



Interview with the SECURE Trial Organisations – Session 1

March 6th, 2025



Funded by
the European Union



Selected actions: UCY

1. Stakeholder Mapping Workshop

A structured session identifying key partners based on policy influence, career diversity support, resources, networks, and innovation. Result: A prioritized action plan for collaboration.



2. Conference on Diverse Career Paths

Showcased alumni in entrepreneurship, industry, public sector, and civil society to highlight non-linear research careers.



3. Reporting Tool

A pilot tool enabling researchers to report management issues in proposal development and project implementation, leading to data-driven improvements.

Project phases	Issue Category			
	Documents* ₁	Communication* ₂	Human Resources* ₃	Systems Tools* ₄
Proposal Writing				
Project Initiation / preparation				
Project Financial Execution	✓	✓	✓	✓
Project Closure				
	*1 - σύσταση / συμμετοχή/ έγγραφα ΠΚ/ οικονομικά έγγραφα (timesheets, IP rights, templates,	*2 - φορείς χρηματοδότησης εσωτερική & εξωτερική ΠΚ / social media, project website	*3 - προσλήψεις, θέματα εκπαίδευσης	*4 - functionality, use support, project website, page set up,

Selected actions: UNIRI

PILLAR	TOPIC	ACTION	ACTIVITIES FOR ACTION	TARGETS FOR ACTIVITIES	
3	Working Conditions	Review and internally discuss providing commensurate remuneration for researchers	Discuss and draft (internally and with relevant UNIRI bodies) the policy related to measures for the improvement of scientific work at the University of Rijeka – Research Professorship	M6 (July 2024)	Discuss and draft the policy for Measures for the Improvement of Scientific Work at the University of Rijeka by trial M6
			Adopt the Measures for the Improvement of Scientific Work at the University of Rijeka – Research Professorship		Adopt the Measures for the Improvement of Scientific Work at the University of Rijeka – Research Professorship by trial M6
5	Assessment Initiatives	Collect and share best practices on reforming existing research assessment systems	Regularly participate in the activities of CoARA WGs on Academic Career Assessment	M6 (July 2024)	Participate at a minimum of 2 events organised by CoARA either within the WGs or by the WG, specifically related to sharing best practices among signatories by trial M6
			Participate in the Assessment of Early-and-mid-Career Researchers, in the work of YUFE Work Package 5: YUFE Responsible, Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Research and other relevant working groups within YUFE, YERUN and at EU level	M12 (January 2025)	Participate at a minimum of 3 other relevant events within the groups mentioned in the Activities for Action above by trial M12
7	Charter Encouragement	Raise awareness on the revised Charter among researchers	Finalise and adopt the HRS4R Action Plan	M6 (July 2024)	Adopt the HRS4R Action Plan by trial M6
			Present the HRS4R Action plan to Vice-Deans for Science at a session of the Expert Committee for Research and Innovation	M12 (January 2025)	Deliver a presentation on UNIRI HRS4R before the UNIRI Expert Committee for Research and Innovation by M12

Selected actions: NOVA

1. Review and provide more permanent contracts to researchers

- a) NOVA led nationally and secured funding for **228 permanent positions** under the FCT-Tenure program (87% success rate)

This will contribute to:

- **triple the number of researchers with full-time permanent contracts at NOVA and promote staff renewal**

- b) Revision of NOVA's Regulation on Research Careers (pending new ECIC approval)

Pillar 3
#WorkingConditions

FCT-Tenure

2. Promoting Career Development Support

- **400+ Researchers and Research Managers** impacted by training sessions during the trial (*Pillars 1 & 5*)
- NOVA became an **organizational member of Vitae** (tools, resources and recommendations on career dev. for researchers)
- Creation of a **career development section** on NOVA's website, featuring **ResearchComp**

3. Raise awareness for the importance of the Charter, and formally apply to the HR Excellence in Research award

- NOVA initiated its application to the **HR Excellence in Research award**
- **170+ Survey** answers to assess the perception on the Charter recommendations and gather feedback on the practices already in place at NOVA and what is missing.
- Preliminary gap analysis and action plan drafted.



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

Key Challenges/barriers: UCY

◆ Lack of Long-Term Political Vision

Despite recognizing research's value, policymakers hesitate to commit sustained funding due to shifting priorities.

◆ Public Perception & Backlash/Division

Fear of public resentment prevents bold reforms, as tenure is seen as a privilege.

◆ Short-Term Political & Budget Cycles Vs Research Projects

Academic careers need long-term planning, but policy decisions operate on shorter cycles, making tenure-track reforms difficult.



Lessons learnt: UCY

Early and Inclusive Engagement

- Involve researchers, administrators, policymakers, and external partners from the start
- Fosters shared ownership and smooth adoption of new initiatives

Small Wins Lead to Bigger Changes

- Minor adjustments (e.g., simplified administrative processes) build momentum
- Demonstrating tangible benefits encourages broader reforms
- Facilitates tackling complex issues like permanent funding for tenure-track positions

Sustained Political Will & The Role of Open Science

- Highlight societal gains from strong research ecosystems
- Stable academic positions contribute to long-term impact
- Strengthens advocacy for research sustainability
- Enhances political alignment and funding structures
- Supports high-impact, long-term research careers



Challenges/barriers : UNIRI

- No significant challenges for most actions, as they were well aligned with institutional policy efforts.
- The primary concern remain potential delays and uncertainties surrounding the future funding methodology for universities in Croatia, particularly in relation to the new **Lump-Sum Performance-Based Financing Agreement**. This agreement should be established with universities before the start of the 2025/2026 academic year. While negotiations with the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth are ongoing, delays may be expected due to the still unclear framework.
- In the meantime, funding for initiatives such as the reintegration scheme for researchers will continue under the existing framework.

Lessons learned: UNIRI

Importance of Clear Communication

- Effective communication is crucial, regular updates and clear instructions prevent misunderstandings and delays.
- Recommendation: implement a structured communication plan.

Resource Allocation and Planning

- Accurate resource planning and their clustering is essential.
- Recommendation: conduct resource assessments and allocate sufficient time to account for unforeseen needs.

Data Collection and Management

- Efficient data collection processes are vital, while delays in gathering can hinder decision-making and progress.
- Recommendation: streamline data collection and use IT.

Action budget Flexibility

- Budgets need to be flexible and regularly reviewed.
- Recommendation: include contingency funds and conduct periodic reviews.

Timeline Adjustments

- Flexibility in action planning timelines is crucial, since rigid timelines can lead to rushed work and low/er quality.
- Recommendation: build flexibility into planned timelines.

Stakeholder Engagement

- Engaging stakeholders early and often is beneficial, since their feedback provides valuable insights and prevents rework.
- Recommendation: create a stakeholder engagement plan for their buy-in.

Implementation Reviews

- Thorough reviews of implementation plans are necessary, since rushed or incomplete reviews lead to oversights and inefficiencies.
- Recommendation: allocate sufficient time and involve multiple stakeholders.

Training and Development

- Regular updates to training materials are essential to avoid skill gaps and inefficiencies.
- Recommendation: regularly update training materials.

Action approval Processes

- Efficient approval processes are essential for timely implementation, while delays can hinder action completion.
- Recommendation: streamline approval processes and ensure clear communication with decision-makers.

Feedback Integration

- Integrating feedback of stakeholders in APs, thus enhancing the outcomes and ensuring alignment with expectations.
- Recommendation: establish systematic process to collect and integrate feedback.

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Challenges/barriers: NOVA



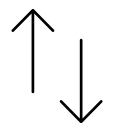
Most actions aligned with the institution's efforts to drive policy reform in line with key national and European recommendations, resulting in fewer significant challenges.



However, being a **comprehensive and decentralized university** presents additional challenges in harmonizing procedures and **implementing cross-cutting initiatives**.



The main concerns/barriers stem from **uncertainties in national legislation** on research careers (ECIC) and the Legal Framework for Higher Education Institutions (RJIES) in Portugal, currently under discussion in the Portuguese Parliament. These uncertainties may lead to delays in implementing policy revisions at the institutional level.



There is also a clear **need to enhance efforts in promoting intersectoral mobility** and raising awareness of **opportunities beyond academia**, especially as dozens of researchers at NOVA approach the end of their fixed-term contracts.

Lessons learned: NOVA



Collaborative work is key: e.g. the success of FCT-Tenure application was the result of a collective effort focused on combating precariousness in science and enhancing conditions for NOVA's researchers. This achievement was made possible through the dedicated work of teams from the academic units and the Rectorate.



Mapping existing initiatives and best practices at each School – some good ideas and practices are already in house and must be implemented at the institutional level.



Stakeholder engagement – collect (and integrate) feedback from interested parties, not only to align policies with national and European recommendations but also to engage and align the vision with the main target groups.



Not everything can be controlled – as a public university governed by national rules and legislation, delays in implementing or updating certain policies may occur due to ongoing changes in the national landscape.

Thank you!



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Interview with the SECURE Trial Organisations – Session 2

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Selected actions: UEFISCDI

Pillar	Topic	Action
1	Intersectoral Mobility	Raise awareness on the wide diversity of research careers in and outside academia
2	Recognition/Interoperability	Collect and share best practices on recognition and support of diverse research careers
3	Working conditions	Collect and share best practices on improving the working conditions for researchers
4	ResearchComp	Raise awareness on ResearchComp and transversal skills/competences for researchers
4	ResearchComp	Collect and share best practices on ResearchComp and transversal skills/competences
5	Research Assessment	Monitor any reforms in research assessment criteria for negative and unwanted effects
5	Assessment Initiatives	Identify structural and administrative barriers to reform research assessment systems
5	Assessment Initiatives	Collect and share best practices on reforming existing research assessment systems
5	Tenure Track	Review regulations and status of TTLMs in national context and locally at organisations
5	Tenure Track	Engage with key stakeholders on TTLMs to collect and share best practices on TTLMs
6	Competitive Union	Review and internally discuss support to attract and reintegrate returning researchers
7	Talent Platforms	Raise awareness on the EURAXESS portal and ERA Talent Platform among researchers
7	Charter Encouragement	Raise awareness on the revised Charter among researchers
7	HRS4R/Charter	Raise awareness on the HRS4R award and its relevance for researchers
8	RelCO	Engage with OECD and key stakeholders on development and implementation of RelCO

Selected actions: PLOCAN

1. Review profiles for research manager and research technician

- Review of roles and responsibilities of PLOCAN's research managers and technicians.
- Develop of a clear profile for research managers and technicians, aligned with the **ESCO classification**.

This will contribute to:

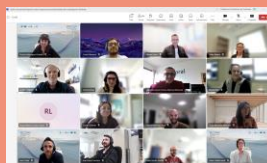
- Enhance role clarity, improve collaboration, optimize resource allocation, and foster professional development.
- Emphasize the complementary nature of their roles in achieving PLOCAN's research objectives.



Pillar 1

2. Promoting career development support

- One **awareness-raising workshop** was organized with an industry expert, focused on non-linear or hybrid research career paths, where best practices, lessons learned, and potential challenges were identified
- One workshop on **intellectual property**.
- Continue to organize workshops with industry experts, expanding the range of topics to include emerging trends and skills needed for hybrid careers.



Pillar 2 y 4

3. Analysis of working conditions

- An analysis of the existing policies and plans, particularly focusing on the **EU Gender Equality Strategy**.
- Based on **best practices and new applicable legislation**, a proposal was developed to improve processes.
- **Best practices** were collected from **other research infrastructures and public administrations**, and shared to support continuous improvement.



Pillar 3

Selected actions: Adoc

1/ Map existing organizational profile onto R1-R4 profiles

- Each private sector job title was scored using a model based on verb strength associated with core missions
- Private sector job titles were then mapped according to the R1-R4 framework to establish clearer correspondences

->This model provides a standardized way to evaluate private sector positions based on responsibilities, ensuring consistency across different sectors.

2/ Track long-term career path of researchers

- Career mobility between academia and industry occurs at multiple stages, demonstrating that transitions are feasible at any time
- Research activities remain central throughout the first three postdoctoral professional experiences

->Understanding these dynamics enables better career guidance and strategic workforce planning, ensuring smoother transitions and sustained professional growth for PhD holders.

3/ Inform recruiters and selectors on the value of alternative career paths and career break

- Webinar gathered recruitment professionals from both the public and private sectors to discuss how career interruptions are perceived in hiring processes.

->Providing valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities that PhD holders/researchers face when dealing with career interruptions and sector transitions.

Challenges/barriers: UEFISCDI

- **Fragmentation of Initiatives** - Different initiatives, consultations and laws happening but sometimes in isolation (e.g. on RA).
- **Harmonizing National and EU Regulations** – Adapting the national policies to European frameworks requires time, more piloting and sustained effort.
- **Navigating Complex European Frameworks** – Understanding and integrating evolving frameworks (e.g., revised EU Charter, HRS4R, ResearchComp) within institutional processes remains a challenge. For instance, ResearchComp is a complex framework that requires additional supporting materials for effective implementation.
- **Limited support - complementary funding beyond initial grants** (RFO + RPO) for returning researchers leading them to leave again; additionally, inadequate resources for work-life balance hinder their reintegration.
- **Pilot Timing Constraints** – 1) awareness raising, other consultations, and parallel piloting actions taking place in the same period, on novelty topics, overwhelming the researchers. 2) **limited engagement** - obtaining timely and positive responses from invited organizations for interviews.

Lessons learnt: UEFISCDI

Ensuring Coherence Across Frameworks Impacting Research Careers

- A **coherent and overarching alignment** of recommendations and requests related to research careers at both the EU and national levels is essential to drive real cultural change.
- Strengthening efforts to align **initiatives and regulations** across EU, national, and institutional levels.
- Defining **clear, yet simplified and comprehensive** procedures and regulations.
- Continuously monitoring **legislation, rules, and regulations**, along with responses to changes in research assessment, researcher careers, and tenure-track model development.

Institutional culture:

- **Build Institutional Awareness & Leverage Institutional Expertise:** Cross-departmental discussions helps clarify significance, impact, and get institutional commitment.
- **Engaging Leadership & program officers:** enabled a comprehensive review of funding support, understanding the level and need of alignment with existing mechanisms at institutional, national, and European level

Learning from Best Practices

- Engaging in discussions on different models/frameworks to learn from others' experiences and adapt to the national context.

Lessons learnt: UEFISCDI

Long-term Support for Returning Researchers (complement grants)

- Ensuring sustainable support (grants + institutional support) for returning researchers is crucial; RPOs should implement structured reintegration programs to provide stability beyond the UEFISCDI grant period.

Awareness Raising

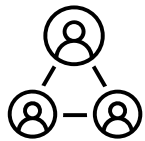
- **Dissemination** activities and **appropriate tools** can ensure the successful implementation of pilot activities – e.g., the role of regular subject-targeted dissemination in BrainMap communities.
- **Increasing awareness and knowledge** at both the team and institutional levels regarding these interventions and their benefits for the RDI community.
- **Regular and consistent dissemination** of research career initiatives, incorporating international best practices that highlight their benefits within the RDI community.

Post-SECURE: Next Steps

Diving deeper into key topics to:

- **Test** appropriate measures through future projects and **implement** further strategic actions.
- **Link to other relevant** institutional and national **strategic topics**.
- **Integrate outcomes** into the institutional **dissemination/engagement approach** for long-term impact within wider national RDI (topic) communities.

Challenges/barriers: PLOCAN



- ☐ **Resistance to change:** Some delays in specific actions, primarily due to the complexity of internal changes and the time required for them to take effect. Additionally, resistance to change posed a significant challenge.



- ☐ **Administrative barriers** also contributed to delays, making the implementation process more difficult.

Lessons learned: PLOCAN



- **Increased awareness and understanding** of these initiatives and their benefits within the organization.



- **Stronger alignment with EU initiatives** enhancing skills development and competence recognition.



- **A comprehensive analysis of working conditions and policies**, benchmarked against best practices, identifies key opportunities for improvement and innovation.



- **Emphasis on internal training and development**, essential for fostering innovation and supporting team member growth.



- **Increased internal training efforts** to support innovation and career growth.
- **Active senior management involvement**, crucial for driving internal change and organizational development.

Challenges & lessons learned: Adoc

- Identifying the relevant criteria to fully define the R1-R4 profiles and establish a clear distinction between the roles
- Aligning with Adoc Talent Management's values: innovation, doctorate valorization, and empowering researchers
- Through SECURE, Adoc Talent Management bridges the gap between academia and industry by improving career transparency, standardizing skill recognition, and facilitating smoother transitions
- Contributing to stronger, sustainable careers for researchers by enhancing understanding of career pathways

Lessons learned: Adoc

- Developing a training module on interdisciplinarity to prepare ECR for effective collaboration
- Creating documentation to support the implementation of the R1-R4 framework in the private sector
- Enrolling in the HRS4R process to align HR practices with European standards
- Helping companies adopt best HR practices for researchers, strengthening academia-industry collaboration