

HR STRATEGY - ACTION PLAN

Name Organisation under review: Research and Innovation Centre Pro-Akademia (RIC)

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Web link to published version of organisation's HR Strategy and Action Plan:
<http://www.proakademia.eu/en/about-us/hr-excellence-in-research/>

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1. ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

STAFF & STUDENTS	FTE
<i>Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research</i>	8.81
<i>Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)</i>	0.0
<i>Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation)</i>	1.0
<i>Of whom are women</i>	6.25
<i>Of whom are stage R3 or R4 = Researchers with a large degree of autonomy, typically holding the status of Principal Investigator or Professor.</i>	3.31
<i>Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level</i>	2.0
<i>Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level</i>	3.5
<i>Total number of students (if relevant)</i>	0.0
<i>Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff)</i>	14.61
RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year - 2017)¹	€
<i>Total annual organisational budget</i>	937,968.15
<i>Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)</i>	18,623.44
<i>Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)</i>	437,783.76
<i>Annual funding from private, non-government sources, designated for research</i>	466,732.23
ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE (a very brief description of your organisation, max. 100 words)	
<p>RIC is a small independent non-profit private research organisation, registered as a Public Benefit Organisation, specialising in industrial research and experimental development in sustainable energy and circular economy. 16 permanent staff work in RIC today (14.61 FTE) and over 200 external experts as external consultants have been collaborating with us over the last 22 years. In the evaluation ran by Polish Ministry of Science in 2017 we were ranked as the 2nd most effective among all 992 Polish research organisations in terms of material effects of research. In 2018, we are implementing 16 R&D projects (including 2 H2020 projects).</p>	

¹Average reference rate published by European Central Bank for 2017: 1 EUR = 4.2570 PLN

2. NARRATIVE

Introduction

The Charter and Code Deployment Task Force, consisting of: Dr. Ewa Kočańska (chair, R4), Dr. Karina Michalska, Head of Bioprocess Lab (R3), Dr. Andrzej Klimek, Assistant Professor in Energy Efficiency Lab (R2), Katarzyna Korczak, a doctoral candidate (R1), and Monika Stojan – Head of the Management Board Office, carefully analysed and compared the Charter and Code statements in terms of their execution in RIC.

Part of the rules has been already regulated by Polish law, especially the Code of Labour, as well as by RIC's internal regulations, i.e. Statute, Ethical Code, Rules of Labour, and Rules of the Intellectual Property Management. Several rules are also implemented within RIC's Quality Management System related to design and provision of research services, certified for compliance with PN-EN ISO 9001:2005 by ZETOM-CERT Ltd.

The gap analysis has been made in line with the template published at the EURAXESS website.

Ethical and Professional Aspects

The current policy guarantees the researchers at RIC freedom in many different aspects, both in theory and practice: starting from the freedom of thought and the freedom of speech of the researcher, to the possibility of defining the research scope and choosing the research methodology adequate to the research problem. Nevertheless, they recognise and respect the limitations of the research freedom, which follow the necessity of respecting the copyright, intellectual property rights, or infrastructural, budget and personal limitations. All of them are formulated in the Researcher's Ethical Code.

The researchers are also obliged to respect the principles and regulations formulated in the Code. RIC recognises the universality of such principles and ethical values as: honesty in presenting the research objectives and intentions, objectivism appearing itself in basing the interpretations and conclusions only on facts, impartiality in the approach to the problem, independence of external influences on conducting of the research, openness in discussions on own research, teamwork reliability, criticism to results of the own research, and transparency of the data collection, analysing and interpretation.

The main stream of the research carried out at RIC is being adjusted to and remains oriented at targets set by the European Commission, in particular in the Horizon 2020 programme and Polish National Smart Specialisation in the field of sustainable energy and circular economy. Therefore, it is definitely useful for society as it aims at achieving public good, especially in the area of sustainability and environmental friendliness of the industrial sector and eco-innovation. Thus, we have no doubts about our high level of professional responsibility.

Every researcher employed at RIC has been acknowledged with the strategical aims of the Centre and with the research financing mechanisms. If the permissions are required, they are obtained before commencing the research.

All the RIC Pro-Akademia employees are conscious of their responsibility for the efficient management and use of the financial resources allocated for the research or project implementation. All the purchases of commodities and services are made in line with the correct and sound spending of the resources. Financial management and accounting in RIC are held in line with the accounting act of 29.09.1994 (Polish JoL 2009 no. 152, pos. 1223 with later amendments). An internal document for the Centre is the Accounting Policy. However, formal rules for purchases funded from institutional sources is not included in the "Employee Handbook" (only purchases funded from external sources, e.g. grants have a formal procedure in place).

The scientific staff implementing the project works is up to the requirements. The works are subject to an internal and external control (financing institutions). In the RIC Pro-Akademia the rule of quarterly project internal control applies, aka. internal audit. RIC Pro-Akademia also has always put big emphasis on applied projects deployed together with the business or commissioned by the entrepreneurs.

Under current policy the educational activities for the schools and universities, as well as the open dialogue with the local community by organizing the RES TTC open-door days, are only fringe activities of the RIC. With the new policy the scale of all of these will be enhanced, so that they could grow to the full scale. Furthermore, RIC Staff will increase efforts in publishing research results in high impact factor journals.

Although the SharePoint platform which creates backup files in the cloud automatically is in common use in the RIC, there will be prepared a detailed backup creation strategy as an element of RIC's Safety Policy. RIC's standard job contract has a document called "Equal treatment in employment" attached. However, there are no regulations or bodies preventing the institutional discrimination in the RIC.

Information about projects implemented by RIC is available on the website: <http://www.proakademia.eu/en/projects/> while the publication record is available in the Knowledge Database: <http://www.proakademia.eu/baza-wiedzy/> (at the moment available only in Polish).

Recruitment and Selection

Under the current policy RIC publishes its job advertisements mainly on its website. Consequently, they are often absent on the most popular nationwide websites dedicated to this issue or at Euraxess, being reached by thousands of potential candidates. However, the current template does not include a description of career development perspectives and the standard researchers recruitment procedure does not include the feedback about strengths and weaknesses of their application. In order to fix it, the job advertisements will be supplied with the description of career development perspectives. Use of new distribution channels for the advertisements, such as the Internet will be examined.

On balance, the rest of the Recruitment and Selection categories are real tangible strengths of RIC. The organisation has clearly formulated standards of employing the researchers. The Centre guarantees respecting such values as equal treatment of all the candidates, regardless of their sex, background, political orientation etc., as well as an openness and transparency of the recruitment process. The RIC during the staff selection process takes into account the entire scope of experience of the candidate. Except the evaluation of their general potential as researchers, the level of independence and creativity is also included. Among the assessment criteria, regarding the experiences and competences, scientific and practical achievements are responsible for a half of the final result each.

Working Conditions and Social Security

RIC manages the Renewable Energy Sources Technology Transfer Centre – an interdisciplinary centre for research on sustainable energy. The RES TTC consists of 7 Laboratories aiming at knowledge and technology transfer, equipped with the modern instruments and specialised software for analysing the outcomes. Even though RIC participates in several international projects (including several H2020 projects), the institution does not participate in any COST research network. However, the institution will soon apply for joining the most suitable COST network. Compliance with the national and industrial occupational healthcare and safety regulations is a duty of the employer. In spite of that, minor shortcomings regarding OHS have been detected lately (related to gas cylinders). They will be urgently removed as the executive procedures will be practically conformed with the national standards.

In RIC there is a huge flexibility and support for working from home, if necessary. All of the workplaces are fully accessible for the disabled. There are 8.81 FTE research positions in RIC now (core R&D personnel), but the institution has been collaborating within various projects with many other researchers affiliated to different institutions (they are mentioned on our webpage at <http://www.proakademia.eu/baza-wszystkich-ekspertow/>). Usually external experts (consultants) are engaged based on a task-based commission (not employment contract), which greatly increases the scope of competences offered in our projects.

All of the research, technical and administrative workers have full, adequate and equitable social security provisions guaranteed by Polish law. Mentoring procedures, value of mobility, and IPR protection support are another clear strengths of the Centre. However, at the moment there is no formal career development or career advice strategy for researchers, regardless of the kind of contract. Nevertheless, the researchers are mentored in an informal way. Furthermore, as part of the Action Plan, appropriate procedures in case of detecting the discrimination will be prepared and included in the "Employee Handbook".

Training and Development

Relation with supervisors, supervision and managerial duties, continuing professional development, access to research training and continuous development, and supervision are in general good. The quarterly evaluations of all of the researchers will be continued. Technical aspect of the evaluation forms will be improved so that RIC researchers have no problems with updating their research achievements in a timely and easy manner.

Summary

The preliminary internal analysis proved that the majority of the principles stated in the Charter and the Code are obeyed by RIC. Meanwhile, several questions where the actions of RIC are more or less incoherent with the statements of the Charter and the Code emerged during the analysis (details presented in the Gap Analysis).

Main strengths:

- Ethical and Professional Aspects
- Training and Development
- Value of mobility appreciated, collaboration approach rewarded in the employee evaluation system

Main weaknesses:

- Frequent abstaining from publishing the job advertisements at the most popular nationwide websites or Euraxess
- Lack of ombudsman and bonus/reward system
- Limited number of publications published in high-impact factor journals

3. ACTIONS (01.04.2018-31.03.2020)

Priority ²	Action no.	Action name	Timing	Responsible Unit	Indicator(s) / Target(s)
A. Ethical and Professional Aspects					
1	A1	A detailed backup creation strategy as an element of RIC Pro-Akademia's Safety Policy will be prepared and added to the "Employee Handbook".	Q2 2018	Information Security Administrator	0 files unintentionally lost, starting from June 2018
	A2	Recommendations for the researchers to prepare and update a scientific publications plan, as well as a conference, seminars & another scientific events plan – as a part of "Employee's Scientific Effectiveness Profile".	Q2 2018	RIC President and the heads of the labs	Plans from 90% of research staff included in the "Employee's Scientific Effectiveness Profile"
			Q3 2018		
Q4 2018					
Q1 2019					
Q2 2019					
Q3 2019					
A3	Improvement of technical aspect of the evaluation forms in "Employee's Scientific Effectiveness Profile" so that RIC researchers have no problems with updating their research achievements in a timely and easy manner.	Q2 2018	Management Board Office	Positive feedback from RIC researchers during internal workshops in June 2018	
		Q4 2019			
2	A4	RIC Staff will increase efforts in publishing research results in high impact factor journals.	Q4 2018	The heads of the labs	Each laboratory will submit at least one article in high impact factor journal a year
			Q4 2019		
	A5	Formal rules for purchases funded from institutional sources will be created and added to the "Employee Handbook".	Q3 2018	RIC Vice President	rules for purchases funded from institutional sources added to the "Employee Handbook"
A6	Appropriate procedures in case of detecting the discrimination will be prepared and included in the "Employee Handbook".	Q4 2018	Legal Team	Anti-discrimination procedures published, shared with all employees, and implemented	
3	A7	Continuing scanning of the submitted manuscripts with the anti-plagiarism system	Continuous	Journal's scientific secretary	100% of submitted manuscripts scanned with the PlagScan system
	A8	Preparation of the information about possibilities of financing the scientific and research	Q2 2018	RIC Vice President	Schedule for open calls for proposals in the following quarter delivered to all
Q3 2018					

² Scale: 1 - very important and urgent; 2 - important; 3 - already being done, but should be reinforced/maintained

		works (open call for proposals schedules)	Q4 2018 Q1 2019 Q2 2019 Q3 2019 Q4 2019		researchers on RIC's SharePoint Platform
	A9	Continuing activities for the schools and universities on an enhanced scale	Q2 2018 Q4 2018 Q2 2019 Q4 2019	RIC Vice President	10% more people engaged in the event
	A10	Continuing the open dialogue with the local community by organizing the RES TTC open-door days on an enhanced scale	Q2 2018 Q2 2019	RIC Vice President and the heads of the labs	10% more people engaged in the event
	A11	The quarterly evaluations of all of the researchers will be continued.	Q2 2018 Q3 2018 Q4 2018 Q1 2019 Q2 2019 Q3 2019 Q4 2019	Management Board Office	100% researchers with completed "Employee's Scientific Effectiveness Profile" and mentoring meetings attended per quarter
	A12	Review the progress in action plan implementation in the area A (Ethical and Professional Aspects)	Q2 2018 Q4 2018 Q2 2019 Q4 2019	HRS4R Task Force, participation of all employees via workshops	Review report, updated action plan (if necessary)

B. Recruitment and Selection

2	B1	Update templates for the job advertisements by including section for: researcher career profiles, selection criteria, number of available positions, career development perspectives.	Q4 2018	Science marketing team	100% of new advertisements containing the description of career development perspectives
	B2	Test use of new distribution channels for the advertisements on the Internet	Q1 2019	Science marketing team	At least 3 new distribution channels for the advertisements on the Internet tested, including EURAXESS
	B3	The external expert (e.g. external member of RIC's Scientific Council) will be invited for interviews with job	Q2 2019	Science marketing team	External experts participating in at least 50% of the interviews with

		candidates. It is of high importance to invite the representative of e.g. companies if the candidate is applying for a job in a project which is ordered by the company.			research job candidates
	B4	The recruitment of all researchers (including unsuccessful applications) will be supplied with the feedback about strengths and weaknesses of candidates' applications. The record of the selection and evaluation process within the "Interview Assessment Form" and all CVs are archived.	Q2 2019	Management Board Office	All candidates supplied with feedback
	B5	Update the internal guide on OTM-R procedures and practices by including the evaluation criteria which are applied at an early stage of the application evaluation (before a job interview).	Q2 2019	Management Board Office	Internal guide on OTM-R procedures and practices updated
	B6	Update the rules referring to researchers from abroad.	Q2 2019	Management Board Office	Internal guide on OTM-R procedures and practices updated
	B7	Set clear rules concerning the composition of selection committees.	Q2 2019	Management Board Office	Internal guide on OTM-R procedures and practices updated
	B8	Make sure that in each selection committee a sufficient gender balance is provided.	Q3 2019	Management Board Office	Internal guide on OTM-R procedures and practices updated
	B9	Update the guidelines for selection committees by including more merit and quantitative criteria.	Q3 2019	Management Board Office	Guidelines for selection committees updated
	B10	Advise Recruitment Committees to monitor gender balance and make efforts towards ensuring it in the gender structure of RIC staff.	Q4 2018	Management Board Office	Guidelines for selection committees updated
	B11	Develop and publish OTM-R online on the RIC's website, based on the review of all improvement actions undertaken in area B of the action plan	Q4 2019	HRS4R Task Force	OTM-R online on the RIC's website
3	B12	Review the progress in action plan implementation in the area B (Recruitment and Selection)	Q2 2018 Q4 2018 Q2 2019 Q4 2019	HRS4R Task Force, participation of all employees via workshops	Review report, updated action plan (if necessary)

C. Working Conditions and Social Security					
1	C1	Removal of the OHS shortcoming concerning gas cylinders. Review of OHS in RIC for conformity of the procedures with the national standards.	Q2 2018	Infrastructure team	Validated 100% conformity of the procedures with the national standards
	C2	Certification of the Quality Management System for conformity with the new version of the standard – PN-EN ISO 9001:2008 – the certification will take into consideration the updated process no. 10 (HR management) that is now in line with HRS4R rules.	Q2 2018	Management Board Office	QMS incl. H4S4R procedures certified by external audit
	C3	Evaluation of the needs of the researchers for the flexible working hours (e.g. work during weekends when biomethane generation tests are running) as well as work from home.	Q2 2018	RIC Vice President	At least 10 researchers at RIC presented their needs during the workshop; summarizing report of the evaluation shared with the researchers
	C4	Updating legal arrangements concerning work from home and flexible working hours will be re-evaluated in collaboration with RIC's legal counsellor.	Q2 2018	RIC Vice President and the Legal Counsellor	Updated legal provisions (e.g. in the employment contracts, if necessary)
2	C5	Proposing the rules of the bonus/reward system and consulting it with RIC researcher and administration staff.	Q3 2018	Management Board, Task Force	Rules of the bonus/reward system prepared and consulted with the staff
	C6	Introduction of reward/bonus system that would be fully responsive to the motivations of all employees.	Q1 2019	Management Board's Office	Bonus/reward system implemented
	C7	Organising workshops for the employees concerning their satisfaction from the work in RIC.	Q2 2018 Q2 2019	Management Board's Office	At least 2 workshops devoted to staff satisfaction organised
	C8	Application for joining the most suitable COST network to further intensify RIC's transnational research collaboration.	By Q4 2018	Science marketing team	At least 1 application to join the existing COST network (or to create a new one)
	C9	Appoint an Ombudsman ("Rzecznik Zaufania"), a person outside the RIC Management Board and Management Board Office, who will evaluate complaints and appeals of all employees in an impartial manner. Persons turning to the Ombudsman will be granted full confidentiality and informal way of conflicts and complaints resolution. Further steps of	Q3 2018	Management Board	Ombudsman appointed

		conduct will be determined with interested persons depending on circumstances. In case of the observed irregularities, the Ombudsman will provide recommendations to the relevant members of RIC Team in order to prevent bad practices and to introduce the necessary corrections.			
3	C10	Review the progress in action plan implementation in the area C (Working Conditions and Social Security)	Q2 2018 Q4 2018 Q2 2019 Q4 2019	HRS4R Task Force, participation of all employees via workshops	Review report, updated action plan (if necessary)

D. Training and Development

1	D1	Arrange and finance participation of RIC's staff in language trainings, technical skills trainings and certified project management courses	Q3 2018 Q4 2018	Management Board's Office	At least 5 external trainings attended by RIC Staff per year
3	D2	Trainings for the newly employed staff about the research financing mechanisms	Ongoing	RIC Vice President	100% of newly employed researchers trained about the research financing mechanisms
	D3	Further monitoring of the career development needs of the researchers. The quarterly reviews based on "Employee's Scientific Effectiveness Profile" will be extended with more focus on career advice, allowing for better and more structured career planning of RIC's research employees. During the quarterly assessment meetings (based on review of "Employee's Scientific Effectiveness Profile"), discussion on further career development will be structured according to the European specification of career development profiles (R1, R2, R3, R4).	Q2 2018 Q3 2018 Q4 2018 Q1 2019 Q2 2019 Q3 2019 Q4 2019 Q1 2020	Management Board's Office, Management Board	At least 8 quarterly reviews of the career development needs of all researchers, including individual mentoring meetings
	D4	Review the progress in action plan implementation in the area D (Training and Development)	Q2 2018 Q4 2018 Q2 2019 Q4 2019	HRS4R Task Force, participation of all employees via workshops	Review report, updated action plan (if necessary)

Actions addressing the implementation of Open, Transparent, Merit-Based Recruitment principles:

As shown in the *OTM-R checklist for organisations* section of the Gap Analysis, RIC already implemented 21 out of 23 OTM-R principles. Nine of these, which are implemented substantially or partially, will be further improved to fully meet standards of the OTM-R. Furthermore, it is already planned to apply two principles which are not exploited yet.

All applied OTM-R rules are evaluated on a regular basis, at least once a year, as a part of a part of the implementation of the ISO 9001 Standard. 12 principles, which are already fully utilised, are updated whenever needed. All people who are engaged in the recruitment process are trained beforehand in the area of OTM-R. This applies in particular to external experts and internal staff who are not regular members of the selection committees and may not be familiar with OTM-R rules. RIC's current OTM-R policy does not exclude any group of candidates, in particular underrepresented or from outside of the organisation, including researchers from abroad. In fact, 95% of candidates, who applied for a job in 2016 and 2017, came from abroad. They represented all genders and all continents, including third-world countries. 4 (out of 16 current employees) who were hired in 2017 previously worked in external institutions (e.g. Lodz University of Technology) or countries (e.g. Spain). Regarding advertising and application phase, RIC uses templates for job advertisements. Job offers are then shared on RIC's website, and whenever applicable, they are also published on relevant universities' career services offices. To maximise the number of received offers, RIC asks candidates to send only a CV and a cover letter. If the position is externally funded, RIC fill out the administrative parts of the application forms with or for the candidate. All documents necessary for the job contract are required only from the approved candidates, just before signing a job contract. During the appointment phase, all candidates are clearly informed regarding the next steps of the process. At the end of the selection process, the applicants are informed about the date when the final results would be announced. If the result of selection process is negative, the applicant receives thank you note for participation in the recruitment process and information that his/her CV has been archived and will be taken into account in the next processes of selection. He/she also usually receives feedback on their application, with strengths and weaknesses of the application, however, this will be improved. Each candidate can also complain about the procedure to the RIC's Management Board.

There are nine rules, currently implemented substantially or partially which will be improved, and two OTM-R aspects which will be developed from the ground in 2018 and 2019. The recruitment guidelines, which are currently available on RIC's intranet, contain procedures for employing for new positions and selection criteria. It is planned to complete it with the evaluation criteria which are applied at an early stage of the application evaluation (before a job interview). More intense use of e-recruitment tools will be tested, as a current procedure (submission via an application form, published on RIC webpage <http://www.proakademia.eu/o-nas/kariera/>, or via email) seems to be not sufficient. What is more, RIC plans to test at least three platforms for publishing job adverts, including EURAXESS. Furthermore, RIC is going to put more emphasis on the composition of the selection committees. Clear rules concerning the composition of selection committees will be established. The policy of keeping selection committees big enough (at least 3 people) and balanced in terms of gender and their expertise will be improved. In particular, it will be ensured that men are not underrepresented, as it happens sometimes. External experts, including from abroad, will be involved in the process, whenever justified. To facilitate the work of the selection committee and to ensure a merit-base and fair assessment of each candidate, a current evaluation protocol will be updated and guidelines for the selection committees will be developed. Finally, when updated, the OTM-R policy will be published online on the RIC's website.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

The Task Force preparing the Gap Analysis will play the roles of an implementation committee and steering group and will be regularly overseeing the progresses in OTM-R strategy implementation. The RIC's research community has its representatives in the Task Force (researchers at all career development stages are involved). It will not be the only form of their participation in the implementation process, as their opinion will be checked and taken into account in workshops planned to be organised as side events of the RIC regular staff meetings.

HRS4R has been included in the Quality Management System of RIC (certified for conformance with PN-EN ISO 9001:2005), as a part of the process no. 10: HR Management. Furthermore, for increasing the internal visibility of HRS4R implementation, the Action Plan has been included in the first section of the "Employee Handbook", an online resource available as a key support tool for all employees on the internal SharePoint portal of RIC. For increasing the external visibility for HRS4R implementation, the Action Plan has been published on RIC's website (section "About Us"). Therefore, there are several forms of evidence proving alignment of the HRS4R process.

RIC is committed to gaining and maintaining the Seal of Excellence in HR for Researchers and will do its best to positively pass the planned external control. In order to make sure that the actions listed in the Action Plan are truly implemented, all of them have been already transferred to RIC's Task Management System – Asana, where all employees plan and monitor their all daily tasks (not only related to organisational issues, but also research-related aspects) – all employees will be able to observe, engage in and support the progress of the "project" already placed in RIC's task management system: "HR Excellence". All actions have also specific person assigned as in charge of implementation or coordination of implementation. Therefore, all of the actions intended to be implemented are tangible and consequently they will leave deliverables which will become an evidence of completing particular tasks in the future.

The internal review of the process will be ran in parallel to the ISO internal audits that are held at least twice a year and managed by RIC's Finance and HR Team. The internal review of HRS4R implementation will be performed by the same Task Force that was engaged in the Gap Analysis. Furthermore, at least twice a year, internal workshops will be held with all staff to jointly analyse the shortcomings and ensure that the appropriate measures are taken within the continuous improvement process.

After the 24 months of Action Plan implementation, the interim assessment will come up and report will be prepared by the Task Force for external evaluation. Justifications will be given for altered actions and revised timelines, taking into account external circumstances that were not known at the time of establishing the initial action plan. Within three years, RIC will implement and monitor the proposed actions according to the revised action plan incorporating feedback from the interim assessment.

After three years, the external assessment will be conducted in two subsequent stages: an internal review conducted by RIC and assessed by external experts appointed by the EC, followed by a site visit to RIC Headquarters. Three years after the successful assessment and site visit by the external experts, the Task Force will submit to the relevant authority an internal review of how RIC's Action Plan has progressed and gained in quality.