



GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE FOR ADVISORY SERVICES



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Abbreviations

CoARA: Coalition for Advancing Research
CREA: Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (from UNICA)
ERA: European Research Area
GEP: Gender Equality Plan
HRS4R: Human Resources Strategy For Research
HSE: Health, Safety and Environment
MGR: Mobilità Giovani Ricercatori (from UNICA)
MUNI: Masaryk University
NIH: National Institute of Health
OPAQ: Office for the Promotion and Evaluation of Quality (from UJI)
PNU: Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University
REA: Research Executive Agency
UJI: Universitat Jaume I
UNICA: University of Cagliari
UP: University of Potsdam
UPECS: University of Pécs
UPN: University Paris Nanterre
UR: University of Rennes
USN: University of South-Eastern Norway
WP5: Work Package 5

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1. Introduction

Work Package 5 – Task 5.2: Building Capacities of Research Career Advisory Services

Project: EDUC-WIDE

Coordinator of T5.2: Universitat Jaume I

This Good Practice Guide is part of the EDUC-WIDE project, within the WP5 in the T5.2 Building Capacities of Research Career Advisory Services led by Universitat Jaume I. This project has been funded with support from the European Union (101136533 - EDUC-WIDE) through the European Research Executive Agency (REA) ("EU Executive Agency" or "Grantor"), under the powers delegated by the European Commission. This Good Practice Guide has been designed for Universitat Jaume I, University of South-Eastern Norway, University of Cagliari, University of Potsdam and University Paris Nanterre with the collaboration of University of Rennes, Masaryk University, Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University and University of Pécs.

Task 5.2 is embedded within the overarching framework of Work Package 5 of the EDUC-WIDE project, which is dedicated to strengthening institutional capacities and fostering inclusive, interconnected, and sustainable Research and Innovation (R&I) ecosystems in Widening countries. WP5 is strategically aligned with the objectives of the ERA and the Widening Participation agenda and contributes directly to enhancing the attractiveness and accessibility of research careers across the alliance.

This Guide presents information on the current services offered by the participating universities. It has six main chapters, in addition to this introductory chapter and the final one, on continuous improvement tools. The Guide begins with Chapter 1, Objectives and Current State, written by UJI with input from the other participating universities. Chapter 2 is led by USN. It deals with the advice offered by the university to research staff in the field of Human Resources. Chapter 3 is led by UNICA and focuses on Research Advisory services provided by the University. Chapter 4 is led by UP and focuses on Entrepreneurship and Innovation. Chapter 5 is led by UJI with the collaboration of UPN. It focuses on Equal Opportunities for researchers. Conclusions and tools for continuous improvement are presented in Chapter 6. All the universities in the EDUC WIDE consortium were invited to contribute and propose the content of each chapter of the guide, as well as to give feedback on the guide as a whole during the development of the task.

This Good Practice Guide can provide support to the universities in the consortium. They will be able to integrate the tools and resources of their partners into their universities and provide quality guidance to researchers. The Guide serves as a strategic tool for universities to improve institutional performance and promote an inclusive and progressive academic environment. This Guide can be used by universities as a practical reference and strategic framework to improve their operations and decision-making processes in key areas such as policy development, training and capacity building, internal evaluation, etc. The first draft of the Good Practices Guide will be presented at the Pécs Workshop, scheduled for 28–29 April 2025, providing an opportunity for review, validation, and the integration of stakeholder feedback across the consortium.

Widening Universities

Targeted capacity-building activities for staff at widening institutions may be integrated into Task 6.2, with a focus on familiarising personnel with the content, methodology, and

operationalisation of the Good Practices Guide. These training sessions would support the effective deployment of advisory services and contribute to institutional transformation in line with the objectives of the ERA.

Moreover, widening universities are strongly encouraged to actively disseminate the Guide's content among their research communities, ensuring that researchers at all career stages benefit from improved advisory mechanisms and support structures.

1.1 Objective and current state (UJI)

1.1.1 Objective of the guide

The primary objective of Task 5.2 is to develop and implement a Good Practices Guide in research career advisory services. This Guide aims to facilitate knowledge transfer and support the harmonisation and enhancement of career support services across the alliance, particularly in widening institutions.

The Guide will serve both as a capacity-building tool and as a strategic reference document to:

- Transfer best practices and institutional knowledge from more experienced institutions to Widening partners.
- Support institutional transformation and sustainable service development.
- Improve the quality, efficiency, and visibility of research career advisory services across the consortium.

This task aligns closely with the EU's ERA objectives, particularly regarding talent circulation, researcher careers, and institutional reform.

1.1.2 Status and scope of work

Scope and Structure of the Guide

The scope of the Guide encompasses four critical advisory service areas, coordinated by advanced partners within the EDUC alliance:

1. Human Resources – led by the University of South-Eastern (USN).
2. Research Advisory Services – led by the University of Cagliari (UNICA).
3. Entrepreneurship and Innovation – led by the University of Potsdam (UP).
4. Equal Opportunities and Inclusion – also by the Universitat Jaume I with the collaboration of the University Paris Nanterre (UPN).

The Guide will include the following core elements:

- Ethical principles and good practice frameworks.
- Standard operating procedures and efficient workflows for common services (e.g., mobility guidance, contract advice).

- Tools and resources (e.g. training modules, online toolkits) are available at each institution.
- Training pathways for both service staff and the research community.
- Quality assurance and monitoring indicators.
- Contact points to foster future inter-university collaboration and peer-learning.

Methodology and Data Collection

To ensure the Guide is evidence-based and context-sensitive, the following methodology will be adopted:

- Mapping of existing practices: Each university will collect detailed data on the structure, activities, and users of their advisory services.
- Gap analysis: Identify key strengths and areas for improvement, including service accessibility, career diversification, and equal opportunities.
- Training needs assessment: Examine the current offer of training for service personnel and researchers, with attention to upskilling needs and digital capabilities.
- Pilot implementation: Wide Universities will trial new initiatives such as Career Events, joint mentoring activities, or innovation support sessions.

This document is presented with an appendix that includes a list of information contributed by partner universities, with the aim of sharing services and processes implemented by these institutions. These may serve as a source of inspiration for the creation of new services or the improvement of existing ones. This proposal presents a structured taxonomy to classify advisory services available to research staff, aligned with the R1–R4 researcher career stages. It aims to respond to the evolving needs of researchers throughout their professional development.

Expected Outcomes and Long-Term Impact

Task 5.2 will deliver a consolidated Good Practice Guide that supports the professionalisation and institutionalisation of research career advisory services across the alliance. The implementation of this Guide is expected to:

- Strengthen institutional capacity in widening universities through knowledge sharing and co-creation.
- Enhance the quality and inclusiveness of researcher support services.
- Increase collaboration rates, project success rates, and researcher satisfaction.
- Promote career diversification through training in emerging areas such as Research Management.
- Facilitate gender equality and equal opportunity policies within research careers.

In line with EU policy on research career development, the outcomes of this task will also contribute to the broader modernisation of human resources strategies in higher education and research institutions.

Sustainability and Future Collaboration

To ensure long-term impact and sustainability, the Guide will be:

- Published in digital format and made openly accessible via the project website.
- It will be translated by each university into its own language, enabling broad uptake across diverse institutional and national contexts.

Benefits of Cooperating with Transnational Partners to Achieve the Project

Cooperation with transnational partners within the framework of Task 5.2 brings significant added value and is fully aligned with the strategic priorities of the ERA and the Widening Participation agenda. This collaborative approach supports the advancement of research careers, fosters institutional capacity-building, and strengthens the cohesion of the European Higher Education and Research landscape.

Enhanced Knowledge Transfer and Learning

Working transnationally allows for the transfer of best practices and institutional models from more established institutions to those in widening countries. This reciprocal exchange enables partners to benchmark their services, identify transferable approaches, and adapt solutions to local contexts, fostering mutual learning and continuous improvement. It also ensures that the Good Practice Guide is informed by a broad spectrum of institutional realities, increasing its relevance and applicability across Europe.

Building Institutional Capacity Across Diverse Contexts

Transnational collaboration will directly support capacity building in less experienced institutions by providing access to the expertise, resources, and training methods of their more developed counterparts. Through structured cooperation, widening partners will enhance the professionalisation of their research career advisory services, reinforcing their institutional role in supporting talent development and research excellence. This contributes to the structural reform objectives of ERA, promoting convergence in service provision across the EU.

Promoting Harmonisation and Strategic Alignment

By involving a diverse consortium of universities under the EDUC alliance, the project fosters the harmonisation of advisory practices while recognising and accommodating institutional diversity. It facilitates the development of shared tools, indicators, and quality assurance mechanisms, thus enabling coherent support to researchers across different national systems. Such alignment enhances the visibility and interoperability of research support services at the European level, making career progression more transparent and predictable.

Strengthening Gender Equality and Inclusion

Working collaboratively on equal opportunities and inclusion enables the consortium to exchange effective strategies and gender-sensitive practices, helping to mainstream these approaches across all partner institutions. It also ensures that the services designed are inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the needs of underrepresented groups in research careers, particularly in Widening countries.

Fostering Long-Term Strategic Partnerships

The task also aims to establish a Research Career Advisory Network within the EDUC alliance, which will serve as a long-term platform for peer learning, joint development, and sustainability. This network will facilitate continued collaboration beyond the project duration, strengthening institutional links and promoting collective advancement in research career support.

Increased European Added Value and Policy Impact

Finally, transnational cooperation ensures that the results of Task 5.2 have broader European relevance, contributing to key ERA goals such as talent circulation, career attractiveness, and institutional modernisation. It demonstrates the project's capacity to generate EU added value, going beyond isolated improvements to create a shared vision and collective progress across the alliance and potentially informing policy at the EU level.

2. Area of Human Resources

This chapter has been developed especially in collaboration with the University of South-Eastern Norway. It should be remembered that examples and good practices are shown and are intended to serve as a reference. Any university wishing to use and transfer these good practices to its own services should adapt them to its own needs and procedures.

2.1 Scope of action

The scope of this section includes information, documentation and suggestions to those services that support early-stage research with career related information, support and activities from the startup to the finish line of the employment period.

The aim is to present a list of services that can help to develop a good structure for the development of a research career. The main goal is to strengthen the facilitation for research mobility, career planning and development, and to facilitate for researcher training and management so that our research fellows are better able to navigate for future research life, either in academia, beyond academia in the industry or public sector.

2.2 Formalities and ethical principles

Everyone should have equal rights and access to the same information, equal treatment and transparency, also within the field of research career development and equal opportunities.

It is regulated by law (Universities and Colleges Act, from August 24) that:

- The institution has a duty to ensure that a career plan is prepared for all PhD fellows and postdoctoral fellows.
- The career plan must be followed up and updated regularly in the annual employee interviews.

- All PhD fellows and postdoctoral fellows shall have access to career guidance during their employment period.

Advice:

- Incorporate a plan for other career-enhancing work (work in addition to research projects and doctoral education that provides relevant knowledge and experience for further careers at higher education or research institutions or in other sectors).

For fixed – term recruitment for researchers:

- An employment contract must be entered into before the start of work.
- In determining the length of the fixed-term period, the institution shall consider the specific nature of the work, any time for other career-enhancing work and available funding.
- At the start, it must be clarified who is responsible for following up the employee with academic supervision.
- Make sure that the information is updated and given in the preferred language.
- Increase professionalisation of the recruitment process.
- Establish arenas for networking and collaboration. This is especially important when the University has several campuses on different locations.

2.3 Common procedures

At USN we do not have an institutional welcome desk or service center. The University consists of 8 Campuses, with 4 Faculties serving the total of 6 PhD programs. The Faculties and PhD Programs are located across Campuses.

The career information, development and training are given within each Faculty and/or PhD program. Career workshops, seminars on various transferable skills, career guidance with the supervisor and/or the head of the department are examples of activities that are arranged.

The HR department contributes with design, development and structure regarding the content and templates for career support and services at USN. The HR department collaborates closely with the Faculties, the Research, Innovation and Library department and to some extent, other external partners (career advisory companies and university alliances).

HRS4R strategy

University of South-Eastern Norway was granted the "HR Excellence in Research" award in 2020. We have recently had a revision of the first action plan and the second plan (2026-2028) has newly been approved by the USN top management. Highlights from the new plan:

Research ethics: Identifying areas of improvement to ensure that the institution has a research culture that promotes responsible and ethical research, including strengthening on-boarding and training for newly recruited researchers.

Research assessment: Develop and implement the USN Assessment Matrix. In accordance with national (NOR-CAM) and European (CoARA) reform of qualifications criteria for academic employment and promotion.

Working conditions: Strengthening psychosocial working conditions for PhD Research Fellows.

Research Careers and Talent Development: Strengthening Career Services for PhD Research Fellows and Postdocs, aiming to meet the new national legislation, develop a holistic and systematic career service that better supports the young researchers, whether they want to stay in an academic position or transfer beyond academia.

Examples on common procedures on research career development:

- Provides information on the employment, the regulations, the contract, work permits and agreements.
- Provides information on startup procedures and welcoming new employees.
- Provides information on work-life balance and welfare to create a supportive and healthy environment for PhD research fellows, promoting their well-being and success.

Example from USN: [Relocating to Norway to work at USN - Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge](#)

Example of welcoming new employees: [Welcome to USN](#) (Norwegian language, texted in English -on Youtube)

Example from USN: organization of a buddy [The USN Buddy](#) (Norwegian language, texted in English - on Youtube)

All new employees receive a buddy. The role of the buddy is to be a social support for a new employee and to provide local, social and some work-related support for the new employee. Also recognize that each PhD Candidate has unique needs and challenges. Tailor support and resources to accommodate these differences, ensuring personalized care. If the new employee is a foreigner, it is important that the buddy has in mind that the new employee is not familiar with Norwegian culture, language and social codes.

The HR department also provides schemes, templates and guidelines that shall help the researcher to navigate and strengthen the necessary researcher qualifications for their future career. Some examples:

- Selection and hiring of research staff and research support staff.
- Work environment manuals and schemes. This includes the researcher's working environment and inclusion with the research groups.
- Guidelines for the evaluation of research.

- Guidelines for research career development.
- Manuals/templates for appraisal interviews.
- Templates for career and competence planning.
- Guidelines for academic career development - assessment, qualification, tools.

A new framework is being developed at USN following the principles within CoARA (Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment).

Ongoing reforms to science systems are directed at resolving research assessment. Current assessments are perceived to overly focus on publishing in scientific journals, and neglecting other types of contributions to research, teaching, societal interaction, and innovation. Moreover, there are concerns that irresponsible use of quantitative indicators leads to undesirable behaviour and research cultures. This project investigates the drivers and barriers to reforming research assessment based on multiple entry points: how notions of research quality develop and institutionalise, the reward and incentive system in science, norms that research assessments should comply with, and the role of quantitative indicators in peer review.

- Guidelines for career promoting work for PhD fellows and Postdoctoral fellows.
- Research mobility: A mobility coordinator from the HR department is responsible for information, procedures and forms regarding research mobility. Information is given online/website and in meetings with the Faculties as well as the individual researcher. The mobility coordinator also handles practical guidance and assistance such as filling out mobility grants applications, informs about travel documents, housing, visa and insurance.

In addition to the HR department, the PhD Research Fellow is surrounded by different resources who give support and advice and assist in different academic and administrative matters. The HR department and the Research, Innovation and Library department work closely together in these matters and have tailored a website with useful information. (The website is constantly updated with new information. In particular, the career development section is under construction and will be restructured and updated with more details regarding career guidance, career training activities, webinars, start-ups and innovation possibilities and much more).

[PhD Research Fellow information website](#)

2.4 Resources, tools, training

To ensure that all researchers have professional, academical and personal development, it would be advisable to offer a series of workshops on topics such as grant writing, public speaking, and career learning activities. Under follows some advice/best practices:

- Provide access to online courses and certifications that enhance research and professional skills.

- Make sure that the individual career plan is followed up during the research employment.
- Set up regular meetings for personal and academic development for enhancing the transition to the next career step.
- Implement guidelines and structure for career advice and support.
- Give information about transferrable skills courses, career webinars, workshops and career guiding sessions.
- Give examples of relevant career promoting work.
- Contribute to teaching, laboratory and exercise teaching, supervision and examination work within the employee's areas of competence.
- Provide training in the use and operation of research infrastructure.
- Put in place Norwegian/English language training, educational competence, HSE courses and the like necessary for the performance of teaching and research work.
- Allow participation in dissemination, exhibition and collection work.
- Contribute to the preparation of research project applications or the organization of academic conferences.
- Give time to do clinical activities.
- Contribute to ongoing research projects, academic development work, consultancy and analysis work in the academic environment.
- Organize an internship or collaboration with public or private actors.
- Train and support supervisors.

Provide training for supervisors on mental health literacy and effective communication. Equip them with the skills to identify signs of distress and offer appropriate support. Also create a respectful and inclusive environment by implementing regular training sessions on diversity and inclusion for all advisors and train them in skills so they can assist in career development as well.

Create a mentorship program that pairs researchers with multiple mentors from different disciplines. Organize networking events where researchers can meet potential mentors from industry and academia.

A list of examples from USN follows:

Developing Doctoral Supervision

An annual course for strengthening supervisory support. The course aims to train both novice and experienced PhD supervisors. They are skilled in topics like:

- Roles and responsibility.
- Equality and diversity.
- Ethical issues.
- Career development and possibilities for PhD Candidates.
- Mental health and work-life balance.

Onboarding program for new PhD Research Fellows - PhD Get started

A one-day program for all new PhD Research Fellows that aims to give structured information from the start of the PhD Journey. The program is developed in collaboration with the HR and the Research, Innovation and Library department as both departments have important supporting roles and responsibilities for the target group. The program is arranged once a year and is in addition to the startup meetings that is given within each PhD program.

The PhD's will be informed about the university's relevant rules and regulations, research mobility offers, career learning and planning and work-life balance.

- Career awareness – career planning and career learning.
- PhD mobility services – how to apply for mobility fundings, where to go and whom to contact.
- Rules and regulations (holiday, sick leave, progress, working hours etc).
- Mental health and work-life balance.
- Information from the Unions, the library support and the HSE service.
- Networking and social gathering.

USN has the lead of a Research School in Complex Systems, a collaboration between three universities and industry partners.

[Industrial Research School in Complex Systems - Frontpage](#)

The research school aims to increase the value creation and quality of our PhD's towards world-class research and innovation of Complex Systems through cross-fertilization between industry and academia.

The research school shall:

- Give PhD candidates access to research and work in companies to increase problem understanding and relevance.
- Contribute to meeting the industry's need for cutting-edge expertise in complex systems.

2.5 Quality assessment indicators

Evaluation and feedback is important for the improvement of the structure, content and services that are given.

Conduct annual surveys to gather feedback from advisees about their experiences with the advisory services. Also include the aspects of the psychological working environment, the overall benefit of Doctoral study, the support and the career development and guidance given to the Candidates.

Example from USN:

The employee appraisal interview is an important part of USN's comprehensive work with organizational and personal development. This also includes PhD research fellows and Postdoctoral fellows.

The HR department has designed a template for the appraisal process and interviews specifically for the PhD's and Post doctoral fellows. This includes a separate conversation regarding career planning and future career goals. The aim is to create a plan for the researchers' personal and academic development already from the start, to ensure that they will have a good transition for the next career step.

[Career conversation PhD.docx](#)

[Career and Competence Development Plan PhD.docx](#)

The Research, Innovation and Library department is responsible for the annual PhD Candidate Survey. This survey is a part of the total feedback and an important quality assessment indicator for the university. All career-related questions are of greatest importance. Some of the questions could be:

- Have you had any career conversations with your leader or supervisor?
- Do you have a clear understanding of your future career possibilities after your PhD?
- Have you participated in a career workshop or any career network?
- Do you have the transferable skills and competences that you need for your future working life?
- Are you satisfied with the career support (skills courses, conversations, information and training and support) that comes from USN?
- What can USN do to better support your career development?

3. Area of Research Advisory

This chapter has been developed especially in collaboration with the University of Cagliari. It should be remembered that examples and good practices are shown and are intended to serve as a reference. Any university wishing to use and transfer these good practices to its own services should adapt them to its own needs and procedures.

3.1 Scope of action

This section presents a list of the Research Advisory services provided to researchers at the University of Cagliari (UNICA).

From an administrative perspective the services described are embedded in the "Research and Territory division", one of the 10 operational divisions of UNICA.

The Research and Territory Division provides administrative support to the research projects carried out by the departments of UNICA and promotes dialogue, interaction, and collaboration with the stakeholders in the regional context (public administrations, enterprises, research centres, non-profit organisations) to favour the transfer of results and the placement of its graduates.

In particular, it promotes:

- support for research, both by overseeing and coordinating the university's participation in national and international programmes and projects, also in collaboration with institutional, economic and social entities; it coordinates participation in international scientific and technological collaborations.
- participation in national and international calls for research funding, administrative support, management of research grants, in liaison with the financial and personnel divisions.
- career guidance activities and post-graduate traineeships aimed at fostering employment opportunities for UNICA graduates.
- university's relations aimed at innovation and local development, in order to enhance the university's service function with respect to the regional territory.
- technological transfer of the knowledge developed through scientific research, encouraging the establishment of spin-offs, start-ups and patenting activities.
- partnership relations aimed at the development of technology clusters, competence centres, joint projects with enterprises.

The research advisory services offered by UNICA to its researchers are:

- Job placement service.
- Research funding services.
- Mobility services.
- HRS4R strategy.
- The Industrial Liaison Office.
- The University's Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CREA).

3.1.1 UNICA Job Placement service

The [Job placement service](#) offers various services to increase the employability of final-year students and graduates and encourages interaction between demand and labour offer.

Undergraduates and graduates can benefit from the following services:

- support in choosing a career path;
- advice on the drafting and revision of CV and cover letter;
- support for the preparation of job interviews;
- job vacancy matching service: through the national portal Almalaurea, final-year students and graduates can be contacted directly by companies and send their applications in response to advertisements;
- information on training activities and job opportunities;

- meeting days with companies: initiatives dedicated to the selection of graduates or the illustration of new professional opportunities;
- extracurricular internships: within 12 months of obtaining the degree graduates can activate training and orientation in agreement with the university;
- the higher education and research apprenticeship: it is an employment contract that is activated in agreement with the university, aimed at students enrolled at the university or postgraduate.
- University career day: the main opportunity for University of Cagliari's graduates to meet Companies.

Recently, specific job placement initiatives - in particular, recruiting events - are targeting doctoral and post-doctoral students. UniCa Job Placement promotes [recruiting events](#) for PhD and PhD students organised by the Emblema Foundation as part of the forDoc programme. UNICA has recently approved the constitution of the "UniCa Alumni" association, with the aim of gathering UNICA graduates into a community that promotes the university's values and fosters networking opportunities.

3.1.2 UNICA's Funding and mobility opportunities

a) Research Funding opportunities

Three offices provide support to researchers at different stages of projects' life according to the granting authority. The support is also provided to the departments which are in charge of all the administrative procedures necessary for the project implementation.

Progetta Horizon

The office is dedicated to simplifying the process of accessing funding opportunities within the European framework programs, providing specialized and personalized assistance. The services include:

- the accurate mapping of competences and research areas within UNICA, followed by targeted promotion of funding calls.
- on-demand assistance for researchers who wish to identify and evaluate funding opportunities on specific topics.
- support in building strong consortia, ensuring the development of solid and collaborative project proposals.
- guidance in drafting the scientific section (Part B) of project proposals.

EU and USA grant office

The EU and USA grant office provides technical and administrative assistance to researchers and administrative offices of the University for the submission, management, and reporting of European projects funded by the European Commission's framework

programs and by the US National Institute of Health (NIH). In particular, for EU projects the office supports its researchers in the following 3 main phases:

- Pre-award assistance: in analysing different funding opportunities and/or specific calls, building international consortia, and preparing the financial plan. The office also supports researchers and their partners during the contract signing phase for the preparation of the preliminary project documents and in all the interactions with the EU and the partners of the consortium.
- Post-award and in progress assistance: during project's life the office offers its support in administrative, financial, and accounting management and assists the researchers for accurate project reporting and preparation of financial reports (Form C). Furthermore, in case of economic and financial verifications by the European Commission (second-level audit) the office supports in reviewing and preparing the required documentation.

The office operates in close collaboration with the Working Group for the promotion and participation in European research programs, which brings together expertise from various University offices, to grant the necessary assistance to the Rector's Delegate for international projects, Prof. Luigi Raffo. Furthermore, with reference to the Horizon Europe programme, the office cooperates with APRE, the National Agency for the Promotion of European Research, which provides information, support, assistance, and training activities to enhance the participation of UNICA to the calls of the European framework programs.

International cooperation office

The office provides support to researchers on specific calls such as Interreg programs, LIFE, National and local calls in the field of international cooperation, in all main phases:

- Pre-award assistance: it supports researchers in filling out the application forms and finding the right program among the different opportunities. It holds the connections within the main contact points and coordinates the necessary activities of approval from the legal representative of the University.
- Post-award and in progress assistance: it supports researchers and other offices in the University to manage the projects, assuring that they have the necessary support to correctly use the funding in compliance with the different requirements of the specific calls. Specific support is given during the requests for amendment and official communication with the granting authorities especially at the final stages of the project.

Moreover, UNICA provides researchers with additional services:

- Grant Search. It is available only for UNICA researchers; after they log in, they are directed to a page containing the summaries of competitive calls for proposals aimed at funding basic and applied research, technology transfer and development cooperation, promoted by public and private bodies at local, national and international levels.
- Networking platform CROWDHELIX. In order to enhance the research strategies of the University of Cagliari and in compliance with the objectives of the integrated

strategic planning, the University has decided to join the Crowdhelix collaboration intelligence platform starting from January 2022. This decision aims to strengthen the participation of our researchers to international competitive funding opportunities, particularly within the Horizon Europe program. The use of Crowdhelix allows all UniCa researchers to initiate and/or strengthen their collaborations, thereby expanding their networking and actively engaging with several research and innovation communities worldwide.

b) Mobility opportunities.

UNICA supports incoming and outgoing mobility, through different opportunities and a dedicated service.

[MGR \(Mobilità Giovani Ricercatori\).](#)

It is an outgoing mobility programme for UNICA's young researchers financed by the Autonomous Region of Sardinia under the Regional Law no. 7/2007 'Promotion of Scientific Research and Technological Innovation in Sardinia'. It is aimed at supporting the development of research activities and internationalisation through the establishment of collaboration and scientific exchange relations with other universities at international level. These exchanges will enhance UNICA participation in European and other International funding programmes.

The MGR's funds are distributed through specific calls, and UNICA researchers are supported by the personnel of the Research and Territory Division, who oversee the administrative procedures.

[Visiting Professor/Scientist programme](#)

This programme encourages the incoming mobility of lecturers and scientists working at European and non-European universities, institutions and research centres, including emeritus professors. Through these initiatives UNICA expanded the teaching offer and boost scientific research. The selection process takes place each year through the publication of a call for long or short-terms visits. The office in charge of this activity is embedded in the Education and orientation division of UNICA.

[Euraxess Service Centre and Mobility](#)

The office is the only Euraxess service centre in Sardinia. The office gives information about administrative duties and procedures (visa, permit of stay, health insurance, bank account, taxation, social security etc.), before international researchers arrival and during the whole period they spend in Sardinia. The office also provides them with practical information relating to accommodation, everyday life, school for children, language courses, and translation services.

3.1.3 Implement career development strategies: HRS4R strategy

UNICA was granted the HR Excellence in Research label in 2024. UNICA Action Plan (AP) for [HRS4R](#) strategy includes 29 actions. AP actions related to research career advisory are:

1. Plan training courses for all researchers (R1-R4) on research integrity, intellectual property rights, ethics, professional attitude, and data management to increase awareness over professional responsibility.

2. Provide administrative support to researchers in drafting the data management plans requested by European projects.
3. Training activities organized by multidisciplinary teams for the faculty staff with managerial positions to develop management, organizational and mentoring skills. Participation in these activities should be mandatory for the academic members in relevant management positions (e.g., department Heads, PhD coordinators, and supervisors to ensure good supervision quality).
4. A pilot project involving three Departments, to foster mentorship programmes by formally assigning a senior researcher/expert to R1, R2 and/or R3 researchers. The mentors will advise them on career perspectives through the design of a personalized career development plan (PCDP), including training needs, research progress monitoring, mobility phases.
5. Provide research starting grants for R3 researchers.
6. Supporting Open Access publishing of early stage researchers.

3.1.4 Build capacities for continuous professional development

As part of the Third Mission activities, the University of Cagliari aims to implement relations with businesses. UNICA offers companies and agencies services aimed at encouraging the matching of job offer and demand, as well as a series of opportunities for companies to contribute to the University's research activities and to the training of professionals in the field of research.

[The Industrial Liaison Office](#)

The office acts as an intermediary between the University's supply of technological competences and the demand for innovation expressed by the actors operating in its territory: companies, public administrations, third sector realities, other educational and research actors.

The activities performed by the office are diverse:

- Promoting actions aimed at the creation of spin-off companies.
- Follow all procedures related to patenting and management of the patent database.
- Carrying out networking activities and developing partnerships with public and private organisations.
- Offer design support within the framework of regional, national and EU initiatives concerning innovation and technology transfer.
- Finding information on research activities, technology transfer, university-business collaboration opportunities.
- Seeking sources of funding and other types of facilities.

[The University's Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship \(CREA\)](#)

The Centre encourages the integration and contamination between the different scientific-disciplinary sectors of the University and pushes business culture in the territory. CREA acts as a link between backers, national and international stakeholders as well as innovative ideas and projects developed within the University of Cagliari.

The aim and mission are to create links between students, researchers and entrepreneurs operating locally and worldwide. CREA promotes and manages the activities of the

Contamination Lab, Contamination Up and Unica&Imprese, including research and dissemination.

The main services provided are:

- Entrepreneurship education: organization of highly valuable training opportunities that encourage the beginning of a new entrepreneurial path.
- Open innovation: Through cross-fertilization programs and exchange meetings, CREA UNICA promotes the meeting of researchers from very different disciplinary areas.
- Technology Transfer: University knowledge and the most current research topics will be essential in the process of creating a business. The experience gained in a defined research area will be an important point of reference for companies and CREA supports researchers in Technology Transfer and Public Engagement activities.

One of the activities is the UNICA Contamination bootcamp, an open innovation programme which involves Businesses (SME), Researchers and Startups. CREA organized a 4 days training programme based on mutual learning process: companies learn to generate innovation in a collaborative and shared way assisted by first-rate venture capital experts, brilliant researchers and startups. Participants acquire skills such as team building and learning by doing.

Basic and applied research legal framework:

- Patents Regulation (Rector's Decree n.1465/2025 September 18th, 2024).
- Regulations of the University of Cagliari for the establishment of spin-offs (Rector's Decree no 11 of October 6th, 2016).

3.2 Ethical principles

The University of Cagliari has pursued over time all the principles of the ethical and professional aspects of the "European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct" (C&C).

UNICA fully recognizes research freedom (RF) and supports it also at the international level. UNICA aims at creating the conditions whereby researchers at all career stages, students, staff, and all workers associated with the University are treated equitably regardless of "gender, ethnic or social origin, physical appearance, age, genetic features, religious, personal or political beliefs, citizenship, economic conditions, disability, sexual orientation, personal health conditions, including pregnancy, role/position outside the University", in compliance with the non-discrimination principle.

Furthermore, UNICA addresses the aspects related to professional responsibility and professional attitude by internal rules, such as the Code of Ethics and Conduct, industrial property, the creation of spin-offs, and the Patents regulation.

The new Code of Ethics and Conduct has been recently issued (Rector's Decree no. 364/2025 of 09/04/2025). It is conceived as a guide for all members of the academic community; it establishes rules of conduct based on the recognition and respect of individual rights and the acceptance of duties and responsibilities towards the Institution. UNICA appointed the [Ethics Commission](#), it is composed of three members and it carries

out advisory and control activities regarding the implementation and compliance of the code of ethics and conduct of the University of Cagliari.

Ethical issues also involve the research activities, thus UNICA participates in the “[Sardinia Ethics Committee](#)”. It is an independent entity which performs advisory functions in connection with ethical issues related to scientific activities. It is responsible for clinical trials of drugs, the use of medicines and medical devices, the use of surgical and clinical procedures or the study of food on humans. All the scientific activities related to the above-mentioned topics have to be submitted to the evaluation of the “Sardinia Ethics Committee”.

Finally, at UNICA it was established [the Animal welfare committee](#). In Italy, all the research projects involving vertebrate animals and cephalopods must be authorised by the Ministry of Health. The application for authorisation must be submitted by the Animal Welfare Committee of the Institution. This committee also advises the staff working with animals for research purposes, on animal welfare issues related to the acquisition, housing, care and use.

3.3 Common procedures-examples and tips

The offices described in the first paragraph perform their activities in different ways, according to the input received by the coordinators and the researchers. Nevertheless, it is possible to highlight two procedures that are common to them:

- Preparation and publication of calls, management of the selection processes, customised support during the different steps of the administrative procedures and during the implementation of the activities (e.g. mobilities, internships).
- Scouting of funding opportunities, promotion of the open calls through different channels (website, mailing lists) and customised support to researchers.

Tips:

- It is important to promote the activities performed by the offices to the research community, through different channels (newsletters, mails, social media, public events). This is because researchers, especially in the early stages of their careers, might not be aware of the opportunities they have to be advised on specific aspects of their work.

3.4 Resources, tools and training

The offices listed in section one offer dedicated support to researchers. The main **tools** are:

- The website: with specific sections devoted to the publication of new calls.
- UNICA mailing list: accessible to UNICA's staff members.
- Mail exchange: offices receive request of support by researchers.
- Public events: e.g. University career day, the main opportunity for University of Cagliari's graduates to meet Companies.

Training offered to staff:

The EU and USA grant office, with reference to the Horizon Europe programme, cooperates with the Agency for the Promotion of European Research ([APRE](#)), which provides information, support, assistance, and training activities to enhance the participation of UNICA to the calls of the European framework programs.

Intensive/interdisciplinary courses are run for PhD students, within the PhD programmes

The intensive/interdisciplinary courses are aimed at providing PhD students with practical skills and general information related to different domains, such as the preparation of research project proposals, open science, intellectual property and patents, public speaking and gender equality. The courses are taught by vice-rectors and the administrative staff of the Research and Territory Division and the Division for Quality, Library Services and Museum Activities.

A. Funding your research through the calls of the European Community Framework Programmes

Teachers: UNICA Delegate for International Research Projects; Administrative staff Technical Assistance to EU, HE and US Research Programs - Research and Territory Division.

Short Description:

The 20-hour course aims to introduce PhD students (of any year) to the framework programs of the European Commission and to the Horizon Europe program, its structure, its work programs, its calls. Information will be provided on how to frame one's research activity in this context, the tools for submitting a proposal, the evaluation criteria, starting from practical examples. The way to write a successful proposal will be described in detail by delving into the three main parts: Excellence, Impact, Implementation. Each lesson will have a theoretical part and a practical part of exercise in which PhD students will be asked to work independently on project proposals. Researchers from the University of Cagliari who have obtained funding in this field will then be invited to present good practices and their suggestions. The course is available only face-to-face, a final assessment test is expected.

B. Scientific Research: Sources, Tools and Evaluation

Teachers: UNICA Vice Rector for research and the administrative staff of the Division for Quality, Library Services and Museum Activities

Short Description:

The course aims to introduce the topics of scientific communication, copyright, Open Access/Open Science, and research evaluation. The aim is to acquire the skills to carry out bibliographic searches, to know how to use information in a responsible way, to produce new knowledge by disseminating results in an open form, to understand the functioning of the research evaluation system. The main tools for conducting effective bibliographic searches on resources in the field will be presented (this module will be differentiated according to the relevant subject area) and elements for handling data in an open manner will be provided. At the end of the course, the learner will have a better understanding of

electronic research infrastructures, of the tools and services available for publishing results, including open access, and of how to assess the scientific productivity of researchers.

C. Innovation and Valorisation. From intellectual property to technology transfer

Teachers: Administrative Staff of the “UNICA Liaison Office”, Research and Territory Division.

Short description:

The 6-hour course is divided into three modules: the first two are mainly theoretical and the third is practical, especially for research on patent databases. The primary objective of this course is to make young researchers aware of what intellectual property (IP) is, how it is generated, and how it is protected. It underscores the significance of an efficient intellectual property rights (IPR) system in fostering creativity and innovation across the entire economy. Recognizing that intellectual property is integral to the daily lives of researchers, the course aims to equip today's PhD students – who will become tomorrow's Principal Investigators, politicians, and general managers – with a basic awareness and understanding of IP.

It is deemed essential for these future leaders to know the fundamental aspects of intellectual property to leverage them effectively in their chosen professional paths. Furthermore, the course highlights the importance of being aware of the opportunities to utilize the vast technical and commercial information available in intellectual property documentation. It also emphasizes the need for universities to transform their research activities into intellectual property rights, manage their IP portfolios, and engage in technology transfer with industrial partners to create value and benefit society as a whole. Moreover, PhD students will learn about the consequences of inadequate protection of intangible assets, including the risks of reverse engineering, plagiarism, and industrial espionage.

In particular, the course covers:

- the characteristics of inventions and patents;
- the legal profiles of intellectual property rights (patents, trademarks, know-how, designs, copyright), the protection requirements, the duration, the national and international filing procedures (the Italian patent, the PCT international patent, the European patent, the international extensions, nationalizations and validations) and the Italian and international search report, the profile of the inventor and the ownership of the invention.

Practical cases are discussed, and the use of both public and paid patent databases will be shown. The course gives the opportunity to understand concepts such as "proof of concept", "technology transfer" and "open innovation" and the different best practices for carrying out technology transfer operations will be described. In this regard, we will talk about spin-offs and start-ups of research, collaborative university/business research.

D. Continuous Professional Development Course entitled "The Glass Ceiling ain't broken"

Teacher: Rector's Delegate of UNICA for Gender Equality.

Short description:

The course is focused on women and leadership in the non-compulsory education sector, developed as an output of the European Erasmus+ Project SMILE (Social Meaning Impact through Life-Long Learning Universities in Europe) (2022): it involved young researchers at different stages of their career, from PhD students to full professors, along 4 sessions, each lasting 3 hours.

E. Gender Equality in the Academic Context and Research: Policy Tools and Strategies

Teacher: Rector's Delegate of UNICA for Gender Equality.

Short Description:

The 20-hour course aims to promote among doctoral students of any year and any scientific area a critical analysis of the phenomena of horizontal and vertical segregation that continue to define profound asymmetries in the distribution of disciplinary and career paths between men and women in the academic and research context of excellence. The focus of the training activity starts from this context analysis to highlight the social, cultural and organizational practices and mechanisms that produce these asymmetries and to explore the policy tools and strategies activated on a local, national and international scale, in a comparative perspective, to counter all forms of discrimination based on gender and gender identity and to promote equality, inclusion and enhancement of diversity, from an intersectional perspective (e.g. Gender Equality Plan, Diversity Plan, Gender Budget).

F. Public speaking in research

Teacher: Vice rector in charge of public relations and Patrizia Mottola.

Short Description:

The 10-hour course aims at the preparation and presentation of a research topic according to the principles of effective communication.

The course includes 4 introductory hours on the principles of effective communication, management of speech design, preparation of supporting materials, preparation and presentation of a research topic according to principles of effective communication. These theoretical indications will be interspersed with exercises in which doctoral students will have the opportunity to practice presenting content related to their current research.

3.5 Quality assessment indicators

UNICA participates in a national project called "Good practice" promoted by POLIMI (Politecnico di Milano) graduate school of management. It consists in the administration of a customer satisfaction survey, the target audience is divided into three groups: students; technical-administrative staff and librarians; professors, researchers, PhD students and research fellows.

The data collected are divided into different areas, but it does not provide the specific data of the services analysed in this chapter, nor the recommendations for improvement received.

4. Area of Entrepreneurship and Innovation

This chapter has been developed especially in collaboration with the University of Potsdam. It should be remembered that examples and good practices are shown and are intended to serve as a reference. Any university wishing to use and transfer these good practices to its own services should adapt them to its own needs and procedures.

4.1 Scope of action

This section describes the operating principles and good practices of the Startup Service at the University of Potsdam. The Startup Service is part of the Potsdam Transfer unit, the University of Potsdam's central institution for startups, innovation, and the transfer of knowledge and technology. As such it is one of seven central units, which are providing services to students, researchers and the wider academic and non-academic staff.

The main mission of the Startup Service at the University of Potsdam is to empower researchers and students to develop the insights and skills gained from their studies and research into successful market applications. Increasingly, this support is framed through an impact lens: the aim is not only to scale viable companies, but above all to scale the positive social and ecological impact generated by research. To achieve this, the service focuses on inspiring their "customers" to start new entrepreneurial ventures and providing tailored solutions to meet the specific needs of their target groups to do so. The Startup Service works with individuals at and beyond the University of Potsdam, also extending their services to alumni, as well as researchers in the wider region of Brandenburg and internationally.

4.2 Formalities and ethical principles

The general tasks of Potsdam Transfer and the Startup Service are described in the [Statutes](#) of the central unit (January 2025). More concretely, the objectives in relation to entrepreneurship and innovation and the measures to reach them are defined in the [Transfer Strategy of the University of Potsdam](#) (2017).

Third-party funding plays a key role in enabling the Startup Service to realise its strategic goals, with support drawn from regional, national, and international programmes. Through this acquired funding, political and legislative goals from the different political levels become tangible actions, such as German economic policies aimed at integrating innovative scientific ideas into society.

Ethical principles that guide the work of the Startup Service team are rooted in an unwritten code of conduct of the scientific community that ensures the integrity of research and the intellectual property of researchers:

- **Be free from discrimination** (do not discriminate personally and do not tolerate any form of discrimination);
- **Be open and appreciative** (focus on the individual; the person is central in the advisory process and more important than the idea);

- **Act confidentially and responsibly** (essential when dealing with intellectual property and early business ideas);
- **No support is given for ideas relating to dual-use items**, if **sanctions** are in place or **security concerns** apply.

Equally important are the soft skills and mindset of the Startup Service team members. They must be able to listen empathetically, set aside personal judgment, and create a space for open dialogue. The ability to ask the right questions, think creatively, and demonstrate an entrepreneurial mindset themselves are essential qualities. These competencies mirror those of effective mentors or coaches and are critical in encouraging innovation and guiding founders.

4.3 Common procedures

The Startup Service team works with agile methods, responding to the individual needs of their “customers”, and adapting formats and the respective concepts in response to learnings from previous offers. There is no one-size-fits all, but a range of methods is used to support researchers on their own innovation path, also depending on the goal and focus of a specific workshop.

Nevertheless, these are common procedures at the Startup Service:

- **Raising awareness of entrepreneurial opportunities:**
Conducting targeted outreach activities to sensitise researchers to the topics of entrepreneurship and business ventures, and to familiarise them with the available support structures.
- **Promoting entrepreneurial thinking in academia:**
Integrating entrepreneurship into academic discourse through events, workshops, and internal communication formats designed for researchers.
- **Embedding impact-oriented entrepreneurship:**
Helping researchers integrate social and environmental goals into their venture ideas for increased impact and sustainability.
- **Providing individual, step-by-step advisory services:**
Offering personalised advisory support to guide researchers through the process of entrepreneurial thinking. The advisory approach places particular emphasis on developing an entrepreneurial mindset - encouraging researchers to adopt new perspectives, especially introducing user-centric business model and lean startup perspectives, identifying core problems and understanding their target group as a foundation for shaping their business idea.
- **Encouraging academic involvement in startup support:**
Encourage (senior) academic staff to provide professional support and mentoring for research-based startup initiatives.
- **Offering settlement opportunities for spin-offs:**
Providing researchers with access to basic office solutions on or near university premises to support the founding and establishment of startups.

- **Offering innovation and co-working spaces:**
Offering dedicated innovation spaces tailored to the needs of research-driven startups and spin-offs, supporting both collaboration and early business development.
- **Developing services for the post-startup phase:**
Expanding the range of advisory and support services to include the post-founding phase, focusing on sustainable business development, scaling, and market access for research-based enterprises.
- **Strategic cooperation within the university:**
Cooperating with diverse units and members of the university to build a community around entrepreneurial thinking and reaching target groups.
- **Building and engaging in networks:**
Actively participating in and expanding regional, national, and international networks to support research-based entrepreneurship. These networks facilitate mutual exchange, access to expert knowledge and specific advisory services.
- **Promoting international visibility and collaboration:**
Building international partnerships to enhance the visibility of Germany's entrepreneurial academic landscape. These collaborations support the strategic aim of attracting global talent and cooperating for research-driven innovation.
- **Securing external funding to strengthen startup support:**
Continuously identifying and applying for third-party funding opportunities at the regional, national, and international levels to ensure the sustainable delivery and expansion of startup support services.

4.4 Resources, tools, training

Providing researchers with the resources and knowledge they need in order to turn their research into a startup idea is at the core of the activity of the Startup Service. Central in the advisory services is to help researcher customers take up a new perspective to help them think beyond academic research and develop an entrepreneurial mindset. Oftentimes, researchers cannot name the underlying problem and who is affected by it and it is exactly these two things that are most relevant in developing research results into a business idea.

To foster the entrepreneurial mindset and equip researchers with the relevant knowledge for founding, the Startup Service has a variety of support schemes in place. The threshold is kept deliberately low and researchers don't need a business idea yet to participate in most activities - interest and curiosity often suffice and are the initial momentum that can be built on.

4.4.1 Training Pathways and Key Offers

Individual Consulting Process:

A step-by-step personal consultation process that is adapted to each individual researcher. The consulting staff bases the process on the needs, interests and goals of the researcher and adapts to their speed. Support reaches from developing ideas, to

applying for funding or setting up the business. Researchers might be referred to external experts (see below) or to a relevant workshop offer that the service organises.

Access to External Expertise:

Network is key. The Startup Service works with experts in the city and region that can advise researchers on specific topics in their founding process, e.g. legal matters or business entity types. An external partner for this is e.g. Business Support Potsdam, who provide individual advisory for the customers of the Startup Service. While the Startup Service staff are generalists, the Business Support has a pool of experts that offer specialised consultation sessions.

Coachings & Workshops:

Workshops are at the heart of the Startup Service. They employ methods such as Design Thinking and further creativity techniques, like Business Model Canvas, Lean Canvas or LEGO® Serious Play®, to help researchers make the shift to an entrepreneurial mindset. Topics and formats are regularly reviewed and further developed to ensure they remain relevant and impactful.

- **Startup Basics** is a workshop series providing key knowledge and valuable insights into different aspects around founding a business.
- **Startrampe** (launching pad) is a three-day intensive workshop that helps researchers develop and validate their startup ideas through hands-on methods, expert input, and peer exchange.
- **Impact Startrampe** is a “purpose-driven” edition of Startrampe that guides researchers in turning scientific results into ventures or initiatives aimed at measurable social/ecological benefit.
- **From PhD to Impact Innovator** is a two-day workshop for PhD students and postdocs guiding participants in transforming their doctoral research into entrepreneurial projects by exploring their innovation potential, applying design thinking, pitching ideas, and connecting with experienced sciencepreneurs.
- **Potsdam Entrepreneurship Experience Lab (PEELx)** is a four-day, hands-on business modelling workshop where interdisciplinary teams of students, researchers, alumni, and university staff develop and validate impactful, research-based startup ideas in a real-world context. The teams explore how their work can drive social or ecological change, regardless of whether the outcome is a new business, an NGO, or a strategic partnership.

EXIST Funding Programme:

EXIST is a German national funding scheme that provides several ways to support up-and-coming founders with a kickstart fund. The Startup Service gives expert advice on accessing the funds and submitting competitive applications for the EXIST Business Startup Grant and the EXIST Transfer of Research funding.

Matching Platform:

Job postings from researcher-led startups are shared to highlight growth opportunities and attract talent. By pooling these listings, the Startup Service helps connect startups with the broader student and research community at the University of Potsdam.

International Startup Service:

The Startup Service is very internationally focussed. Two-thirds of companies founded at the University of Potsdam are by international researchers. The Startup Service offers an individual consultation process as well as many of its workshops in English. Some of their workshop offers are open to researchers from their international ecosystem, such as from EDUC universities. Additionally, via the Soft Landing Capital Region scheme, international researchers are attracted to base their startup in the region and profit from the described services.

Train-the Trainer:

In addition to supporting their core target groups, the Startup Service team offers a dedicated Train-the-Trainer programme for colleagues who want to act as facilitators, startup advisors, or project managers. This two-day, hands-on workshop equips participants with effectuation-based methods and practical tools to effectively support aspiring entrepreneurs and foster an entrepreneurial mindset within academia.

Training for own staff:

A training budget is planned into project funding to support staff development. Training includes both individually initiated learning and regular team workshops planned to stay updated on entrepreneurship and business trends. The team stays informed through conferences, workshops, expert collaborations, new team member insights, and active networking via events and online platforms.

4.4.2 Tools

To effectively support researchers on their entrepreneurial journey, the Startup Service uses a variety of practical tools that facilitate ideation, planning, collaboration, and communication with customers. Altogether, these tools help turn abstract research ideas into structured, actionable plans, making the path from academic insight to startup more tangible and achievable.

Interactive digital platforms like **Miro** enable creative teamwork during workshops and consultations, allowing participants to collectively develop and iterate ideas in real time. Central to this process are method-based templates such as the **Business Model Canvas**, which helps map out key aspects of a business including value propositions, customer segments, and revenue streams, and the **Lean Canvas**, which is tailored for early-stage ventures with a focus on problem-solving and identifying target customers. The **Research Canvas**, developed specifically for researchers, guides them in translating academic insights into business opportunities by clearly defining the underlying problem, affected stakeholders, and potential applications. Creativity exercises like the **Speed Boat** method encourage participants to reflect on barriers and drivers in their innovation journey.

Communication and ongoing networking are supported through platforms like **Slack**, which facilitates team collaboration (e.g. onboarding of new colleagues) and participant engagement beyond workshops, as well as **LinkedIn** groups that connect partners and alumni within the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Additionally, structured templates and manuals such as those from the **Business Plan Competition Berlin-Brandenburg (BPW)** offer detailed guidance on developing comprehensive business plans.

4.5 Quality assessment indicators

In line with its commitment to excellence in research and teaching, the University of Potsdam places great importance on regularly evaluating its transfer structures both internally and externally. The Startup Service actively seeks expert advice to further develop its existing services in a needs-based and purposeful manner. These efforts include participation in initiatives such as the “Gründungsradar” (“Startup Radar”) conducted by the Stifterverband, a comprehensive national benchmarking tool that evaluates startup support at German universities across multiple key dimensions.

The University of Potsdam achieved a 5th place among Germany’s large universities (those with over 15.000 students) in the 2025 Gründungsradar ranking, placing it among the leading institutions in startup support. The Gründungsradar assesses universities across seven dimensions: including institutional embedding of entrepreneurship, awareness-raising, qualification, support services, startup activity, monitoring and evaluation, and network engagement, using a total of 46 indicators.

The [seven dimensions of quality assessment indicators](#) described below as defined by the Gründungsradar:

1. Institutional anchoring of entrepreneurship

Institutional anchoring of entrepreneurship is crucial for establishing long-term, effective startup support at universities. Clear strategies, secured resources, and transparent structures with incentives foster collaboration among all stakeholders.

2. Awareness-raising and skills development

Raising awareness of entrepreneurship among students and academic staff is essential for effective startup support. Sufficient staffing and targeted communication help ensure that both curricular and extracurricular activities reach their audience. Equally important is equipping potential founders with the skills needed for entrepreneurial careers. Since awareness-raising and qualification often go hand in hand, they are evaluated together.

3. Startup support

Effective startup support is best achieved in collaboration with external partners, such as through advisory services and mentoring programmes. It also relies on sufficient staffing within the university and tailored support offerings aimed at specific target groups.

4. Startup activities

The previously described elements form the foundation for universities’ startup activities, which aim to increase both the number and sustainability of new ventures. These activities can be measured qualitatively and quantitatively.

5. Monitoring and evaluation in startup support

Measuring the impact of startup support is vital to assess outcomes and adjust measures as needed. Continuous monitoring, tracking, and evaluation enable internal review and external transparency. Universities should plan for these from the start, using standardised processes to ease data collection.

6. Networking in startup support

Networks are key to effective startup support, enabling universities to enhance their offerings through collaboration with external partners. Sharing best practices inspires

innovation, while partnerships with business, politics, and civil society help address challenges and motivate aspiring founders.

7. Internationalisation in startup support

The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action has set the goal of positioning Germany as a global leader in science-based startups. University startup services actively strive to contribute to this objective, leveraging the strong potential of many German universities.

Regularly assessing performance against these indicators allows the Startup Service at the University of Potsdam to identify strengths and areas for improvement, ensuring that its support remains aligned with the needs of its community. This commitment to quality and transparency helps the university maintain its leading position in startup support and contributes to fostering an innovation-driven ecosystem of researchers and founders.

5. Area of Equal Opportunities (UJI with UPN as collaborator)

This chapter has been developed by Universitat Jaume I, as coordinator of task 5.2, **to serve as an example of potential content** based on the current situation at this university. Each university should adapt it to the aspects that have been more developed in their university and they think that could be useful and transferable to other universities. Additionally, UPN has contributed with relevant content.

5.1 Scope of action

The scope of this section includes those services that support equal opportunities for career development in the field of research. In this sense, we can include areas such as:

- Recruitment of staff.
- Accessibility for people with disabilities.
- Gender equality.
- Integration of foreign nationals.

The aim is to present a list of services that can help to develop a culture of equal opportunities in the development of a research career. This would include examples of procedures that are helping in the establishment of that culture and that would be good practices to export to other universities.

Below are some examples of advisory services that could be considered in this section:

The recruitment service for research and research support staff ([example at Uji](#)).

Some of the services provided by this service include:

- Vacancies and calls for applications.
- Selection panels and scales.
- Incentive plans.
- Evaluation of research activities.
- [Welcome portal](#) for research staff.

The Accessibility Unit ([example at UJI](#))

This Unit was created with the aim of ensuring the accessibility of the University's websites and applications for mobile devices. The work areas of this unit are:

- The coordination and issuance of guidelines on accessibility.
- Attention to the requirements of users on accessibility issues.
- Coordination of periodic accessibility reviews.
- Issuance of annual accessibility reports.
- Coordination of awareness and training actions.

The Equality Unit ([example at UJI](#))

The aims of this unit are:

- To remove the obstacles to effective equality between women and men.
- To promote full equality between women and men.
- To include the study and application of the principle of equality in courses and programmes of initial and continuing teacher training.
- To promote teaching and research on the meaning and scope of equality between women and men, the inclusion of teaching on equality between women and men in appropriate curricula, the creation of specific postgraduate courses and the conduct of specialised studies and research on the subject.

5.2 Ethical principles

The Vice-Rector's Office in charge of Research at the university, and in the case of UJI through the welcome desk of the recruiting service, provides an advisory service on [research ethics](#). In relation to the area covered in this section, this service provides researchers with training and advice resources on the [gender perspective in research](#) and the use of inclusive language when dealing with people with disabilities.

The main instrument for supporting researchers in matters relating to ethical principles is the [Code of Good Practice in Research and Doctoral Studies 2025](#) (CBPID). This code establishes the overarching ethical and deontological principles that must prevail in all scientific activities conducted at the public university of Castelló. It is structured around four key thematic areas: integrity, gender equality, open access, and communication and public engagement.

5.3 Common procedures

The most common research-related procedures carried out by the **recruiting service** could be:

- Selection and hiring of research staff and research support staff.
- This procedure includes the drafting of the call for applications, the formation of selection boards and the establishment of the applicable scales. In addition, job exchanges are established for each call for application, and potential candidates will be notified. Once an offer has been accepted by the selected candidate, the service completes the process by managing the contractual formalities.
- Welcome process for researchers.
- When a researcher arrives at the UJI for the first time, researchers receive a welcome email from the Human Resources Department. This email provides useful

links, documentation and contact details to facilitate integration into the university community. Particular attention is given to providing support services for managing residence permits for international staff, and to provide information on campus accessibility, the ombudsman's office and the Equality Unit.

- Incentive Plans management
- It includes the design of the university's own system for the evaluation of research staff incentives, the publication of the annual call for applications and its management.
- Providing information on the evaluation of research activity.
- Information is provided on calls for the evaluation of research activities, as well as the applicable scales.
- Management of the [welcome desk for research staff](#).
This web portal includes information related to career development, working conditions, rights and duties, etc.

The most common research-related procedures carried out by the **Accessibility Unit** could be:

- Coordinating and ensuring the effective functioning of communication mechanisms.
- Coordinating periodic accessibility reviews.
- Coordinating and encouraging promotion, awareness and training activities.
- Provision of training courses to promote access to information and communication technologies. Those are courses for people who develop content for websites, manage social networks, provide audiovisual content, etc.
- Provide resources and tools to train research staff to create accessible content.
- Guides and tutorials that help research staff make their content accessible, as well as accessible applications and technologies.
- Conducting internal monitoring reports.

The most common research-related procedures carried out by the **Equality Unit** could be:

- Development, implementation and evaluation of the monitoring of the University's Equality Plan.
- This plan is reviewed periodically, and its main objective is to establish the measures and means necessary to achieve effective equality between men and women (including in the field of research).
- Development, implementation and evaluation of the monitoring of the University's Inclusion and Non-Discrimination Plan.

- The objective of this Plan is to establish some axes and actions to generate the appropriate university environment so that no person in the university community can be discriminated against because of birth, racial or ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, conviction or opinion, age, disability, nationality, illness, socioeconomic status, linguistic, political and union affinity, appearance, or any other personal or social condition or circumstance (including in the field of research).
- Provision of training courses to promote effective equality between men and women (including in the field of teaching and research).
- To inform and disseminate information about the university's research groups that include the gender perspective and the treatment of affective-sexual diversity.
- To give visibility to doctoral theses with a gender perspective.
- Promotion and dissemination of congresses related to gender equality and attention to diversity.

5.4 Resources, tools, training

In this section, duplication of content with other chapters of this guide has been avoided. It should also be noted that the implementation of equality plans in universities has been specifically addressed under Task 5.3 of the same Work Package within the EDUC WIDE Project. Consequently, this section focuses on providing resources, tools and training that are specifically linked to equal opportunities, which are defined as the absence of any kind of discrimination. This section does not cover initiatives, activities or usual processes that are not explicitly aimed at the promotion of equal opportunities.

5.4.1 RESOURCES:

Code of good practices in research and doctoral studies:

This cross-cutting, multi-faceted resource promotes the gender perspective at institutional levels. All Plan beneficiaries must necessarily adhere to this set of good practices.

Link to the document: [CBPID](#)

Equality Plan:

It promotes gender equality in all areas. It ensures equal opportunities and treatment for women and men. This is specifically in research activities.

Link to the document: [GEP UJI](#)

Plan for the promotion of research and knowledge transfer with a gender approach:

This Plan outlines a variety of activities and initiatives. For instance, some aspects are included in calls for proposals that promote a gendered perspective:

- Explicit adherence to the code:
Persons who receive funding under the Plan must adhere to the Code of Good Practices in Research and Doctoral Studies.
- Impact assessment:
The evaluation considers the scientific-technical, social, and economic impact of the expected results within the project's field of knowledge (10%).

- Deadlines:

The principal investigator must have obtained their first doctorate no more than 10 years ago. This period may be extended due to childcare, pregnancy-related disability, gender-based violence, etc.

Foundation ISONOMIA:

The Foundation Isonomia at UJI is a non-profit entity that has like object promote the equality of opportunities among women and men, as well as of other social communities, economic, labour, educational and culturally disadvantaged or susceptible to suffer discrimination, in all the fields of the life of the people, with the end to contribute to a juster society and more egalitarian.

More information: [Foundation Isonomia](#).

Violet point Rainbow:

The Universitat Jaume I of Castellón has a permanent Violet Point-Rainbow on campus that offers information, orientation, and psychological and legal advice on matters relating to sexual bullying, male chauvinism, and diversity in affective-sexual and gender matters. The aim is to raise awareness of the need to find solutions to social problems such as machismo and LGTBIfobia. More info: [Violet point - rainbow](#).

Scientific outreach:

- International day of women and girls in science:

Celebrated annually on February 11 to encourage the participation of women and girls in science. More info: [link](#).

- European researchers' night:

Held at the end of September to bring science closer to the public through scientific demonstrations, talks by women researchers, games, and more. More information: [Science GTS](#).

- They have the formula:

Exhibition about women dedicated to the study of chemistry from ancient times to the present day.

5.4.2 TOOLS:

Official notice board (ONB):

This tool improves the transparency and accessibility of all staff recruitment procedures at the university, facilitating their effective publication and dissemination.

ListenAll:

Mobile App for Android and iOS developed by the Universitat d'Alacant for recognition and transcription of speech to text in real time.

Tleo:

This application, developed by the University of Málaga, is designed for the simultaneous transcription of classes, lectures, conferences and dictations. The free version can produce a written text from a conversation and save the transcription. It is compatible with mobile phones, tablets and computers.

TapTapSee:

This app is available for Android and iOS and allows you to identify and describe objects in photographs aloud or in text. Just take a photo with your phone or select an existing one, and the app will describe it in a few seconds — including any people or colours in the image.

Screen magnifiers:

This software allows images on the screen to be displayed at a larger size. They are very useful for people with partial visual impairment. [This list, prepared by the Universitat d'Alacant](#), details the most commonly used screen magnifiers for each platform, along with guidelines for using them.

Look to Speak:

This app, developed by Google Creative Lab, is available for Android and allows people to select phrases or pre-written words to be spoken aloud using only their eyes. It is available in Spanish, French and German. It is designed to help people with speech or motor difficulties.

PROTOCOL for prevention, detection and action in case of harassment and discrimination at the Universitat Jaume I of Castelló.

PROTOCOL for the change of name of transsexual, transgender and intersex people at the Universitat Jaume I.

5.4.3 TRAINING:

Course: Research and gender perspective

Cross-disciplinary training by the Doctoral School.

Hours: 15 hours.

Language of instruction: English.

Fee: Free of charge.

Objective: To provide research staff at Universitat Jaume I with targeted training to implement a gender perspective in their research, in accordance with the provisions of the Law 14/2011 on Science, Technology and Innovation, Article 33j (Spanish Act), "measures for the inclusion of the gender perspective as a cross-cutting category in science, technology and innovation", and the Horizon 2020 Programme (EU Regulation No. 1291/2013), Article 16, "effective promotion of gender equality and the gender dimension in research and innovation shall be ensured."

Link to the information of the course: [INFO](#)

Course: Healthy leadership: How to lead research teams?

Cross-disciplinary training by the Doctoral School.

Hours: 23 hours.

Language of instruction: Spanish.

Fee: Free of charge.

Objective: This course will teach participants the basic concepts of a healthy leadership style, from a positive approach. The ultimate goal is to optimise healthy leadership styles as a key social and organisational resource, contributing to the personal and professional development and promoting psychological and social well-being within the institution.

Link to the information of the course: [INFO](#).

Course: Accessibility for content managers

Acquire the skills to generate and manage web content in compliance with digital accessibility standards. Free online course.

Course: Creating accessible documentation

Students will acquire the skills to create accessible documents using common market programmes. Free online course.

Course: Accessibility in audiovisual content

Acquire the skills and knowledge to produce audiovisual materials that are accessible to a range of audiences. Free online course.

Course: Web accessibility awareness

A Course designed to raise public awareness about that new technologies are made accessible. Free online course.

Course: Editing and generations os accessible web content

The course is organised by the National Institute of Public Administration (INAP), with the support of the Web Accessibility Observatory under the General Secretariat for Digital Administration, part of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation. This online course is available 24 hours a day and may be completed at your own pace. Designed with content editors in mind, the course is open to any individuals interested in developing accessible content.

Course: Research methodologies with a gender perspective, challenges in STEM degrees

This course presents European and Spanish regulations relevant to research staff, focusing on the integration of sex and gender analysis in research projects (Horizon Europe, the State and the Generalitat Valenciana's funding calls.) and the position of scientific publishers on this issue. In line with these requirements, it identifies the main gender biases in research, how to overcome them, and how to integrate sex and gender analysis across all phases of the research cycle. The course concludes with a practical internship, in which participants provide a gender review of one's own project or research.

5.5 Quality assessment indicators

In this section, we would like to take this opportunity to talk about an existing service at the Universitat Jaume I: the Office for the Promotion and Evaluation of Quality (OPAQ). This unit is responsible for promoting continuous improvement in processes and services at UJI from a quality perspective. To this end, the OPAQ offers support and advice to the university's centres, degree programmes and administrative and management units, and encourages participation from all interested parties.

The OPAQ's activities include developing, implementing and deploying the internal quality assurance system; promoting institutional accreditation; and obtaining [international quality seals](#) (EuroInf, EurACE and the seal of excellence in human resources recruitment), as well as maintaining quality management systems in accordance with the ISO 9001 standard. The OPAQ also develops and reviews indicators of the university's activity, measures stakeholder satisfaction and service quality, monitors improvement proposals and disseminates quality actions.

Since 2019, quality assessment surveys of the different services and units have been carried out at the Universitat Jaume I every February. The survey is open to the entire

university community, and each person can evaluate the quality of any services they have used in the previous year.

In the early years, a general report of the results was made public. In addition, a specific, detailed report evaluating each unit or service was sent to the unit itself and the vice-rectorate to which it belonged. Since 2023, the general results report published on the website has also included some specific data for each unit or service. For instance, regarding the Human Resources Service and the Equality Unit, we can consult the following indicators for 2023 and 2024:

- General satisfaction
- Evolution of general satisfaction since 2019.
- Fulfilment of expectations
- Satisfaction with the resources available to the unit/service.
- Reliability offered by the unit/service
- Availability of staff
- Professionalism of the people providing the service
- Treatment received from service staff.

In the case of the Accessibility Unit, data is only available since 2024 because it is a newly created unit.

Each of these indicators is assessed on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing 'totally dissatisfied' and 5 representing 'totally satisfied'.

5.7 The UPN approach: Gender and Equality Framework under the EDUC-WIDE GEP (2025)

Since 2021, the University of Paris Nanterre (UPN) has engaged in a reflective and structured effort to advance Gender and Equality Policy, combat all kind of discrimination and hate speech and promote Inclusion at different levels. Anchored in national and European frameworks, this commitment has evolved through both strategic planning and active institutional participation. Initiated within the context of the **Educ-Share** project (Horizon 2020, project occurred and successfully achieved during 2020-2023/4) and supported by the **Educ-Wide GEP** framework, UPN's internal assessment highlighted both its achievements, and the reforms still needed to foster an inclusive academic environment.

Central to this progression has been the National Action Plan for Gender Equality (2021–2023), established in application of the French Law of 6 August 2019. Jointly driven by the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sport and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation in France, this plan provides a renewable three-year framework.

It aligns with the broader Research Programming Act (2021–2030), which supports improvements to guarantee equity, career structures, and working conditions for research and higher education staff throughout academic environments. As part of this legislative approach, there has been a renewed focus on the reclassification (« repyramider ») of

technical and research roles and the implementation of a more coherent career trajectory for teaching and research personnel.

The **Action Plan**'s five core strategies entangle, at all scale of university levels and departments, a circle of connected Human Resources practices and stances, such as:

- Strengthening gender governance
- Promoting equal access to employment and responsibilities
- Addressing salary and career disparities
- Supporting work-life balance
- Fighting discrimination and multiple gender-based violence

These elements are foundational to UPN's Gender and Equality policy and vision. While the plan is robust enough, its implementation at the institutional scale faces limitations, given that key reforms - such as salary policy, contract types, and extended leave provisions - remain under the regulatory authority of the national civil service. It is also important to consider that UPN operates through a collaborative commission-based approach, where evaluations are conducted horizontally to implement new procedures and actions. Indeed, Equality is mirrored within UPN local design, allowing UPN to act as an academic European promoter by dressing the device of a fair, democratic and inclusive higher education organisation while articulating consultation bodies at all university levels. It requires a longer but certainly more appropriate and rightful decision-making policy process.

In fact, despite some delays related to the **Educ-Wide** scheduling roadmap, UPN has made important institutional strides. The Mission Égalité et Non-Discrimination was established to engage across all university departments and functions, by promoting a culture of genuine inclusion. Its structure includes specialised units offering deep support and concrete listening services to victims of gender-based violence and discrimination - whether occurring on or off campus and addressing the situations accordingly whenever the University can act within the legal responsibility. These services are reinforced by targeted training for priority groups, internal awareness campaigns, and collaboration with student associations and specialised associations and organisations locally and nationally.

Among the Mission's central initiatives is the Equality Month (*Le mois de l'Égalité à Nanterre*), a dynamic and multidisciplinary programme held annually in March. The 2025 edition featured an array of events - from academic conferences on obstetric violence, psychiatric care, and trans rights, to artistic performances such as the *Nanterre Drag Show* and the *Bobigny Trial reenactment*. The inclusion of activities like virtual reality experiences on invisible disabilities and the eloquence workshop co-organised with *Amnesty International* further demonstrates the university's creative and participatory approach to raising awareness. The programme was designed not only to educate but also to actively engage the university's diverse communities. It successfully fostered dialogue across departments, between students and staff, and with civil society, reinforcing the role of the university as a space for inclusive debate, critical inquiry, and democratic participation. *Equality Month* has thus grown to become a cornerstone of UPN's public engagement and a model for translating institutional commitments into experiential learning and advocacy.

In the last university year (September 2024 - July 2025) both the political strategy and the structural organisation for Equality Inclusion and Non-Discrimination underwent massive changes. A vice-presidency was created to build a transversal strategy and strengthen it in

the next few years. The vice-presidency will be helped by a task force of 4 researchers in charge of advising, constructing and developing the policies, the research development but also the education of students. Each researcher will have a topic: gender equality and gender based-violence, fight against discrimination (with a focus on racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia and LGBTQIA-phobia), laicity in relation with the antisemitism and Islamophobia topics, as well as disability. The Mission went through a very important structural evolution because it became an autonomous service of the University under both the authority of the General Service Directory and the Presidency; the Mission is now called *Coordination Center for Equality and Non-Discrimination*. With the purpose to significantly change the culture across the University spaces, 4 job positions have been opened, and 3 of them will be operational within the Coordination Center, by differentiating contributions and purposes as well as by allowing employers to implement specific skills and put into place significant actions through the Mission.

- The first position is dedicated to the Events and Sensibilizations Actions: organizing a yearly programme of events for the whole community (with the Equality Month being the most important moment of the year), reinforcing the sensibilities and education of students on these topics.
- The second position has been conceived for the management and treatment of the incident situation (gender based and sexual violence, discriminatory and hateful acts and speech's): listening and responding on requests coming from UPN actors, taking the statement, advising on the UPN's responsibilities and offering possible answers, following up on them.
- The third position has been crafted by aiming to create, plan and promote several training modules for the university personnel (teachers, researcher, administrative and technical workers): crafting workshops and thematic workshops, adapting courses to agents' responsibilities, needs and competences.
- The fourth position will be executed jointly with the Juridic Direction Service, with the purpose to enforce the sanctions and juridical consequences due to incidents situations which are treated previously by the Coordination Center.

Furthermore, UPN's active participation in the national scientific survey *ACAD/ISCR*, which collects data on the experiences of discrimination within higher education and research, further reinforces its evidence-based approach to systemic change. The UPN is also actively involved in the CPED, a national association reassembling people who take care and are responsible for Equality Diversity and Inclusion actions in Universities and Public Higher Education schools. Frequently, different members of the association CPED present their work, compare their peculiarities and strategies, and share best practices with other stakeholders.

Parallel to these social, cultural and pedagogical efforts, UPN's institutional commitment is reinforced through the University Boarding's decision to adhere to the HRS4R and follow its labeling process with the scope of ameliorating researchers' professional environment. In alignment with the *European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers*, UPN has developed a roadmap designed to improve working conditions and promote transparency and equity in academic careers. Within this process, 4 expert working groups implemented an institutional diagnosis and proposed to the UPN to different deputy commissions to put into place actions targeting early-career support, recruitment conditions, and the fostering of inclusive research environments. Also, the on-going discussion on adopting the Open, Transparent, and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) model, will strategically mark a significant step forward in European campuses research quality and development. **HRS4R** can contribute to:

- Strengthening procedures for recruiting academic staff and researchers.
- Encouraging participation in national campaigns (e.g., disability doctoral contracts).
- Developing mentoring programmes for new colleagues.
- Hosting foreign researchers and promoting inclusive onboarding practices.

UPN's operational roadmap includes further strategic priorities:

- The creation of video training modules on non-discrimination.
- The development of statistical tables and recruitment indicators.
- The assessment of staffing needs for the Equality and Non-Discrimination Mission.
- The pursuit of AFNOR French certification to continuously strengthen the institution's equality frameworks.
- Organizing roundtables and policy-focused debates to link research, governance, and civil society.

In line with UPN's on-going labeling workflow and aim, through inter-offices and inter-departments design and interactions, the European assessors « welcomed the care taken in aligning HR practices with those of the EU Charter for Researchers ». Because the « comprehensive analysis and action plan » submitted by UPN met « the requirements for the use of the 'HR Excellence in research' award », UPN can keep continuing its statements and advancements by considering European suggestion and modeling the HR local Policy and innovative devices during the following phases of the label procedure. UPN is now allowed to use the *HR Excellence in Research* award for officially disseminating and promoting its academic presence on websites, e-publications, publicity materials to stimulate and endorse a favorable and sustainable working environment.

Finally, in July 2025, the UPN voted its new « Plan of actions for Equality and Non-Discrimination in the Workplace » which corresponds to UPN's new strategy from 2025 to 2027 (effectively between late 2025 and beginning of 2028). Seven axes, 26 sub axes and 73 objectives are listed and translated into concrete actions. These axes are:

- Evaluating, Preventing and Treating wages gaps
- Guarantying for Equal access to jobs and promotions for women and men
- Articulating job and personal life
- Fighting against gender-based violence
- Fighting against stereotypes, biases and discrimination
- Taking actions for the health of workers (with a gender and inclusion focus)
- Developing and disseminating a culture of Equality Inclusion and Non-Discrimination

At the same time, and with the aim to allow the possibility of consistent changes which foster the **HRS4R** requirements, it is essential to underline UPN efforts that have been

facing structural and institutional constraints which continue to shape the pace and extent of HR circular progress and diversification.

For instance, the introduction of specialised leave for conditions such as endometriosis has been considered but remains legally restricted. Moreover, while equality indicators were officially introduced, their application only began midway through the 2023–2024 academic year, relying primarily on consolidated data from 2022. In light of this, as a **Educ-Wide** associated partner, UPN expresses a clear interest in contributing to and cooperating with further projects, and mostly by following the Alliance common **Equality and GEP** guide-lines, and focusing on gender, equality and non-discrimination enhancement and key-strategic issues.

However, current internal planning cycles and institutional schedules are not fully aligned with those of the Alliance. As such, the university will not be in a position to implement integrated actions within the immediate timeframe. At the same time, UPN genuinely reaffirms its engagement in the project and remains committed to progressing within this **Educ-Wide** vision and forecasting advancement. Substantive engagement and implementation of collaborative actions are planned to begin with the next academic year, 2025–2026. This timeline will allow UPN to synchronize internal efforts with the strategic objectives of the **Educ-Wide** project and to contribute meaningfully through a coordinated and sustainable framework and cooperations.

6. Conclusion

This Good Practice Guide, developed under Task 5.2 of the EDUC-WIDE project and coordinated by Universitat Jaume I, represents a significant milestone in the collective efforts of the consortium to advance the institutionalisation and professionalisation of research career advisory services across the European Higher Education Area. The Guide supports the wider objectives of the European Research Area (ERA), particularly in the context of Widening universities, by promoting inclusive, high-quality, and sustainable research ecosystems.

The Guide presents a structured and comprehensive mapping of existing advisory services in the areas of Human Resources, Research Advisory, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and Equal Opportunities, as implemented by partner institutions. It draws on shared experiences, identifies good practices, and integrates tools and recommendations aligned with researcher needs at all career stages (R1–R4). A harmonised framework of ethical standards, standard operating procedures, training pathways, and quality assurance indicators has been co-created, providing a strategic and operational reference for improving institutional performance in the provision of career support services.

This initiative responds to the strategic priority of enhancing the attractiveness and accessibility of research careers, particularly within less experienced institutions. The Guide directly addresses structural gaps by supporting institutional transformation, improving service accessibility, and enabling a more cohesive approach to researcher development. It reflects the principles underpinning the Widening Participation agenda and contributes to levelling the playing field across diverse national contexts.

The Guide introduces a shared taxonomy of services and offers an integrated, transnational approach to service design and delivery. It facilitates the mutual transfer of knowledge between more experienced and less experienced institutions, encourages peer learning,

and fosters alignment with ERA policy goals such as talent circulation, equal opportunities, and research excellence. Its innovative potential lies in its scalability, adaptability, and capacity to be used both as a training tool and a strategic planning instrument. The collaboration has also led to the proposal of establishing a permanent Research Career Advisory Network within the EDUC Alliance, which is key to ensuring continuity and knowledge sustainability.

The implementation of the Guide has the potential to generate long-term institutional impact, particularly if combined with capacity-building actions such as those planned under Task 6.2. These would support the operationalisation of the Guide and help embed its methodologies into institutional practice. While the Guide lays a strong foundation, future iterations could benefit from:

- Deeper integration of digitalisation strategies and data analytics for service improvement.
- Enhanced engagement with researchers through participatory design methodologies.
- Systematic monitoring of the Guide's uptake and impact across institutions.
- Expansion of case studies to reflect a broader range of institutional realities.

In conclusion, through open access, localisation, and strategic dissemination, the Guide can inspire similar frameworks across the EU and beyond. This Good Practice Guide constitutes an important step forward in realising a more inclusive and interconnected European research landscape. It enhances institutional capacity, strengthens cross-border cooperation, and exemplifies the EU's commitment to fostering excellence through shared knowledge and strategic alignment.

6.1 On the scope of the work

The consortium partners' collaborative efforts have highlighted substantial variations in the institutional contexts, resources, operational circumstances, and organisational structures.

For the purposes of the Guide, this indicates that a diverse range of services and procedures are implemented differently across institutions.

Within this framework, the direct transfer of services, processes or methods does not seem feasible. The categorisation of the information into four thematic areas, based on scope of intervention, facilitates the interpretation and practical application of the resources and procedures presented by each university. This, in turn, enables partners to adapt the Guide's application to their particular institutional requirements.

The knowledge and expertise shared by each partner in this Guide will enable us to critically reflect our own services and identify potential improvements. Thus, this Guide functions both as a basis for implementing new services or methodologies and as a source of inspiration that can be further improved during the second phase of the EDUC WIDE project.

6.2 On the usefulness and dissemination of the Guide

The dissemination of this Guide across the consortium universities is essential to maximise its impact. The document has the potential to inspire both operational staff and institutional leadership to adopt enhanced practices aimed at improving the support and advisory services available to research personnel.

Furthermore, during the second phase of the project, it is strongly recommended that partner institutions gather structured feedback from relevant stakeholders regarding the Guide's usability and applicability in their institutional contexts. This participatory evaluation will support the iterative refinement of the Guide, allowing for the incorporation of targeted improvements and necessary adjustments identified through Task 6.2.

Beyond the immediate consortium, the Guide may also serve as a transferable model for other higher education institutions across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), promoting knowledge exchange and institutional development at a broader level.