The European Charter & Code for Researchers

HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

Report on Internal Review for Interim

Assessment by the European Commission

Decree n. 53 of April 30, 2020

Introduction

In May 2016, CREA set up a Working Group composed of permanent and fixed-term researchers, technologists, office managers and administrative staff, with the task to elaborate the institutional framework for the adoption of the "European Charter for Researchers" ("Charter") and the "Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers" ("Code").

In a first step, the Group carried out a Gap Analysis between the principles set out in the Charter and the Code and the rules and practices in force at CREA. The Group then elaborated and shared a Survey with all research and non-research staff, aimed at identifying actions to close the identified gaps. Following the evaluation of the results of the Gap Analysis and the Survey, an Action Plan was elaborated proposing 15 different Actions to be implemented by December 2019. In addition to the Gap Analysis and the Action Plan, CREA drafted the document "CREA Strategy for Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment (OTM-R)".

These documents were submitted to the European Commission in October 2017.

On March 21st 2018, following unanimous positive judgement by the evaluators, the European Commission approved CREA's request for recognition of the "HR-Human Resources Excellence in Research" to CREA.

The European Commission establishes that 24 months after HR recognition, the respective institutions must undergo an intermediate evaluation, based on a report describing the progress made in the implementation of the proposed Action Plan and OTM-R strategy. The present Report summarizes the results of an internal review designed to highlight the accomplishments achieved and to analyse still ongoing actions. This report also proposes New Actions to be implemented during the next three years. In fact, at the end of the mid-term evaluation, useful recommendations are provided for continuing the process started and, at the end of the following triennium, the European Commission will carry out a further evaluation through "on-site" visit of its experts.

The Report on the internal review for the Interim Assessment of CREA is presented below, prepared according to the model provided by the European Commission.

Name of Organization under review:
CREA Council for Agricultural Research and Economics

Contact:
Gian Luca Calvi, Extraordinary Commissioner, segreteria.tecnica@crea.gov.it

1. INFORMATION ON THE ORGANIZATION

STAFF & STUDENTS	FTE
Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research	923
Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)	2
Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation)	0
Of whom are women	487
Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor (*Note: for the sake of this Report, the indicated stages correspond to I and II level Researchers and Technologists, according to the Italian National Labour contract for Public Research Organisations*)	165
Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level (*Note: for the sake of this Report, this level corresponds to III level Researchers and Technologists, according to the Italian National Labour contract for Public Research Organisations*)	667
Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level (*Note: for the sake of this Report, this level corresponds to Scholarship holders in possession of a Ms.Sc. or equivalent degree and holders of research grants*)	91
Total number of students (if relevant)	0
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff)	**2091**

RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)	€
Total annual organisational budget	168.717.497 €
Direct annual funding to the organization by the government (designated to research)	111.036.498 €
Annual competitive funding by the government (aimed at research, obtained in competition with other organizations - including EU funding)	57.010.459 €
Annual funding by private (non-governmental) sources, designated to research	570.540 €

ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE
CREA is the largest Italian research institution in agriculture (Legislative Decree 454/99 and L. 190/2014). It has legal personality under public law and is supervised by the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies. CREA carries out research and develops innovations aiming at improving the protection and conservation of natural resources and biodiversity of agricultural, forestry and marine ecosystems and at enhancing profitability and competitiveness of agriculture, agro-industry and forest management, in the context of sustainability of production systems and product quality. CREA is included among the public research bodies (EPR) pursuant to Legislative Decree 218/2016.

2. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Ethical and professional aspects

With reference to **Action 1**, CREA approved its "Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct" (2017), based on the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. With this Code, CREA intends to provide scientific staff with clear and updated indications in order to guide the work planning of researchers and technologists, encourage national and international collaboration, improve the management of experimentation and the production of scientific data, as well as their use and dissemination. The Code will be signed by the Directors of the single Research Centers, researchers, technologists, research fellows, scholarship holders and by all the technical staff, permanent and fixed-term.

In addition, it will be disclosed to all research staff through a specific event to, be repeated in 2021, if necessary.

https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/Action+1_CREA+and+European+Ethics+Code+%281%29.pdf/734320a9-1187-6820-8d58-56ce3b147c02?t=1587714334183

Concerning **Action 2**, CREA approved the "New Regulation on the responsibility of researchers and technologists in the participation in projects and in the management of funding". The document was drafted by a Working Group composed of researchers and technologists, Center Directors and administrative staff. It identifies the methods for defining project responsibility, budget management and for project portability, in case the coordinator moves to another Research Center within CREA or to another Research Organization. The New Regulation was promoted during a training event, also streamed through teleconference, which took place on April 29th, 2019.

The implementation of this Regulation will be monitored by consulting the staff of the Research Centers, in order to timely identify any need for improvement.

https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/Action+2%2615_Responsibilty+of+Researchers_projects.pdf/eafb7499-29fd-6937-b946-474d830ad82a?t=1587395190572

Action 3 establishes the drafting of "Guidelines for data protection". Given its complexity, the Action cannot be considered concluded by now, but is in progress. CREA manages significant amounts of particularly sensitive data subject to the rules governing intellectual property, within the ISMS - Information Security Management System (voluntary standard for the management of data security and IT systems recognized ISO / IEC 27001). Our Institution is therefore developing projects aiming at safeguarding the organization with regard to both cybersecurity and privacy frameworks. These projects, currently under way but not completed yet, cover all areas of information technology and aim to bring technological solutions for the secure exchange of information among researchers. CREA intends to establish a Technical Panel to address all aspects of cybersecurity, including the management of information by researchers, over the three-year period 2020-2022.

Action 4 foresaw the identification of criteria for the periodic evaluation of the scientific performance of researchers. This Action still remains a point for which there is room for improvement in CREA. On the one hand, it is difficult to understand how to identify and quantify in a homogeneous way a series of activities which in themselves are heterogeneous, including those of basic scientific research, applied research, support to public administration at national, regional and European level. On the other hand, according to the Italian legislation, it is not possible to evaluate the individual performance of researchers, but only that of the research institutions as a whole. This work has to be carried out in collaboration with ANVUR (National Agency for the Evaluation of the University System and Research), which should have issued guidelines that would have allowed the implementation of the Action. However, these Guidelines have not been published yet, and therefore the Action is being re-proposed, with the cancellation of the term "performance" from the title, since in the Italian legislation this term is used for the evaluation of administrative profiles.

Recruitment and selection of candidates

As foreseen by the Action Plan, for **Action 5**, CREA provided access to its competition procedure for researchers and technologists to all EU citizens, through the publication of competition notices for permanent staff, fixed-term staff and scholarships and research grants on the CREA website (https://www.crea.gov.it/en/permanent-position; https://www.crea.gov.it/en/fixed-term-position; https://www.crea.gov.it/en/scholarships-and-research-grants), as well as on the EURAXESS website (https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs); however, to date not all CREA calls have always been included in EURAXESS. For this reason, CREA intends to monitor the percentage of recruitment announcements published on EURAXESS over time.

By **Action 6**, in order to increase the number of international and private sector experts in the CREA Register of Experts for the selection of the competition commissions, the "Application for admission to the Register" and the "Notice for selection of experts ", have been published, in Italian and English languages, on the CREA website (https://www.crea.gov.it/en/board-of-experts). At the moment, no new candidates have been recruited: CREA intends to further promote the publication of the recruitment announcements by using its internal and external circuits, also involving the Presidents of national and international scientific Societies of reference for the research areas of interest of CREA, and evaluating the number of applications received over time. These processes will furthermore be enhanced upon the completion of our organization's automation process, which involves the online insertion of data by the candidates.

Action 7 provided for the definition of Guidelines for the members of the competition commissions, in connection with the "CREA Strategy for Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment" We therefore elaborated the "Guidelines for the recruitment and career progression of researchers and technologists according to the OTM-R strategy", which outline the general

selection and evaluation criteria for researchers and technologists by applying transparent procedures and providing useful information for career building. In order to assess the factual implementation of the OTM-R strategy of CREA, we intend to prepare a questionnaire, to be submitted to researchers and technologists, with the aim to understand their opinion regarding CREA's application of the criteria expressed by the Code, with particular regard to the OTM-R strategy.

https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/Action+7_Guidelines+recruitment.pdf/4db1f954-b537-8184-6b37-4dc84a7ad671?t=1587714261096

https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/CREA+OTM-R+Strategy.pdf/08bb0204-f158-46c3-6b42-eadb41716ea2?t=1587395809464

As foreseen by **Action 8**, CREA prepared a "Multi-year recruitment plan for permanent researchers and technologists" for the period 2018-2020. The Plan, which is annually updated, is approved by CREA's Management Board, after consultation with the Scientific Committees of the different Research Centers, as well as with the Scientific Board.

As part of the activities envisaged by **Action 11**, a section dedicated to job opportunities offered by foreign research institutions was added to the CREA web area dedicated to international cooperation. This section provides information for researchers, divided by countries, on foreign Universities, Research Centers, Institutions and Organizations operating in the areas of competence covered by CREA, and links to the respective web pages where the job advertisements are published. https://www.crea.gov.it/en/international-job-opportunities

Among the strong points, it should be noted that during 2019, and beyond the provisions of the Action Plan approved in 2018 and in implementation of Legislative Decree 75/2017, 406 fixed-term scientific and administrative staff members were given permanent contracts, of which 181 are researchers and technologists. During 2020, further temporary staff will be given permanent positions.

Working conditions

Three Actions included in the Action Plan (PA) are related to this topic.

Action 9 related to the improvement of the research environment. The goal of offering opportunities and facilities to create a stimulating research environment has been achieved by providing researchers (including young researchers) with an IT package which includes an operating network (Office 365).
https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/Action+9_Networking.pdf/6b398893-2039-aaea-d779-75f5f74bf34a?t=1587395321357

A further Action (**New Action no. 16**) must be undertaken in order to allow access to databases and editorial resources from external locations, as they are currently only accessible from the personal working location (with CREA's IP).

As regards **Action 10**, a step was made to guarantee better working conditions by closing the gap relating to the lack of internal regulations concerning sabbatical years and teleworking. Therefore, a document called "Guidelines on seconded national experts, association and sabbatical periods" was approved (the document is being translated and will soon be published on the institution's website). The internal analysis of this point of the Charter (i.e. the Working Conditions) must be further deepened in order to fully achieve its objectives, with particular regard to flexible working hours and the use of short internships abroad to be foreseen within the thematic area related to Training Plans (see section on Training and Development).

As regards flexibility of the work activity, a new action is proposed (**New Action, n. 17**) which takes into account the principle according to which flexible working hours, part-time work, teleworking and sabbatical periods should be integrated in the financial, administrative and organizational provisions necessary to regulate this range of possibilities.

Concerning the procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals, in implementation of **Action 12**, a seminar was streamed to inform all researchers of the existence of a dedicated committee in CREA (CUG - Unified Committee for Guarantee) aiming to resolve these issues. https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/Action+12_Workshop+conflict+management.pdf/adab4383-438a-ac62-a8e9-c95c34f07d25?t=1587395393983.

Among the strengths it should be noted that, beyond the provisions set out in the Action Plan approved in 2018, CREA annually defines a number of remote work positions (teleworking), which can be granted to permanent or fixed-term staff members who carry out an activity characterized by a high level of operational autonomy. Teleworking is carried out at one's home or in a workplace other than that of assignment. The number of weekly days allowed for remote work is agreed between the employee and his supervisor. For 2019, 40 remote workstations were assigned; for 2020, this number may be increased up to a maximum of 212. The adoption of this working modality has allowed CREA to make the best and continuous use of the professionalism and skills available among its staff, at the same time improving the quality of life of the employees who have chosen it. For this reason, it is foreseeable that the number of employees who will request this way of working will increase in the future.

Furthermore, in January 2020, CREA experimentally activated some smart-working positions, which enable the staff members to carry out their work activity outside the "official" working location. Smart-working can be carried out for a continuous period not exceeding 12 months for a maximum of one day per week, provided that contractual obligations and compliance with workplace safety regulations are guaranteed. A maximum of 199 smart-working positions was set for 2020. Since the aforementioned agile working method is currently being tested, it is currently not possible to determine whether the maximum number of staff to be allowed for smartworking will be increased in the future.

However, in this context, it is worthwhile mentioning that with the occasion of the COVID 19 emergency, almost all CREA staff are placed in smart-working, with more than satisfactory results.

Both remote work (teleworking) and smart-working are being promoted to enhance work/life balance of staff, direct employees towards work by objectives, reduce transportation to and from the workplace, and rationalize work organization within CREA.

We note the need to take a new action to improve the layout of the CREA homepage (https://www.crea.gov.it/en/home) and to simplify the access by researchers to the related online documents, in particular by highlighting both the "Transparency" section and the HRS4R page (**New Action, n. 18**).

Training and career development
The "Regulation for the awarding of scholarships, research grants, PhD scholarships and study stays abroad for training purposes" (**Action 13**) recognizes the need for integration and improvement of the implementation tools that were in place at CREA, as was highlighted during the Gap Analysis.
https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/Azione+13_REGULATION+FOR+THE+SCHOLARSHIP.pdf/a96e7b02-6914-a0b9-577c-f62f0e164583?t=1587395419569

The triennial training plan 2018-2020 was drawn up and approved by the Management Board (**Action 14**). However, there are still some weaknesses highlighted through the Gap Analysis: training for supervisors is not foreseen, scholarship holders and assignees are not foreseen among users. The possibility of using external courses for researchers / technologists is also still missing. Therefore, a new action is proposed (**New Action n. 19**) which has the aim of calibrating the allocation of funds dedicated to training against the different professional profiles present at CREA, and of implementing the Action Plan with other types of training, including the training of supervisors, providing for a timely verification process and communication of results.
https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/Action+14_Training+plan+2018_2020.pdf/86973ccb-d3de-e47f-5987-4a5ac651c389?t=1587395448436

With regard to **Action 15**, an article was included in the Regulation on project responsibilities (Action 2) which provides for the possibility of promoting internships abroad. It should be noted that during 2019, as part of projects whose contracting authorities explicitly requested so, 24 internships were carried out in foreign research institutions. These opportunities will be repeated during the following three years, with an increase in the number of internships.

Have some of the priorities for the short and medium term changed?
At the moment there are no substantial changes in the short and medium term priorities of CREA.

Has your organization undergone any changes which have had an impact on the human resources strategy?

The new CREA Statute of September 22nd 2017, in article 11, acknowledges the implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers by CREA. The Charter is also referred to in Article 2 in relation to the institutional aims and activities, and in Article 16 with regard to the scientific freedom of researchers working in the 12 Research Centers.

With the entry into force of the new Statute, CREA has furthermore established a Scientific Board made up of 12 members, 8 of which appointed by the Minister of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies and 4 elected among and by CREA researchers. In addition, each of the Research Centers has an internal Scientific Committee whose function is to define the respective research strategies of the Center. These Scientific Committees are composed of 6 researchers elected by and among the researchers of the Center itself.

Are strategic decisions planned that may influence the Action Plan?

Currently CREA is supervised by an Extraordinary Commissioner and an acting General Manager. During 2020, the appointment procedure for the new General Manager will be concluded. In addition, the appointment of the President of CREA and the consequent establishment of the Management Board is expected during 2020.

The modification of the entire Governance structure of the Institution could modify the objectives and priorities described in the Action Plan for the next three years.

ACTIONS

(*White cells report the Actions as presented in the CREA Action Plan approved by the European Commission on March 21, 2018.*
Progress on each action on the date of presentation of this report is indicated in the blue cells)

	Proposed actions	Time foreseen	Responsible entity	Targets and indicators	Status	Comments
1	**Code of ethics and professional behaviour**	December 2019	Scientific Board	Code approved by the Management Board and published on the CREA website Realization of one training event in video-streaming for all researchers	In progress	The event has not been carried out yet and is planned for 2020 https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/Action+1_CREA+and+European+Ethics+Code+%281%29.pdf/734320a9-1187-6820-8d58-56ce3b147c02?t=1587714334183
2	**Internal rules on the administrative and financial accountability vis-à-vis project resources**	April 2019	Office for the support to the management of research projects	Regulation approved by the Management Board and published on the CREA website Realization of one training event in video-streaming for all researchers	Completed	Article 11 of the Regulation, as foreseen by Action 15, includes "Directives on mobility and training in the context of research projects" https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/Action+2%2615_Responsibilty+of+Researchers_projects.pdf/eafb7499-29fd-6937-b946-474d830ad82a?t=1587395190572

	Proposed actions	Time foreseen	Responsible entity	Targets and indicators	Status	Comments
3	**Guidelines for data protection**	December 2019	Office for information systems	Guidelines published on CREA website\n\nRealization of one training event in video-streaming for all researchers	In progress	Given the complexity of the subject it was decided to dedicate more time to the completion of this Action
4	**Transparent criteria for the periodical evaluation of researchers**	December 2019 (provided timely publication of relative guidelines by ANVUR)	Office for Management control and research assessment;\n\nScientific Board	Document of principles and procedures approved by Management Board	Extended	ANVUR has not published yet the Guidelines for the evaluation of scientific institutions.\nProposal to change the title of this Action, as described in the narrative section.

	Proposed actions	Time foreseen	Responsible entity	Targets and indicators	Status	Comments
5	**Publication of recruitment notices in English language on CREA website and on Euraxess**	From 2018 onwards	Office for HR recruitment	*Recruitment notices in English language published on CREA and EURAXESS websites* *Indicator (from 2019 onwards):* *percentage of applications received for research positions from foreign applicants*	Completed	*Monitoring of percentage of applications received from foreign researchers is currently underway* *https://www.crea.gov.it/en/permanent-position* *https://www.crea.gov.it/en/fixed-term-position* *https://www.crea.gov.it/en/scholarships-and-research-grants* *https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs)*
6	**Increase the presence of international experts and members from the private sector in the CREA Register of candidates for the formation of Selection Committees**	September 2017	Office for HR recruitment	*Application for admission to the Register and notice for the selection of experts published in English language on the CREA website* *Indicator (from 2019 onwards):* *percentage of foreign experts or experts from the private sector present in the Register)*	In progress	It is necessary to increase the percentage of foreign and private experts in the Register by further advertising the selections https://www.crea.gov.it/en/board-of-experts

	Proposed actions	Time foreseen	Responsible entity	Targets and indicators	Status	Comments
7	**Definition of Guidelines for members of Selection Commisions**	October 2019	Office for HR recruitment	*Approval of Guidelines by the Scientific Board and the Management Board* *Guidelines published on the CREA website, both in Italian and English languages*	Completed	https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/Action+7_Guidelines+recruitment.pdf/4db1f954-b537-8184-6b37-4dc84a7ad671?t=1587714261096
8	**Definition of a multi-year recruitment plan for permanent research positions**	December 2018	Office for HR recruitment Office for HR management	*Plan on human resources approved by Management Board*	Completed	
9	**Enhancement of internal networking instruments and support to young researchers**	December 2019	Scientific Board	*Approval by Management Board*	Completed	https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/Action+9_Networking.pdf/6b398893-2039-aaea-d779-75f5f74bf34a?t=1587395321357

	Proposed actions	Time foreseen	Responsible entity	Targets and indicators	Status	Comments
10	**Guidelines on mobility and sabbatical years**	December 2018	Office for HR management in consultation with the Scientific Board	*Approval of Guidelines by the Management Board*	Completed	
11	**Web page on career possibilities**	December 2017	Office for International relationships	*Dedicated section on CREA website*	Completed	https://www.crea.gov.it/en/international-job-opportunities
12	**Initiatives to improve the efficacy of conflict resolution**	June 2018	Office for HR management	*Realization of a training event in video-streaming on conflict resolution in the research environment*	Completed	https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/Action+12_Workshop+conflict+management.pdf/adab4383-438a-ac62-a8e9-c95c34f07d25?t=1587395393983
13	**Revision of the Regulation on scholarships, research grants and PhD students.**	June 2018	Office for Staff Training	Approval of revised Regulation by the Management Board and publication on the CREA website	Completed	https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/Azione+13_REGULATION+FOR+THE+SCHOLARSHIP.pdf/a96e7b02-6914-a0b9-577c-f62f0e164583?t=1587395419569

	Proposed actions	Time foreseen	Responsible entity	Targets and indicators	Status	Comments
14	**Revision of Staff Training Plan**	December 2018	Office for Staff Training	*Updated Training Plan approved by the Management Board*	Completed	https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/Action+14_Training+plan+2018_2020.pdf/86973ccb-d3de-e47f-5987-4a5ac651c389?t=1587395448436
15	**Directives on mobility and training in the context of research projects**	December 2018	Office for staff training Office for the management of research projects	*Directives approved by the Management Board*	Completed	This Action was accomplished together with Action 2

NEW ACTIONS

(This table summarizes the proposals for New Actions to be undertaken during the next triennium.

Numbering of the Actions is subsequent to the numbering in the previous table, according to the model provided by the European Commission)

	Proposed actions	Time foreseen	Responsible entity	Targets and indicators	Status	Comments
16	**Enable researchers and technologists to access databases and editorial resources from outside their workplace**	June 2021	Competent offices	Development of a new IT tool	New	Access is currently possible via IP recognition of the workplace in the Office. Some resources have been temporarily made available temporarily for the Covid 19 emergency.
17	**Monitoring the implementation of flexibility of working hours**	December 2021	Competent offices	Report on results obtained	New	
18	**Improved user-friendliness of the CREA website**	December 2021	Competent offices	Report on results obtained	New	The layout of the homepage of the CREA website can be improved, and access to online documents be simplified, especially by highlighting the "Transparency" section and the HRS4R page

	Proposed actions	Time foreseen	Responsible entity	Targets and indicators	Status	Comments
19	**Adjustment of the Training Plan to new methods of implementation**	June 2021	Competent offices	Guidelines on staff training Plan for staff training	New	It is necessary to calibrate the allocation of funding for training against the professional profiles present at CREA, to implement the Training Plan with other types of capacity building, and to include training of supervisors by providing for a process of timely verification and communication of the results

Comment on the implementation of the principles of open, transparent and merit-based recruitment

As required by the previous Action Plan (Action 5), access to the competition procedure for researchers and technologists has been facilitated for all EU citizens, by promoting the publication of competition notices for permanent and fixed-term positions through the EURAXESS website (https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs).

We note the need to enhance the publication of online tenders by the single Research Centers, given the fact that in 2019 the percentage of competition announcements uploaded to EURAXESS did not reach 50%. CREA is therefore working, through periodic monitoring, on the number of announcements entered, the number of national and foreign candidates, as well as on the automation of the website in order to facilitate the online insertion of data by the candidates.

With reference to the enlargement of the CREA Register of Experts (Action 6 - https://www.crea.gov.it/en/board-of-experts), since the number of enrolled foreign and/or private sector experts has been zero from 2019 onwards, public awareness on the register is being enhanced, including publication of the announcements on the EURAXESS website, raising of awareness on the Register within CREA's internal and external circuits, and dissemination of information on the Register to the Presidents of national and international scientific Societies sharing the research interest of CREA.

Concerning the document aiming at the implementation of the OTM-R Strategy required by the Code (Action 7) the CREA Table for HRS4R established the sub-group "OTM-R Strategy" which elaborated the "Guidelines for the recruitment and career progressions of researchers and technologists according to the OTM-R strategy" (https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/Action+7_Guidelines+recruitment.pdf/4db1f954-b537-8184-6b37-4dc84a7ad671?t=1587714261096 https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/CREA+OTM-R+Strategy.pdf/08bb0204-f158-46c3-6b42-eadb41716ea2?t=1587395809464), modifying the original document title "Definition of Guidelines for the members of the Competition Commissions", in order to adequately reflect the principles set out in the Code.

As foreseen by our Triennial Research Plan, CREA annually elaborates, on the proposal of the Scientific Committees of the Centers, a "Staff Recruitment Plan" (Action 8), which is approved by the Management Board, after consultation with the Scientific Board. This Plan periodically defines the number of researchers and technologists of levels III-II-I to be recruited by the Research Centers. In 2019, CREA provided permanent contracts for 181 researchers and technologists, as well as for 165 technical collaborators.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

General overview of the implementation process:

The steps for implementation of the Action Plan have been included in the wider process of revision of the organizational and functional structures of CREA. Since 2015, CREA has been conducting a significant reorganization of its Research Centers which has led to the establishment of 12 Centers, and to the complete revision of all administrative procedures, in order to align them with the modified organizational and functional structure, as well as with the European Charter for Researchers. Therefore, within each revision phase, the consistency of the Regulations / Guidelines / working documents (under discussion or approval by CREA) with the international standards of public research bodies was verified. In addition, the procedures for the definition and implementation of administrative regulations have been initiated and are largely finalized. Among these documents there is the Regulation on duty travels, the Regulation on project responsibility, the attribution of compensation for the coordination of research projects, and a general improvement of staff selection procedures, through the drafting of Guidelines for recruitment and career progressions of researchers and technologists.

This phase, which is somewhat complex in itself, has seen a series of moments of acceleration and subsequent stagnation, often in correspondence with crucial phases of internal reorganization. Very positive, however, is the fact that CREA's adherence to the European Charter for Researchers and the adoption of the OTM-R Strategy has stimulated the internal management to proceed in the HRS4R environment.

Currently, CREA has almost 2000 staff members, distributed over several research stations located all over Italy. For this reason, direct and overall involvement of researchers in the whole process was difficult, especially since there are no internal IT tools of "community of practice" via electronic forum. However, the CREA representatives of researchers and technologists were actively involved and information on the progress of the adoption process of the Action Plan was constantly shared with all staff members.

How did you prepare the internal review?

Following the development of the Action Plan, CREA has set up a Permanent Table with the task of providing support to the Offices responsible for the implementation of the provisions set out in the Plan. The Table is composed of 9 administrative managers responsible for the 15 actions, 4 researchers (all of which were already involved in the drafting of the Gap Analysis and the Action Plan), 5 administrative staff members, 1 IT technician, and the manager of external communications of CREA. Coordination of the table was entrusted to the Manager of the Office of Legal Affairs, as independent supervisor. This Manager, in fact, at the time of the establishment of the Table, was not responsible for any of the Actions. We highlight the strong female component in the Table which is composed of 17 women and 4 men.

Over the past two years and in view of the internal review, the Table has analyzed the problems reported by the managers responsible for implementation of the Actions, in order to address and resolve them within the timeframe foreseen. Where this was not possible, it was agreed to postpone the proposed deadline. The Permanent Table also checked the documents describing the implementation of the Actions and their publication in the section of the CREA website dedicated to the European Charter for

Researchers. As the deadline for the presentation of the internal review is approaching, the Table has entrusted a small group with the preparation of the present Report and the proposal of the new Actions.

How did you involve the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?

The Regulation on the responsibility of researchers and technologists in participating in projects and in the management of funding (Action 2) was elaborated with the assistance of the administrative Office in charge, some representatives of research staff and some Directors of the Centers. Once approved, it was shared with all staff in form of a seminar meeting accessible via online streaming.

For the preparation of the "Guidelines for the recruitment and career progression of researchers and technologists according to the OTM-R strategy" (Action 7), representatives of the Central Administration and researchers had been involved.

The Action targeting at the improvement of the effectiveness of conflict resolution (Action 12) consisted in a public awareness event on this topic to which all research staff had access.

Do you have an implementation committee and / or steering group which regularly monitors progress?

The abovementioned Permanent Table has the overall task to facilitate the implementation of the Action Plan. To monitor progress, CREA's Director General and one member of the Management Board receive periodical reports on progresses made. In addition, two members of the Scientific Board conducted an independent evaluation of the implementation of the Actions, making observations and suggesting corrective actions. It is expected that at the end of the intermediate evaluation phase the composition of the Permanent Table will be changed and the monitoring process be continued by new members of the Table.

Is there an alignment of organizational policies with HRS4R? For example, is HRS4R recognized in the organization's research strategy, including human resource policy?

CREA has aligned its organizational policies with the HRS4R strategy, applying its principles by producing internal Regulations and Guidelines, including the aforementioned "Guidelines for the recruitment and career progression of researchers and technologists according to the OTM-R strategy". All approved Regulations / Guidelines are published on the CREA website, in the section dedicated to the European Charter for Researchers.

How does your organization ensure that the proposed actions are implemented?

Every year, CREA approves its Performance Plan, defining the objectives of the Managers of the Administrative Offices and the Managers of the Research Centers. The Actions proposed in the Action Plan approved in 2018 were included in the annual Performance Plan and indicated as the specific objectives of the respective Offices in charge of their implementation. The New Actions proposed in this Report will also be in line with CREA's Performance Plan for the next triennium.

How are you monitoring progress?

The correspondence of the CREA's policies with the principles set out in the Code will be made on the basis of the following indicators:

Indicator 1: constant evaluation of the percentage of recruitment notices published on EURAXESS.

Indicator 2: Preparation of a questionnaire on "Monitoring the application of the CREA OTM-R strategy within the European Charter for Researchers", to be submitted to researchers and technologists, in order to assess the level of perception by research staff concerning CREA's current adoption of the criteria expressed by the Code, with particular regard to the OTM-R strategy and the guarantee of career progression of researchers (by the end of 2021).

Indicator 3: Completion of the automation process for online data entry by applicants to the recruitment notices.

How do you plan to prepare for the external review?

The documentation produced and approved for the implementation of the HRS4R strategy as foreseen by the Code will be published on the CREA website, specifically on the page dedicated to the European Charter for Researchers, and on the EURAXESS website dedicated to CREA, for appropriate consultation by the inspectors. Adequate storage in paper format of sensitive documentation which cannot be published online (Legislative Decree 196/2003) will also be carried out in specific archives.

Indicator 4: Online publication on the CREA website of the documentation produced in the context of HRS4R, in the section dedicated to the European Charter for Researchers.

Indicator 5: Preparation of a paper archive for documentation of sensitive information useful for evaluating CREA in its implementation of the HRS4R strategy.

Additional comments / comments on the proposed implementation process:

The final phase of the implementation process of the Action Plan coincided with CREA being put under an Extraordinary Commissioner, a status which is still ongoing. The weak governance combined with the strong measures of internal reorganization of CREA led to a certain slowdown in the process, even though the vast majority of the envisaged Actions have been completed.

An analysis of the first phase of the process of implementation of the Action Plan approved in 2018 shows that it is necessary to identify, for each New Action, the appropriate implementation indicators instead of the mere notion "Action completed". Indeed, the indicators should allow to measure the objective impact of the Actions themselves within our organization. For this reason, the working group that will be in charge of continuing the process will put special emphasis on the identification of measurable indicators for the new Actions foreseen.

Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment Check-list: OTM-R					
OTM-R sistem	**Open**	**Transparent**	**Merit based**	**Yes, completely** *Yes, substantially* *Yes, partially* *No*	**Indicators**
Have we published a version of our OTM-R policy online (in the national language and in English)?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	The "CREA strategy for open, transparent and merit-based recruitment", which outlines the CREA policies relating to the methods and criteria for the recruitment and career progression of researchers in line with current national legislation, is published on the CREA website, in Italian and English versions. https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/CREA+OTM-R+Strategy.pdf/08bb0204-f158-46c3-6b42-eadb41716ea2?t=1587395809464

Do we have an internal guide setting out clear OTM-R procedures and practices for all types of positions?	**x**	**x**	**x**	*Yes, completely*	The current procedures and practices are in line with current national legislation in force on public tenders (for permanent positions: DPR 12 February 1991, n 171, annex 1; Legislative Decree 30/03/2001, n.165, articles 35-38 -57; Legislative Decree 27/10/2009, n.150; for temporary positions: Council Directive 1999/70 / EC, Circular 18/12/2014 n.24), and further described in the internal document "Guidelines for the recruitment and career progression of researchers and technologists according to the OTM-R strategy ", published on the CREA website in Italian and English versions. https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/Action+7_Guidelines+recruitment.pdf/4db1f954-b537-8184-6b37-4dc84a7ad671?t=1587714261096
Is everyone involved in the process sufficiently trained in the area of OTM-R?	**x**	**x**	**x**	*Yes, completely*	The staff dedicated to the recruitment processes is competent on all legislation, rules and procedures and has followed specific training courses on transparency and corruption prevention. It consists in 4 staff units in the USC1 Office "Recruitment, training and union relations " of the Central Administration, which deal with permanent recruitment. Temporary recruitment, including research grants, scholarships, etc. are managed by the branch offices in the 12 CREA research Centers.

Do we make (sufficient) use of e-recruitment tools?	**x**	**x**	**x**	*Yes, partially*	These tools are limited to the sending of the applications by certified e-mail. Further developments will be considered based on the basis of their compatibility with current legislation.
Do we have a quality control system for OTM-R in place?	**x**	**x**	**x**	*Yes, partially*	Compliance with laws, rules and procedures is ensured by the UDG2 Office "Transparency and anti-corruption" and USC1 Office "Recruitment, training and union relations" of the CREA Central Administration. However, as an indicator of the quality of the recruitment, a specific analysis on the number of disputes and access to documents after competitions would be useful.
Does our current OTM-R policy encourage external candidates to apply?	**x**	**x**	**x**	*Yes, completely*	All recruitment procedures are open to candidates outside CREA (except in case where reserved positions are required by law).

Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to attract researchers from abroad?	x	x	x	*Yes, partially*	All positions are open to European Union citizens (as clearly specified in the calls) and to those of other countries, if compatible with Article 38 of Legislative Decree 165/2001. The calls are published on the CREA website and on EURAXESS website (here, also the call announcement in English version). The number of foreign candidates participating in the competition notices will be used as an indicator of the effectiveness of the introduced measures.
Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to attract underrepresented groups?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	The observed trend in the males and female candidate's ratio show a marked gender balance. Gender balance in the competition commissions is mandatory as long as it does not affect the necessary skills.
Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to provide attractive working conditions for researchers?	x	x	x	*Yes, partially*	The number of applications outside CREA is growing, even if the entity is small. This is due to the economic difficulties of the Italian research system, which have reduced the number of competitions and opportunities to expand and renew the scientific communities.

Do we have means to monitor whether the most suitable researchers apply?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	The scientific community may estimate the coherence of the winners' list by using alternative indicators. The quality of the winners of the competitions is ensured, in principle, by the wide range of elements considered during the selection, (production and scientific visibility, training, dissemination, mobility). https://www.crea.gov.it/documents/20126/0/Action+7_Guidelines+recruitment.pdf/4db1f954-b537-8184-6b37-4dc84a7ad671?t=1587714261096
Advertising and application phase					
Do we have clear guidelines or templates (e.g., EURAXESS) for advertising positions?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	The call forms are defined by the national legislation (Legislative Decree no. 165/2001, articles 35 and 38, paragraph 1). In EURAXESS, the announcements follow the requested standard form.
Do we include in the job advertisement references/links to all the elements foreseen in the relevant section of the toolkit?	x	x	x	*Yes, substantially*	The CREA calls refer to all the main elements reported in the OTM-R toolkit (section 4.4.1), although only in Italian version.

Do we make full use of EURAXESS to ensure our research vacancies reach a wider audience?	**x**	**x**	**x**	*Yes, partially*	The calls are published on the CREA website and, with announcement in English, on EURAXESS website. https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs
Do we make use of other job advertising tools?	**x**	**x**	**x**	*Yes, completely*	The calls are published on CREA website and in the Official Gazette of the Italian Republic (Special Series 4)
Do we keep the administrative burden to a minimum for the candidate?	**x**	**x**	**x**	*Yes, completely*	Current legislation does not impose significant administrative burdens on candidates. The use of self-certification is fully allowed and subjected to subsequent checks.
Selection and evaluation phase					
Do we have clear rules governing the appointment of selection committees?	**x**	**x**	**x**	*Yes, completely*	In the competition commissions, the minimum number of members (3), the independence (at least 2/3 external to CREA), the absence of conflicts of interest and gender balance are ensured. The international dimension and the presence of non-academic representatives should be further improved.

Do we have clear rules concerning the composition of selection committees?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	The members of competition commissions are selected from a "Register of CREA experts". To increase the presence of international and private sector experts in the Register, the "Application for admission to the Register" and the "Notice for the selection of experts", in Italian and English versions, were published on the CREA website. https://www.crea.gov.it/en/board-of-experts
Are the committees sufficiently gender-balanced?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	Gender balance is ensured as stated in Legislative Decree no. 165/2001, art. 57
Do we have clear guidelines for selection committees which help to judge 'merit' in a way that leads to the best candidate being selected?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	Clear indications on the criteria for evaluation of the candidates are reported in all the calls. In addition, CREA has approved the "Guidelines for the recruitment and career progression of researchers and technologists according to the OTM-R strategy", which outline the general selection and evaluation criteria for researchers using transparent procedures, providing also useful information for building their careers.

Appointment phase					
Do we inform all applicants at the end of the selection process?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	As. described in point 7 of the "Guidelines for the recruitment and career progression of researchers and technologists according to the OTM-R strategy", at the end of the competition test the examining Commission must prepare a report on the competition results of each candidate. The report must report the scores obtained, in relation to the submitted professional titles, the written and oral tests (when performed).
Do we provide adequate feedback to interviewees?	x	x	x	*Yes, partially*	At the end of the competition procedure, CREA guarantees the candidate's right of access to the documents of the evaluation procedure, upon formal request to the administration There is no scientific feedback on the performance of individual candidates, being incompatible with current legislation.

Do we have an appropriate complaints mechanism in place?	**x**	**x**	**x**	*Yes, completely*	After accessing to the documents by formal request (Legislative Decree no. 33/2013 art. 5, modified by Legislative Decree no. 97/2016 - FOIA), each candidate, who believes that the selection process has not been regular, has the right to activate an appeal pursuant to the Code of Civil Procedure (art. 669 bis).
Overall assessment					
Do we have a system in place to assess whether OTM-R delivers on its objectives?	**x**	**x**	**x**	*Yes, partially*	Compliance with laws, rules and procedures is ensured by the UDG2 Office "Transparency and anti-corruption" and USC1 Office "Recruitment, training and union relations" of the CREA Central Administration.
					A system for assessing whether OTM-R recruitment effectively meets the set objectives could be to assess the quality of work of individual researchers. Currently, CREA carries out the annual performance assessment of the 12 research centers, thus providing an indirect assessment of the quality of its recruitment strategy.