

# Action Plan III 2024-2027



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

Prepared by: Petra Janečková, Kateřina Uhrová, Marta Vandrovcová  
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## 2. ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

STAFF & STUDENTS	FTE
Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research *	181,52
Of whom are international (i. e. foreign nationality) *	46,23
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation) *	13
Of whom are women *	105,09
Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor. *	65,05
Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level *	50,42
Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level *	66,04
Total number of students (if relevant) *	0
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff) *	297,72
RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)	€
Total annual organisational budget	20 300 000
Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for Research)	10 441 000
Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for Research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)	9 859 000
Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research	0

### 2.1. ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE

The Institute of Physiology (IPHYS) of the Czech Academy of Sciences, a public research institution, is one of the leading research institutions in the Czech Republic. The institute focuses on research in the areas of normal and pathological physiology, with a particular emphasis on:

- The nervous system and the brain
- The cardiovascular system
- Specific areas of metabolism

The primary aim of the research is to characterize the fundamental biological mechanisms underlying serious human diseases, such as stroke, ischemic heart disease, diabetes, inherited metabolic disorders, and neurodegenerative diseases. The institute also includes a Center for Preclinical Drug Testing.

The research addresses major diseases, including those caused by unhealthy lifestyles and aging, from an interdisciplinary perspective. Advanced methods of molecular and cellular biology, biochemistry, pharmacology, imaging, and modeling are used, with animal biomodels revealing the genetic determinants of diseases.

## 3. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE CURRENT PRACTICE

### 3.1. ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL ASPECTS

#### Strengths:

- **Research Freedom:** The Institute of Physiology (IPHYS) provides its researchers with adequate research freedom.
- **Ethical Compliance:** Ethical principles are fully implemented at IPHYS in accordance with the Code of Ethics for Researchers of the Czech Academy of Sciences.
- **Professional Approach:** IPHYS staff fulfill all aspects of professional approach to project work.
- **Legislative Compliance:** IPHYS has all the legislative aspects of its operations in its internal regulatory documentation.
- **IPHYS has high quality technical equipment and administrative facilities.**
- **Anti-Discrimination Policies:** The issue of discrimination and equal access well covered in the Internal Regulations and is in compliance with national law.
- **Support for Young Researchers:** IPHYS provides strong support for young researchers, including support for setting up their own group.
- **Collaborative Culture:** There is a culture of collaboration between IPHYS and the clinicians, encouraging interdisciplinary research.

#### Weaknesses:

- **Dependence on a limited number of funding sources to enable mobility activities for early stage researchers**

Remarks: IPHYS organizes seminars for all scientific staff throughout the year. These seminars feature topics and infrastructure from the institute's departments and host invited external guests who can contribute thematically and support collaboration. We strive to make these seminars as attractive as possible by showcasing interesting methods, inviting renowned experts in the field, and providing opportunities for formal

and informal networking after the seminars. Attendance at the seminars is not mandatory, and not everyone chooses to participate. However, participation is strongly recommended for doctoral students. In addition, there are regular meetings of department heads, where they are introduced to new necessary administrative regulations, operational matters are addressed, significant scientific results are presented, and current issues are discussed. An annual off-site meeting of department heads is also held, with invited speakers such as lawyers, occupational safety experts, and open access specialists. Every two years, an off-site meeting for PhD students is also held, where students present their current work progress, make contacts, and share methodologies and know-how. These activities gradually improve the overall atmosphere. Additionally, a working group for PhD students has been established to address recruitment and improve communication between the new generation of scientists.

Recognizing the importance of science popularization, internationalization, and technology transfer, IPHYS continuously informs its researchers of these necessities. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, IPHYS was awarded a project to support these activities. Financial incentives motivated researchers to engage in popularization efforts by lectures at high schools. However, after the project concluded in 2023, IPHYS no longer had the financial resources to reward these activities, causing a decline in such efforts. Currently, popularization relies on individuals who participate in various events such as Open Days, Science Fairs, Brain Week, a series of seminars for university students, and internships for high school students. As the internationalization of the Institute is important for its development, competitions for international internships among young researchers were held in 2018-2022. In total, approximately 25 PhD students were supported. Nowadays, IPHYS is actively seeking resources to implement short-term internships through mobility projects from the Czech Academy of Sciences and other projects that support these activities. Regarding technology transfer, the position of Technology Transfer Officer (TTO) was established. This individual organized technology transfer courses and face-to-face consultations for interested parties. However, only a few researchers fully recognize the importance of these activities, with some arguing that basic research is difficult to commercialize. To enhance engagement in both popularization and technology transfer, these activities have been incorporated into the evaluation system for scientific staff, ensuring they are recognized and valued within the institute's performance indicators.

The point concerning collaboration with clinical physicians includes that all such collaboration is approved by an ethics committee, ensuring that all research activities are conducted ethically and responsibly. Additionally, all scientific work is carefully planned and conducted in accordance with relevant rules and laws, ensuring compliance and maintaining the highest standards of research integrity.

We have removed the following weaknesses from the list: the lack of a systematic agenda for sharing information and experiences among employees and departments, non-functioning internal communication. We have implemented regular seminars, formalized

minutes from the Director's board, the Board of IPHYS meetings, and meetings with department heads, which are distributed to all employees to ensure they are informed.

## 3.2. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

### Strengths

- The current recruitment process is in compliance with national Labour Code.
- The recruitment process is standard.
- Job ads for vacant posts are published to be accessible both nationally and internationally.
- IPHYS has available tools to attract high quality new employees from abroad.
- The employee fluctuation is low in senior researchers (R3 and R4).

### Weaknesses

- The number of researchers is difficult to plan over the long term, due to the awarded projects and grants.
- IPHYS struggles to attract early stage researchers to return to IPHYS after they complete their mobility abroad.
- IPHYS struggles to recruit necessary quality of technical and administrative staff for its operation.

Remarks: In previous periods, IPHYS was able to recruit and train the necessary number of scientific, technical, and administrative staff. However, this has significantly changed due to evolving employment trends. Post-pandemic, filling vacant positions has become very challenging. The overall unemployment rate in Czechia is low, and in Prague, it is below 2.8%. The recruitment of researchers can be conducted internationally, allowing for easier filling of vacant scientific positions. Even scientific positions face their challenges. In competition with other sectors, PHYS, due to the nature of its work, cannot broadly offer remote work, which is often seen as a weakness in the recruitment process and the overall employee benefits package. All IPHYS employees can work from home with the consent of their supervisor if the nature of their job allows it. Excessive time spent working remotely can lead to a loss of contact and potential alienation. Additionally, working from home can also prolong the resolution of work tasks that require active collaboration. Another obstacle is the wage conditions Czechia compared to developed countries. Very few applicants from developed countries apply for scientific positions, even though we have revised our remuneration system to be more competitive.

We also revised our statement regarding the low employee fluctuation. Although fluctuation is low among senior staff, younger researchers sometimes leave because they feel they cannot freely pursue their own ideas and projects and cannot easily secure funding for their scientific topics. Efforts are being made to address this, but it is

challenging to teach experienced scientists new approaches to employee management. Historically, scientists were expected to excel solely in their specific fields without focusing on soft skills. Another significant factor for the departure of young scientists is insufficient financial compensation and uncertainty regarding the acquisition of grants. Career development is essentially limited to positions as a junior researcher (ordinary scientist/team member) or a department head. Young scientists also struggle to build their careers in competition with well-established researchers, who often succeed due to their established reputation. Additionally, some established scientists are unable to mentor young researchers in a way that allows them to surpass their mentors and provide them with the desired scientific space for self-realization..

Regarding the challenges in filling administrative positions, it should be noted that the manager responsible for the HR Award in 2023 left, and even before there had been significant fluctuation among HR staff during and after the pandemic. This disruption has impeded efforts to improve the culture across IPHYS. Not all positions are currently filled. Finding capable candidates for administrative positions who meet the job requirements has also become increasingly difficult.

One of our significant achievements is the appointment of a coordinator for foreign employees. This individual prepares all necessary documents from the job announcement, through the selection process, to the commencement of work in Czechia, providing information for smooth adaptation. We have also created internal documents such as "Internal Document on the Audition for R&D Staff", "Career Development Plan", "Career Development Program – Establishing Start-ups" etc. The HR department has started to be used more actively by laboratory heads, and the HR department ensures compliance of selection procedures with OTM-R and legislation, creates statistics etc. Therefore, we have removed the weak points "HR department oversees compliance with legislative requirements but does not affect the personnel strategy of the entire Institute, which is mostly absent" and "The absence of medium- and long-term personnel strategy".

### 3.3. WORKING CONDITION

#### Strengths:

- IPHYS provides superior facilities and technical equipment for researchers that is competitive at international level.
- Researchers perceive high degree of freedom and do not feel limited in their research work.
- IPHYS promotes the involvement of women in leadership positions and provides women with the necessary support for reconciling family and working life (home office, flexible working hours, kindergarten in the biomedical compound premises ect.)
- There are several programmes to support young scientists in their career.

- Most administrative processes are electronised.
- The evaluation system directive has been introduced

Weaknesses:

- A significant component of remuneration is the variable component of salary, which is dependent on the number of projects and grants in the department.

Remarks: IPHYS regularly updates its shared instrumentation and technical equipment and supports the purchase of specific devices through regular investment item purchase competitions. This includes explaining the functionality of the requested equipment and analysing its potential usage. As a result, IPHYS is equipped with modern instrumentation, enabling the conduct of cutting-edge research. Additionally, being located in the Krč campus alongside other scientific institutes provides IPHYS with access to a broader range of facilities. This collaboration enriches the institute with additional techniques and the ability to utilize expensive equipment from neighboring institutions.

Researchers are required to submit a project annotation for approval by the Board of IPHYS. This process is intended to prepare statistics on success rates in various calls, ensure financial compliance (including correct remuneration for the involved team), and verify the scientific alignment with the institute's concept. Arbitrary rejection of project proposals does not occur.

When selecting candidates for leadership positions, the criteria include 1) achieved results considering the duration of practice without discrimination due to career breaks, and 2) the presentation of the department's scientific direction. Work-life balance is supported through part-time positions, flexible working hours, home office opportunities, and the availability of a preschool facility for employees' children within the Krč campus.

IPHYS has implemented programs to support junior researchers and utilizes suitable grant programmes to fund short-term internships. Ad hoc competitions for internships or participation in summer schools are also announced. More proactive departments use their institutional resources to cover the costs of courses and other human resource development activities. In 2023, an institute-wide managerial skills training was conducted. Participation was voluntary and included not only department heads but also Principal Investigators interested in the course. The Program to Support Publication Activity, which contributes to the payment of part of the ACP in open access journals rated in Q1 or D1, is also popular. Articles supported in this Program often rank among the most significant publications by IPHYS authors.

IPHYS has also introduced the "Evaluation System Directive," which describes not only purely scientific activities but also activities such as popularization and knowledge transfer.



The issue with the variable component of salaries persists. This is due to the way science is funded in Czechia. What IPHYS can influence is the updating of the salary table. Bonuses for researchers increase depending on their success in securing grants and projects.

### 3.4. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

#### Strengths:

- IPHYS supports foreign internships.
- Scientists have plenty of opportunities to use and improve their knowledge and skills at the institute.
- Young scientists have the opportunity to apply for participation in international development programmes.

#### Weaknesses:

- Lack of a comprehensive training system, based on regular evaluations.
- Supervision of early stage researchers is done individually, depending on supervisors approach. There are no comprehensive guidelines for supervision.
- Some supervisors are lacking managerial skills

Remarks: As mentioned in the previous section, IPHYS has implemented programmes to support early stage researchers and utilizes suitable grant programmes to fund short-term internships. Ad hoc competitions for internships or participation in summer schools are also announced. More proactive departments use their institutional resources to cover the costs of courses and other human resource development activities. In 2023, an institute-wide managerial skills training was conducted. Participation was voluntary and included not only department heads but also Principal Investigators interested in the course. We also introduced new Career development system which summarises information about programmes and evaluation system.

One of the weaknesses at IPHYS is the absence of a comprehensive training system that is grounded in regular evaluations. Currently, there is no structured framework to ensure that all researchers, especially early-stage researchers, receive consistent and ongoing training beyond mandatory requirements. Especially, supervision of PhD. students at IPHYS is currently done on an individual basis, largely depending on the approach of each supervisor. This lack of comprehensive guidelines for supervision can lead to inconsistencies in the mentoring and support that students receive. To remedy this, we plan to elaborate a set of guidelines/check-list for supervision. These guidelines/check-list will outline best practices for mentoring, regular feedback sessions, and clear expectations

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

Since the interim evaluation process, we have focused more on working with early-stage researchers and secured a project to support mobility, which was widely utilized. However, during the global Covid-19 pandemic, travel had to cease, and it was only in 2022 that competitions for internships were once again announced.

The management of the institute has concentrated on evaluating the scientific performance of individual departments, leading to the termination of some non-perspective topics and the establishment of new groups with fresh ideas and approaches. IPHYS has established an International Advisory Board comprising foreign experts with similar scientific profiles to ensure independence. This allows our institute to receive unbiased feedback. Departments are prepared for evaluation, the evaluation process is communicated, and meeting minutes are published. Department have the opportunity to respond to the evaluations, provide additional comments, and clarify any misunderstood points.

In the training of scientists in human resources and related agendas, the previously mentioned conservative and reserved approach has become evident. The seminars were not received positively, and attendance was very low. Consequently, this area has surprisingly fallen short of the institute's leadership's expectations, and the desired effect has not been achieved. Nonetheless, this remains a very important area that the leadership will continue to revisit.

We have also found that delivering information to employees in a top-down manner is ineffective. Alternative methods to improve this are being explored.

In general, it is beneficial to start working with individuals who are already positively inclined and use these "islands of positive deviation" to spread new trends to other departments. Leading by example is powerful, and if it becomes evident that a new approach helps a department retain capable people, it becomes easier for others to accept it. However, we recognize that this approach is very demanding in terms of time and capacity.

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

While establishing new departments based on the „Career Development Program – Establishing Start-ups”, which required the new department to be led by someone from outside the institute, we received feedback from individuals who wanted to create their own departments, breakaway from their current supervisors, and change the direction of their research. In response to this demand, we reconsidered our initial plan to establish new departments exclusively with external candidates. We developed a second directive for internal applicants, organized a competition, and selected a suitable candidate. Now, each year, the director's board decides whether to announce a start-up for external

candidates or consider internal employees with international experience and the ambition to become independent.

Furthermore, we found that some researchers eventually realized they didn't feel comfortable in scientific research. It is possible to utilize their potential in administrative roles, where their experience is valuable, for example, in popularization activities or pre-award support. They understand the research environment, can communicate effectively with both scientists and funding providers, and can thus be valuable members of the scientific community with different competencies.

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

During the implementation phase, IPHYS developed and adopted several internal documents concerning the recruitment process. For example, we established that interviews should be conducted by a committee consisting of the department head, a human resources representative, and another Committee Member. Historically, interviews were conducted haphazardly, with department heads independently posting job ads and conducting interviews without HR present. It was unclear on what basis they made their hiring decisions. Most department heads have learned to collaborate with HR and utilize their expertise. These department heads have realized that an HR representative can save them time and provide valuable insights regarding the candidates' qualities.

## 4. ACTIONS

Proposed ACTIONS	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
<b>ACTION 1</b> - IP Support: - Training modules for researches: ongoing - Consultation and support for researcher with potential IP: ongoing - Establishing the Technological Scout position: completed	(+/-) 5. Contractual and legal obligations  (-/+) 8. Dissemination, exploitation of results	4Q/2019	Office of the Director – IP Specialist	- Number of training session: 3 days every 2 years – completed - Number of consultations: 2 per month – completed - Establishing the position of technological scout – completed
			<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
			COMPLETED	The position of Technological scout has been established. Training sessions and consultations are happening regularly. Several IP's are being developed for further commercialization
<b>ACTION 2</b> - New project management system: - Selection and purchase of the system: The Projects Unit of the Economic department, together with the Working group, will select and purchase project management system, which will enable easier and more thorough monitoring of the projects at the institute. - In progress (funds secured, public tender prepared)	(-/+) 4. Professional attitude  (+/-) 6. Accountability	3Q/2021	Economic Department – Projects Unit	- Purchase of the project management solution – in progress
			<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
			COMPLETED	Institute has secured funds for purchasing the system in 2020, but the public tender was completed in Q1 2022 and the project management system was handed over for use in 2023.

Proposed ACTIONS	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
<b>ACTION 3</b> - New evaluation system: - analysis of the current system: The working group will conduct further analysis of the current practices in all departments, including the evaluation criteria, periodicity, tools and methods and documentation. - in progress for individual researchers - drafting of the new system: The working group will propose new formalised system for evaluation of researchers based on the findings of the analysis and the good practices identified during the analysis. Special section of the system should cover evaluation of junior researcher by their supervisors. - in progress for individual researchers - approval of the system: The evaluation system will be submitted for approval by the Council of the Institute. - training of supervisors: Researchers tasked with leading and supervising other researchers will be trained in the new system. This will be done gradually, based on the availability of the researchers. - in progress for individual researchers - ongoing monitoring: Use of the new system will be continuously monitored to identify potential issues. Monitoring will be based on evaluation documentation, surveys and interviews with selected researchers. – ongoing	(-/+) 4. Professional attitude  (-/+) 11. Evaluation / appraisal systems (+/-) 36. Relation with supervisors	3Q/2022	HRS4R Working group	Approval of the new system. - Completed for research groups, in progress for individual researchers - Training of 80% of the relevant researchers. - in progress
			<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
			COMPLETED	The institute adopted an evaluation system for research groups. The system for individual researchers was also completed. Training activities were postponed and carried out in Q2 2023.

Proposed ACTIONS	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
<b>ACTION 4</b> - Support for popularisators. - training modules for researchers: ongoing - administrative support for popularisation: ongoing	(+/-) 9. Public engagement  (-/+) 37. Supervision and managerial duties	4Q/2019	Office of the Director - PR Specialist	- Number of training sessions: 2 per year. - ongoing - Number of active researchers: 20. - met for 2019 - Number of events: 20 per year. -met for 2019
			<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
			COMPLETED	System for supporting popularisators has been implemented and the popularisation goals have been met in 2019. In 2020 though, most events have been suspended and will resume once the situation allows it.
<b>ACTION 5</b> - Mobility support. - informing researchers about mobility options and funding options: ongoing - establishing position of the Mobility specialist: completed	(-/+) 28. Career development (+/-) 29. Value of mobility (+/-) 39. Access to research training and continuous development	4Q/2019	Economic Department – Projects Unit	- Researchers on mobility: 8 per year – met for 2019
			<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
			COMPLETED	Institute offers short term mobilities for R1 researchers and long term mobilities for R2 researchers. Communication and information efforts have been strengthened resulting in higher interest in those opportunities. Goals have been met for 2019 and planned mobilities for 2020 were exceeding the goal by 100%. However most of the planned mobilities have to be postponed because of the covid pandemic.

Proposed ACTIONS	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
<b>ACTION 6</b> - Management training programme. - defining the goals of the programme: completed - initial Development centre: Initial session to determine and analyse the current state of managerial competencies of the researchers. To be carried out by external experts. - postponed - designing the training programme: Based on the initial session the Working group, together with external experts, will prepare the contents of the training programme. - postponed - organising the training: To be carried out by external experts. – postponed - concluding Development centre: concluding session to determine the results of the training and give recommendations for further development. To be carried out by external experts. - postponed	(+/-) 36. Relation with supervisors (-/+) 37. Supervision and managerial duties (+/-) 40. Supervision	2Q/2022	HRS4R Working group	- Training of 80% of the relevant researchers. -extended
			<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
			COMPLETED	Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, training activities had been postponed. A series of management skills training sessions were held, primarily attended by department heads, but also by principal investigators who expressed interest in participating.
<b>ACTION 7</b> - PHYS OTM-R Policy. - development of document outlining the institute OTM-R policy: The HR Unit of the Economic department, together with the Working Group, will draft up a document adapting the OTM-R principles to the environment of the Institute. - in progress - approval and publishing of the document: The Policy will be submitted for approval by the Council of the institute and after the approval, it will be published in Czech and English on the institute web-pages. - in progress - informing the applicants: link to the document will be included in all the job advertisements posted by the institute. - in progress	(-/+) 12. Recruitment (-/+) 13. Recruitment (Code) (-/+) 14. Selection (Code) (-/+) 15. Transparency (Code) (+/-) 16. Judging merit (Code) (++) 17. Variations in the chronological (++) 18. Recognition of mobility experience (Code) (+/-) 19. Recognition of qualifications (Code) (++) 20. Seniority (Code)	3Q/2021	Economic Department - HR Unit	- Approval and publication of the Policy. - in progress
			<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
			COMPLETED	The HR department is implementing activities to meet the OTM-R policy requirements, and the policy has been approved and published. The document was finalized in Q2 2021 and updated in 2023.

Proposed ACTIONS	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
<b>ACTION 8 - Career development plan.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- defining the goals of career planning - completed</li> <li>- formulation of the career plan: - completed</li> <li>- approval of the career plan: The career plan will be submitted for approval to the Council of the Institute. - in progress</li> <li>- publishing the career plan: the researchers will be informed via email and the career plan will be published on the institute web-pages in Czech and English. The career plan will have the effectiveness of internal directives. - postponed</li> <li>- ongoing monitoring: Implementation of the plan will be monitored by the HR Unit. - postponed</li> </ul>	(+/-) 21. Postdoctoral appointments (Code) (-/+) 28. Career development (+/-) 29. Value of mobility (+/-) 30. Access to career advice (+/-) 29. Access to research training and continuous development (+/-) 40. Supervision	4Q/2021	Economic Department – HR Unit	- Approval and publishing of the career plan. - in progress
			<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
			COMPLETED	The career development plan was formulated and actions are being taken to improve employee career prospects. This includes mobility, popularisation and commercialisation support which is already ongoing and has positive results. It also includes encouraging and supporting employees to apply for grants which would provide them more independence, up to starting their own research department. Several departments have already been established. The number of international projects (submitted applications and received grants) has also increased.
<b>ACTION 9 - Institute ombudsman.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- establishing the position of institute ombudsman, who will provide employees with legal advice, handle complaints and appeals and serve as the advocate of the employees in disputes: The Office of the Director, together with the working group, will define the competencies and authority of the Ombudsman, who will have to be able not only to give advice, but also to deal with complaints and settle disputes. The Ombudsman will become a member of the Collegium of the Director, if they were not member before - in progress</li> </ul>	(+/-) 22. Recognition of the profession (-/+) 34. Complaints /appeals	3Q/2021	Office of the Director	- Establishing the position. - in progress - Informing researchers. - extended - Updated directive. - in progress - Monitoring through surveys - extended
			<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
			COMPLETED	In 2018, an ombudsman was appointed at the institute (employed on a contract basis). Since 2020, she has been employed under a permanent contract and has already resolved several disputes among employees. The scope of her activities is described in the internal directive: On Measures and Procedures to Suppress Negative Behavior in the Workplace.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- updating the Internal directive on measures and procedures to suppress negative behaviour in the workplace: the directive will be updated to include the position of the Ombudsman. - extended</li> <li>- appointment of the Ombudsman: The Ombudsman will be selected by the Steering group and appointed by the director. Information about the Ombudsman will be published on the Institute web-pages and will be sent to all employees by email. - extended</li> <li>- continuous monitoring: Regular surveys will be conducted to monitor the employee awareness. - extended</li> </ul>				
Proposed ACTIONS	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
<b>ACTION 10</b> - IPHYS Researcher's Codex. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- development of document outlining rights and responsibilities of researchers at the institute: completed</li> <li>- approving and publishing of the document:</li> <li>- The Codex will be submitted for approval by the Council of the Institute. After possible revisions and approval, it will be published on the IPHYS web-pages, the Institute Intranet and it will be part of the package distributed to new employees. Employees will also be informed about the Codex by email. - in progress</li> </ul>		4Q/2021	HRS4R Working group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Approval and publication of the Codex. - in progress</li> </ul>
			Current Status	Remarks
			COMPLETED	An ethical code was prepared that outlines the fundamental ethical requirements for employee conduct related to their professional activities both at the workplace and beyond. This code is based on and complies with: The European Charter for Researchers and the valid Ethical Code of Research Workers of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

Proposed ACTIONS	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
<b>ACTION 11</b> - New remuneration system. - initial analysis: completed - analysis of the external environment: completed - formulating new remuneration system: The HR Unit will draft new remuneration system with the goal to ensure fair salaries across all departments and remove discrepancies. The Council of the Institute will be deeply involved in the process as well. It is not expected that the new system could be approved in the next two years. - in progress - approval of the new remuneration system: based on the draft, the system will be presented to the Council for review and approval – NEW -	(-/+) 26. Funding and salaries	4Q/2022	Economic Department - HR Unit	- Findings of the analysis. -completed - Draft of the new remuneration system. -in progress - Approval of the remuneration system
			<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
			COMPLETED	The remuneration system has been analysed and revised and is regularly updated.
<b>ACTION 12</b> - New recruitment guidelines. - hiring and training of a new HR specialist: completed - development of internal document setting out the rules and guidelines for all phases of the selection process: completed - approval and publishing of the guidelines: completed - implementing the process described in the new recruitment guidelines: completed	(-/+) 12. Precruitment (-/+) 13. Recruitment (Code) (-/+) 14. Selection (Code) (-/+) 15. Transparency (Cpde) (+/-) 16. Judging merit (Code) (+/-) 19. Recruitment of qualification (Code)	1Q/2020	Economic Department - HR Unit	- New HR Specialist. -completed - Approval and publishing of the guidelines. - completed - Number of applications received per posting, committee reports. - ongoing - All postings on Euraxess, other sites if relevant and feasible. -ongoing
			<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
			COMPLETED	The new guidelines have been put into effect and are being used in the selection and recruitment process. The effectivity of the system has not been completely evaluated yet, as there was a significant drop in recruitment activities in 2020, due to the covid pandemic.

Proposed ACTIONS	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
<b>ACTION 13</b> - Redefining the role and competencies of the HR Unit. - role of the unit in the recruitment process: completed - role of the unit in career development: completed	(-/+) 13. Recruitment (Code) (+/-) 19. Recognition of qualification (Code) (-/+) 28. Career development (+/-) 30. Access to career advice	1Q/2020	Economic Department	- Internal document authorising the department to its role in the recruitment process - completed - Training of unit staff - ongoing
			<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
			COMPLETED	The HR unit now takes more active part in the recruitment and selection of new employees and also provides, together with the project department, support in career development. Support of foreign employees has also been strengthened.
<b>ACTION 14 - Internal Guidelines / Instructions NEW</b>	(-/+) 4. Professional attitude (++) 23. Research environment (++) 33. Teaching (+/-) 36. Relation with supervisors (+/-) 40. Supervision	2Q/2026	HRS4R Working group	- Approval and publication of "Supervisor's check-list". - Researchers involved in the supervision of PhD. students will be acquainted with the document and their responsibilities as supervisors. - Revision of IPHYS's PhD Programme - Preparation of "New Welcome Guide" - Preparation of "Foreigner's Handbook"
			<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
			NEW	

Proposed ACTIONS	GAP Principle(s)	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
<b>ACTION 15</b> - Monitoring and evaluation of the Gender Equality Plan NEW	(-/+) 4. Professional attitude (++) 10. Non discrimination (++) 23. Research environment (++) 24. Working conditions (++) 27 Gender Balance	4Q/2025	Economic Department	- Current state analysis and comparison with previous state; - Publication of reviewed GEP
			<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
			NEW	
<b>ACTION 16</b> - Complete redesign of the institute's website NEW	(+/-) 5. Contractual and legal obligations (+/-) 9. Public engagement	3Q/2025	Economic Department, IT Department	- Launch of the new website
			<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
			NEW	
<b>ACTION 17</b> - Increasing awareness of internal documents related to HRS4R NEW	(-/+) 13. Recruitment (Cod) (-/+) 14. Selection (Code) (-/+) 15. Transparency (Cpde) (+/-) 16. Judging merit (Code) (-/+) 37. Supervision and managerial duties	4Q/2027	Economic Department	- Conducting training on the recruitment system and the institute's OTM-R policy (Targeted at department heads). - Raising awareness of opportunities for establishing new research groups
			<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
			NEW	
<b>ACTION 18</b> - Enhancing active engagement of researchers in IPHYS's processes NEW	(++) 24. Working conditions (-/+) 28. Career development (+/-) 30. Access to career advice	4Q/2024	HRS4R Working group, Economic Department	- Regular survey administration (at least once a year).
			<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
			NEW	

## 4.1. COMMENTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OTM-R PRINCIPLES

IPHYS has implemented the OTM-R (Open, Transparent, and Merit-Based Recruitment) policy into its recruitment process. Prior to the implementation of OTM-R, recruitment was unsystematic, and evaluation criteria were neither established nor documented. Department heads seeking to strengthen their teams often relied on personal experience and contacts. The HR department was only informed about new hires and played a purely administrative role in the recruitment process. We believe that these hires involved highly qualified experts for performing clear and specific tasks within the framework of grant/project fulfillment.

Now, job advertisements are consistently published on various platforms, and the selection process involves a committee comprising the head of the respective departments, an HR representative, and a third person (an administrative staff member or another scientist). Unsuccessful applicants are informed, which did not always happen before OTM-R, and we also provide feedback to applicants. This transparency helps us recruit the best candidates, increasing the number of applicants for specific scientific positions. IPHYS has established a GDPR policy and subsequently handles the personal data of applicants in accordance with it.

However, the implementation faced challenges. Many department heads were reluctant to collaborate with the HR department and did not want a committee to decide on candidates, preferring autonomy. Convincing these individuals of the benefits of the OTM-R recruitment process was very difficult.

## 5. IMPLEMENTATION

### 5.1. GENERAL OVERVIEWS OF IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The implementation process aimed to improve the recruitment process, enhance employee working conditions, and better support young and promising scientists. Until the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the collaboration between the HR manager and the working group was exemplary. Changes were implemented at IPHYS, including the appointment of an ombudsman, a technology scout, systematic popularization efforts, resources for short-term internships abroad for young scientists, and the adoption of OTM-R policy discussed in the previous section.

However, during the pandemic, employees faced an entirely new situation due to societal disruptions caused by anti-pandemic measures. They had to adapt to new conditions and find timely solutions. Unfortunately, this also affected the engagement of the working group, which ceased to function properly after the lifting of restrictions. Ultimately, the steering committee intervened and dissolved the inactive working group. In 2023, the HR manager resigned. The handover of responsibilities was less than ideal. For some time,

we struggled to engage employees in forming a new working group, which was only achieved in 2024.

We have learned from this situation and adjusted the management of the action plan. For instance, we couldn't locate meeting minutes and proposed procedures. Therefore, we decided to create a shared repository accessible to all. Meeting minutes of the working group will be stored in this repository, accessible to working group members and the steering committee. Each minutes will be published on the intranet in a section accessible to all employees, and results will be presented biannually to the steering committee. This presentation will also be available to all employees.

In the action plan, we also aimed to focus on supporting young talent. While support for mobility activities was successful, there is still room for improvement. We found that young scientists often struggle to compete with senior researchers, which is a broader issue in Czech science providers. Czech grant agencies frequently favour projects submitted by established scientists, even if their projects lack groundbreaking ideas. This issue affects all of Czechia. Therefore, the institute supports young scientists by providing information on calls suitable for young researchers, where they have a higher chance of success, ensuring they have the conditions to submit projects, and listening to their needs. Although we do not always manage to retain talented juniors, we remain committed to this effort because young researchers are an investment in the future.

While working with young scientists, we discovered that some department heads are hesitant to foster potential competitors. We have not yet found a solution to this behaviour, especially when the department head has excellent results in the field. To address this, we plan to create an additional parallel working group for young scientists (different from the PhD student working group mentioned in the section "Ethical and Professional Aspects," which consists of department heads and deals with the recruitment process of talented PhD students; the group mentioned in this paragraph will consist of young scientists to address the problems they face) to prevent potential issues and departures. In the coming period, we will approach individual juniors, explain the purpose of such a working group individually, and believe we can form a functional group.

Employees still do not perceive the HR Award as something that brings them positive change. They currently view the HR Award merely as a project, an obligation, or possibly as a bonus when preparing grant applications. To align with the HR Award's ideas and goals, starting with small steps can suffice, such as including the logo in the signatures of involved individuals, executives, secretaries, and in presentations and employee events. Additionally, better promoting the benefits of receiving the HR Award during recruitment and improving working conditions would help foster greater identification with its goals.

During the implementation phase, the Steering Committee visited the Nencki Institute, where they established a collaborative relationship and drew inspiration from the noteworthy initiatives successfully undertaken by the Nencki Institute as part of the HRS4R. The visit facilitated a valuable exchange of ideas and best practices, contributing to the advancement of our own HRS4R objectives.

## 5.2. ADDITIONAL REMARKS/COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The Institute of Physiology (IPHYS) was founded in 1954 by leading scientists in the field of medicine. This tradition is both a strength and a challenge. Over the years, scientists from the natural sciences have begun to predominate at IPHYS, and researchers with medical backgrounds are lacking. We are striving to attract young scientists from various fields and to make the environment more attractive, especially for researchers from medical faculties. The goal is to continue and strengthen the research in line with the vision of the institute's founders while embracing modern advancements.

Another challenge concerns the core scientific staff who have been employed at the institute for a long time. During this period, they have achieved excellent results in their fields. However, their approach is sometimes conservative or reserved when it comes to adopting new administrative responsibilities and keeping up with scientific trends at the international level. To address this issue, IPHYS is trying to create new research groups and initiate competitive calls for so-called start-ups to attract young and promising researchers.

Throughout the previous period, IPHYS successfully implemented new practices through two projects funded by the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports. The regular six-monthly reporting on progress to the provider ensured transparency and accountability.

One of the challenges faced was ensuring that new practices and changes were fully embedded into the organizational culture. Initially, there was a lack of willingness on the part of some employees who were not directly involved in the working groups. To address this, we emphasized the importance of regular and clear communication about the changes and their benefits.

While increasing communication was necessary, we learned that excessive information could overwhelm employees. Therefore, we adjusted our strategy to mention specific, relevant documents at appropriate opportunities rather than overloading employees with information.

Moving forward, each action in the new action plan has clearly defined indicators that will be objectively evaluated. This will include the publication of new documents and the number of employees trained at specific career development stages.

To further embed the changes and increase awareness, we will leverage every suitable opportunity to highlight relevant documents and practices without overwhelming the employees.

By addressing these points and continuously refining our approach, we are confident that the proposed implementation process will lead to significant improvements in our working environment and career development opportunities for our employees.