible during the interviews.
- Researchers are happy with the support they receive from HR and in preparing project applications. They appreciate their access to scientific facilities, as well as the possibility to express their needs and be heard.
- IRB Lleida puts a lot of effort into sharing every formal and informal communication in Catalan, Spanish, as well as English.
- IRB Lleida makes the most of its small size and familiarity, fostering direct contacts, a sense of belonging, and a shared concern for quality.