HR Excellence in Research

Renewal Assessment: EC Consensus Report

Renewal Phase Assessment With Site Visit - EC Consensus Report

Case number

2018CZ354372

Name Organisation under assessment

Tomas Bata University in Zlin, University Institute

Organisation's contact details

Nad Ovčírnou 3685, Zlin, 760 01, Czech Republic

Submission date of the Internal Review

30/04/2024

Submission date to the European Commission

25/09/2025

Detailed assessment

a. Quality assessment

The quality assessment evaluates the level of ambition and the <u>quality of progress</u> 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	
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 HR Excellence in Research 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)

The internal assessment (Gap Analysis), conducted via surveys and focus groups and followed by an Action Plan appears robust, but raises some points for further exploration:

- Survey and focus-group scope and representation: It would be useful to understand how well the internal assessment engaged across researcher levels—doctoral candidates, postdocs, senior researchers—and whether certain groups (e.g., part-time staff or those outside core departments) were underrepresented.
- Effectiveness of internal self-evaluation in March 2021: How were the lessons from the 2021 internal review acted upon? documented follow-ups or adjustments to address previously identified weaknesses.
- Implementation of OTM-R and gender-equality measures: While these are listed among planned actions, it would be helpful to examine specifics: e.g. what gender-equality guidelines were adopted, how open and transparent recruitment has been structurally embedded, and whether recent recruitment processes followed these principles.

During the assessment, We would like to drill down into:

- 1. Methodology and participant diversity in the internal assessment process.
- 2. Concrete outcomes and follow-up from the 2021 internal review.
- 3. Operationalisation and impact of OTM-R and gender fairness policies.

Please provide details of the transparent rating system. How does it work? How is it perceived by the research community (R1 – R4)?

Please provide details of the Communication Plan and the annual Popularisation Plan. How are they implemented?

What is UNI/CPS' doing to reduce the high dependency on TBU for funding? Can other sources of funding be identified?

How successful is UNI/CPS' in winning EU grants?

What is UNI/CPS' doing to increase the involvement of researchers/scientists in international collaborations?

Does UNI/CPS' have a mobility plan in place? Please provide details.

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

How is the work-life balance (reduced full-time equivalents, flexible working hours, and working from home) working for the institution? What are the issues associated with work-life balance e.g., productivity? How is the organisation addressing these issues?

What are the career paths for researchers? How can researchers progress through the organisation via promotion?

Are individual development plans in place for all researchers?

What can UNI/CPS' do to lessen the negative impact of changes to Senior Management at TBU?

What progress is being made to obtain equal representation of members of UNI academic staff within the TBU's Academic Senate?

Are researchers (R1 – R4) represented on the steering committee, working group and work teams?

From the available strategy and Action Plan materials, key elements worth investigating include:

- Onboarding & career development processes: materials and procedures are in place to support new researchers, and how are early-career researchers' needs addressed?
- Recruitment practices (OTM-R): advertised positions transparent, publicly visible, merit-based. Is there a checklist or similar OTM-R guidance consistently applied?
- Gender equality and diversity: formal actions that have been taken, metrics or targets. Are women and under-represented groups included in senior roles and committees?
- **Professional-development training activities**: what training has been provided (e.g., leadership, financial management, open science, quality assurance)? How many took part, and what's the perceived impact?
- Communication strategy: How is progress communicated? CPS lists info via intranet, social media, posters and emails. Are these channels reaching all staff effectively?
- Monitoring system and governance: Who leads the follow-up committees (e.g., names listed in InfoPoint for 2024 renewal and how are responsibilities shared between the University Institute and the corporate-level HR division?

b. SITE-VISIT BASED Assessment

Please provide a brief answer to the following questions:

Note:Click on each question to open the editor.

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?

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The implementation of the HR Strategy has brought several tangible benefits to Tomas Bata University in Zlín. Most notably, it has enhanced the university's capacity to attract funding, including international sources, thereby strengthening its research environment, reputation, and competitiveness. The process has also contributed to the establishment of clear protocols and standardized procedures, which provide a more structured and transparent framework for both researchers and staff.

Researchers feel valued and supported in their research endeavors. The organisation has established ethics committees, training programmes, recruitment processes, complaint procedures, including external ombudsperson procedures, and career development programs. It is very clear that the management team is committed to the HRS4R process, and this commitment permeates through the institution.

Other benefits include a dedicated, motivated and loyal research community that is gender balanced and consists of international researchers. HRS4R has led to an increase in research projects, international projects, research mobility, collaborations with industrial partners, doctoral students, and the quality of doctoral programmes.

Furthermore, improvements in communication, institutional transparency, research freedom, and organizational flexibility have been evident since the adoption of the HR Strategy. These developments have not only fostered a more open and supportive research culture but also increased the confidence of both internal and external stakeholders.

Overall, the impact of the HR Strategy can be judged as highly positive. It has supported the university in aligning with European standards of excellence, while also generating a more attractive, flexible, and researcher-friendly environment.

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?

The Institution's level of ambition regarding its HR strategy for researchers is highly commendable. Moreover, the institute has demonstrated a clear commitment to providing the best working conditions for its researchers. The Institution has placed significant emphasis on the development of new initiatives aimed at addressing critical areas, such as transparency, diversity and equality across the institution, which is verified and valued by the research community. The strategy is not treated as a separate or peripheral initiative but is instead fully embedded in the daily functioning of the university.

The institution has implemented a vertical communications strategy to ensure the research community are fully aware of all initiatives and are involved in the development of future initiatives.

The institution aspires to become a centre of excellence in its scientific field at the international level. This integration illustrates both the seriousness with which the institution has embraced the HR Strategy and its capacity to translate principles into practical measures. The fact that the strategy is now a natural part of everyday operations highlights the depth of the university's ambition and its sustained efforts to create a supportive and forward-looking environment for researchers.

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?**

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The organisation has made considerable efforts to ensure the implementation of the Charter and Code principles related to the ethical and professional aspects of researchers. These efforts have been strongly supported at all levels of the institution, reflecting a shared commitment to upholding the highest standards of integrity, professionalism, and accountability in research activities.

Thanks to this collective engagement, the implementation process has been smooth and effective, resulting in a research environment that places ethics, transparency, and professionalism at its core. The outcomes are highly satisfactory and demonstrate that the institution not only complies with the principles of the Charter and Code but also integrates them meaningfully into its everyday practices.

The institution has developed a comprehensive set of ethical and professional policies and procedures that are well understood by the research community and are perceived to be transparent and fair. Complaints procedures exist and an independent ombudsperson. There are still some issues that remain to be resolved for the research community in relation to equivalent rights compared to the academic community e.g. annual leave.

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?

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The institution is committed to OTM-R. OTM-R is embedded in the rules and regulations of the institution. The view of the research community is that the recruitment procedures are fair, open, and transparent. Selection boards are gender balanced. The onboarding processes are well documented, and the research community perceives the onboarding process as working well. Language courses are available for researchers to improve their language skills once onboarded. These measures ensure that recruitment is based on merit and that procedures are clearly defined and consistently applied.

An OTM-R (Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment) policy is in place and serves as a solid framework for these practices. The policy is not only formally adopted but also actively implemented, demonstrating the institution's commitment to international standards. Overall, the organisation's efforts in this area can be judged as highly effective, fostering trust, inclusiveness, and competitiveness in the recruitment of researchers.

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?

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The organisation has shown a clear commitment to improving and safeguarding researchers' working conditions and social security provisions, in line with the Charter and Code principles. Considerable effort has been made to provide a stable and supportive working environment, with policies and practices designed to ensure fairness, transparency, and consistency across the institution.

Researchers benefit from stable contracts, comprehensive social protection, and various forms of institutional support, funding to attend international conferences, and mobility abroad. Mentoring programmes, professional development programmes, language programmes, flexible working, and child-minding facilities are in place to support researchers, as well as targeted measures for career development opportunities.

The institution has also demonstrated flexibility in adapting working conditions to researchers' needs, thereby fostering a more attractive and sustainable research environment. These actions highlight the organisation's strong dedication to creating a workplace that supports both professional development and personal stability.

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

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The implementation of development and training programmes for researchers is excellent. There is a substantial number of training and development programmes for researchers to choose from, including professional development programmes. The research community is very satisfied that their training and development needs are being met. The institution has developed a career progression framework for researchers, and it is very clear what researchers must achieve in order to progress. To support the career progression framework, the institution has developed an annual evaluation system for researchers so they receive constructive feedback and direction on their research, training needs, and career direction.

Training activities are diverse and strategically embedded in the university's HR policies, reflecting a strong awareness of the importance of lifelong learning. Furthermore, the institution actively encourages participation in mobility schemes and international collaborations, which enhance researchers' development through exposure to different environments and practices. These initiatives demonstrate a proactive and comprehensive approach, and the overall impact can be judged as very positive, contributing to both individual growth and the university's research excellence.

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)

Several elements of good practice observed at Tomas Bata University in Zlín could serve as valuable examples for other organisations:

- Full institutional embedding of the HR Strategy the strategy is not treated as an isolated initiative but is fully integrated into the daily operations of the university, ensuring sustainability and long-term impact.
- Mobility funds for researchers providing dedicated resources to support international exchanges and collaborations has proven highly effective in fostering
 professional development and international visibility.
- Clear protocols and transparent processes the establishment of standardized procedures has enhanced clarity, fairness, and accountability across the institution. The clear documentation in both Czech and English of all processes and procedures that impact the research community.
- Strong internal coordination and collective ownership the active support of all levels of the organisation, from leadership to individual researchers, has been crucial in ensuring the successful implementation of the Charter and Code principles.
- The appointment of an external Ombudsperson to deal with complaints brings impartiality to complaints.
- The emphasis on work-life balance in the institution is admirable.

The attention and commitment to the development needs of the research community is exemplary.

- KPIs are in place for all research units so they can manage their performance.
- Performance appraisal system is in place for all researchers.

These practices illustrate how strategic alignment, targeted funding measures, and inclusive governance can significantly enhance the effectiveness of an HR Strategy.

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)

Strengths

The commitment of the management and staff is evident.

The Gender Equality Plan is in place.

An Equal opportunities policy is in place.

A Code of Ethics is in place.

A clear and transparent system of recruiting and admitting researchers to UNI/CPS is in place.

The Career website is very comprehensive and commendable.

The HRS4R web pages are very good.

A Human Resources Development Strategy 2022 – 2025 has been published

The HRS4R process is integrated with the institution's strategic and operational plans.

A network of other HRS4R Universities was established to share best practices.

Structured, documented process: Clear timeline from Gap Analysis to Action Plan and internal self-review, including communication methods

Strong institutional support and governance: A dedicated working group, embedded within the University Institute, supported by a new central HR Division—this combination signals both grassroots and top-down backing.

Alignment with European frameworks: Strategy clearly aligns with European Charter & Code and covers major domains—transparency, career development, gender, international mobility, professional training.

Weaknesses

There is a high dependence on TBU for funding

The low level of active involvement of researchers/scientists in international collaborations

Changes to Senior Management at TBU bring uncertainty for UNI/CPS'

Limited publicly available specifics: While general areas are mentioned, there's a lack of detailed metrics or documentation showing how each Action Plan item was implemented.

Outcome tracking: No explicit evaluation of the implementation's impact—e.g., uptake of training, gender-balance improvements, recruitment outcomes, or career progression evidence.

Researcher inclusion & representation: It is unclear how much input researchers themselves had in later stages of design and review—especially early-career or contract-based researchers.

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

Make sure all web links work and all documents on the HRS4R web page are up to date.			
Ensure the research community (R1-R4) is represented on all HRS4R committees and working groups.			
Continually review the HRS4R action plan and develop new actions as issues emerge from the research community.			

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 modifications	\bigcirc
Pending modifications - extended deadline	

Explanation

- Accepted: The organisation is progressing with appropriate and quality actions as described in its Action Plan. There is evidence that the HR Excellence in Research is further embedded. The next assessment will take place in 36 months.
- Pending 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 HR Excellence in Research is further embedded.
 The institution is requested to submit within 2 months a revised file taking into account the recommendations of the assessors.
- Pending modifications extended deadline: 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 HR Excellence in Research 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 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 modifications extended deadline" the recommendations are split into:
 - Mandatory recommendations (to be implemented for award renewal, resubmission within 12 months)
 - Other recommendations

Recommendations *

While the overall implementation of the HR Strategy is commendable, a number of areas for further development could strengthen the institution's performance and long-term sustainability:

The primary recommendation is that the institution continues the excellent work that they have done so far and continually improve the HRS4R process as they have done to date.

Increase international funding opportunities – greater efforts could be devoted to securing competitive international grants and partnerships, further enhancing the university's global research profile.

Consolidate the new bonus system – the recently introduced system of performance-based bonuses should be stabilised and consistently applied to ensure transparency, fairness, and motivational impact.

Promote internationalisation and research stays abroad – encouraging more structured mobility, particularly in leading international centres of polymer research, would reinforce excellence and global integration.

Enhance employment stability for researchers – while annual contract renewals provide flexibility, they can also create uncertainty. Where possible, aligning contract durations with the total length of externally funded projects would contribute to greater job security and reduce stress among researchers. Clearer criteria for contract renewal and the possibility of linking research plans to longer-term or even permanent positions should be explored.

In order to make it more attractive to recruit international researchers, consider offering contracts of longer duration e.g., 3 years.

Strengthen long-term career perspectives – researchers currently working across multiple projects to secure continuity would benefit from more transparent and predictable mechanisms to ensure professional stability.

Look at other ways for research units to communicate their activities with each other with a view to developing further collaborations and synergies.

Continue to engage with the research community for feedback on the implementation of the HRS4R process with a view to developing new actions.

Examine methods for international researchers to engage in teaching activities.

Provide more development opportunites in technical skills e.g., graphic design, computer skills, etc.

Consider giving PhD students a set period of time off in the summer.

These improvements would not only support researchers' well-being and career development but also enhance the university's attractiveness and competitiveness on the international stage.

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 commitment of the management team is exemplary, which is evident in how well embedded the HRS4R process is.

Tomas Bata University in Zlín deserves to be highly commended for the ambition it has shown in the design and implementation of its HR Strategy. From the outset, the institution has demonstrated a clear vision and determination to align with European standards, and this ambition has translated into concrete and effective actions.

The appointment of an external Ombudsperson to deal with complaints brings impartiality to complaints.

The HR Strategy is fully embedded in the daily functioning of the university, which illustrates not only the depth of commitment but also the sustainability of the measures undertaken. Evidence of good practice is visible in several areas, such as the establishment of transparent procedures, the strong internal coordination across all levels of the organisation, and the introduction of mobility funds that have been particularly beneficial for researchers.

The emphasis on work-life balance in the institution is admirable.

The attention and commitment to the development needs of the research community are exemplary.

The clear documentation in both Czech and English of all processes and procedures that impact the research community.

KPIs are in place for all research units so they can manage their performance.

A performance appraisal system is in place for all researchers.

The implementation process has been inclusive, well-structured, and continuously monitored, ensuring that improvements are both meaningful and lasting. Overall, the institution has created an environment in which researchers feel supported, valued, and motivated, and this achievement reflects the seriousness and professionalism with which the Charter and Code principles have been adopted.