



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI  
FIRENZE



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

**UNIFI**  
**ACTION PLAN 2024-2026**

## ACTION NUMBER 1: INCREASE OF FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR RESEARCH RELATED ACTIVITIES

**Goal:** Provide adequate support to UNIFI researchers to promote their participation in national, European, and international funding programmes.

**Remarks:** Participation in National, European and International funding programmes requires adequate skills and expertise. In order to promote success rates, researchers, starting from the younger ones, must be properly trained and receive adequate support. The University of Florence has foreseen dedicated measures in this field since the very first HRS4R Action Plan covering the period 2018-2020. The University Steering Group shares the firm belief that only long term efforts in this field can allow a proper fulfillment of this goal. Therefore this Action has been included in Action Plan 2021-2023 and it is going to be maintained as well in the new Plan for 2024-2026. The following Actions are going to be undertaken:

1. internal communication and dissemination of available funding opportunities through dedicated internal newsletters, posts on the website and emails to the internal mailing list of interested researchers
2. support services for proposals preparation provided by two dedicated offices of the University Infrastructures and Research Services Area: the European and International Research Office and the National Research Office. Both units can rely upon senior skilled personnel that has been working for several years in the field of research projects preparation and management (<https://www.unifi.it/p11721.html>)
3. organization of periodic info days, workshops and seminars dedicated to available funding opportunities, on average at least 2 or 3 each year
4. training courses for researchers to learn correct techniques of proposal preparation. Each year two courses are offered to PhD students (R1): one providing a general overview of the funding programmes landscape (6 hours) and a second one to teach them basic techniques for proposal writing (6 hours). R2,R3 and R4 are going to rely upon an e-learning course that is currently under preparation, allowing personnel to follow the training path most convenient according to their level of expertise (basic, intermediate or advanced).
5. For the most relevant funding schemes UNIFI web site offers to researchers dedicated web pages containing useful information (within the web site intranet)

<b>Status of Implementation</b>	EXTENDED
<b>Action Timing</b>	Q3 2026
<b>Responsible Unit</b>	Infrastructures and Research Support Area
<b>Indicator(s)/Target(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To maintain an average of approximately 1000 subscribers to the University information service about funding opportunities</li> <li>- To maintain on average a level of 1000-1200 proposals submitted each year within available funding programmes</li> <li>- constant monitoring of relevant success rates and identification of possible corrective measures in case of need</li> <li>- at least two training courses offered each year to PhD students</li> <li>- at least two events organized each year to promote participation in available funding schemes (info days, seminars, workshops, etc.)</li> </ul>

**ACTION NUMBER 2: YOUNG RESEARCHERS CALL FOR GRANTS**

**Goal:** To promote at least one annual call to support young researcher’s projects  
**Remarks:** The University of Florence makes available each year its own resources to promote the effective research freedom and research independence for researchers especially in the first stages of their career.

The funds made available are assigned through an open competition promoted annually. <https://www.unifi.it/cmpro-v-p-10809.html>. Each participant is requested to submit a project proposal for a maximum duration of 24 months, to be evaluated under the three usual European evaluation criteria of excellence, impact and implementation.

Each selected proposal gets a funding of approximately 40,000/50,000 EUR corresponding to at least 8 projects supported each year. The University of Florence has foreseen dedicated measures in this field since the very first HRS4R Action Plan covering the period 2018-2020. The University Steering Group shares the firm belief that only long term efforts in this field can allow a proper fulfillment of this goal. Therefore this Action has been included in Action Plan 2021-2023 and it is going to be maintained as well in the new Plan for 2024-2026.

<b>Status of Implementation</b>	EXTENDED
<b>Action Timing</b>	Q3 2026
<b>Responsible Unit</b>	Infrastructures and Research Support Area
<b>Indicator(s)/Target(s)</b>	at least one annual call to support young researcher’s projects.

**ACTION NUMBER 3: RESEARCH INTEGRITY CODE**

**Goal:** To promote the update of existing internal guidelines on research integrity by taking into account ethics related implications of the more recent scientific and technological developments, promoting at the same time awareness about such principles.  
**Remarks:**  
 Even though the ethics principles are already strongly embedded in the University guidelines and guiding principles, recent scientific and technological developments (such as AI) made evident the need for an update of the current prescriptions.

The following Actions are going to be undertaken:

1. check on the existing regulations in order to update them and, if possible, to include them in one unique set of guidelines
2. awareness raising about ethics issues, with a specific focus on the most recent updates in this field
3. dedicated training courses on ethics issues, especially for young and newly appointed researchers including dedicated indications about ethics issues in the welcome kit foreseen under Action 5

<b>Status of Implementation</b>	NEW
<b>Action Timing</b>	Q3 2025
<b>Responsible Unit</b>	Infrastructures and Research Support Area
<b>Indicator(s)/Target(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- preparation and publication of revised internal guidelines for ethics</li> <li>- publication on the web site</li> <li>- communication and dissemination of the revised guidelines</li> <li>- at least one training course each year about ethics issues</li> <li>- publication of the University welcome kit including indications about ethics issues</li> </ul>

**ACTION NUMBER 4 – HRS4R SENSIBILISATION ACTIONS**

**Goal:** To promote awareness raising within UNIFI about the HRS4R process

**Remarks:** During the first 24 months after getting the logo it was noted that the knowledge about the HRS4R principles within UNIFI was still limited. Within the updated Action Plan 2021-2023 a new action has been therefore foreseen specifically devoted to promote awareness about such principles.

This Action is going to be maintained as well in Action Plan 2024-2026 including the following measures:

1. Information and news about HRS4R in due evidence within the UNIFI website, from the very main page
2. maintaining the HR logo included within UNIFI headed paper
3. maintaining the HR logo included within email signatures of all personnel
4. Periodic meetings with Researchers Representatives in each Department spreading information and collecting feedback about the HRS4R process
5. Brochure or Leaflet about HRS4R to be distributed among researchers
6. Periodic surveys

<b>Status of Implementation</b>	EXTENDED
<b>Action Timing</b>	Q3 2026
<b>Responsible Unit</b>	HRS4R Working Group
<b>Indicator(s)/Target(s)</b>	Indicators/Targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- website to be updated annually</li> <li>- meetings with researchers representatives every two months</li> <li>- one additional survey within the end of 2026, including a check of the level of awareness about HRS4R attained</li> </ul>

<b>ACTION NUMBER 5 – RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT</b>	
<p><b>Goal:</b> Providing support to UNIFI research groups to access available research infrastructure and to access the needed research equipment</p> <p><b>Remarks:</b> In order to improve UNIFI research environment the University the following implementation measures have been identified:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. to identify all available research infrastructures and to create a dedicated catalogue available on the web site by providing indications on how to access them</li> <li>2. to include the above mentioned information in the welcome kit included under Action 9</li> <li>3. to promote each year an internal call to support the purchase of equipment for UNIFI interested research groups</li> <li>4. to promote each year public engagement initiatives such as the annual researchers night event and a dedicated call to support public engagement initiatives</li> </ol>	
<b>Status of Implementation</b>	EXTENDED
<b>Action Timing</b>	Q2 2026
<b>Responsible Unit</b>	Infrastructures and Research Services Area Public Engagement Office
<b>Indicator(s)/Target(s)</b>	Indicators/Targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- drafting and publication of the list of available infrastructures and access criteria within the Welcome Kit foreseen under Action 9</li> <li>- annual call to support the purchase of research equipment- annual public engagement call</li> </ul>

<b>ACTION NUMBER 6 – PROMOTING STABILITY AND PERMANENCE OF EMPLOYMENT</b>	
<p><b>Goal:</b> To promote as many tenure track positions as possible in order to support stable career paths</p> <p><b>Remarks:</b> The University of Florence as a public higher education institution is bound by national law to offer each position available through public open selections. Advancement in career is therefore possible only through participation within public selection procedures. According to national law 240/2010 it is however possible to promote tenure track positions.</p> <p>Therefore, the university, in order to promote as far as possible stability and permanence of employment, has decided since the first Action Plan proposed to commit itself to offer annually as many tenure track positions as possible to create paths of career stabilization.</p> <p>Since the strategy of tenure track positions seems from many points of views to have proven effective in promoting stability and permanence in employment the action originally foreseen has been extended also for Action Plan 2024-2026.</p>	
<b>Status of Implementation</b>	EXTENDED
<b>Action Timing</b>	Q3 2024
<b>Responsible Unit</b>	Human Resources Area
<b>Indicator(s)/Target(s)</b>	Indicators/Targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- promoting 60/70 new tenure track positions</li> </ul>

**ACTION NUMBER 7 – PROMOTING PARTICIPATION UNDER EXCELLENCE PROGRAMMES**

**Goal:** Promoting Participation in EU funded excellence programme ERC and Marie Sklodowska Curie Actions

**Remarks:** Participation in EU funded excellence programme ERC and Marie Sklodowska Curie Actions has been identified by the University of Florence since its very first Action Plans as one of the key measures to be undertaken to promote excellence in research and to attract the most promising researchers from abroad. In recognition of the high level profile of candidates funded under European excellence programmes such as MSCA and ERC the Italian Ministry for Education and Research itself has foreseen the possibility of direct appointment as permanent researchers of PIs funded within such programmes.

Therefore UNIFI has identified the promotion in the participation in such programmes as an additional tool to promote stability and permanence in employment. In order to continue supporting and promoting the participation of UNIFI researchers within such funding schemes and to attract the best talents from abroad to work at UNIFI under such funding schemes, the following Actions have been foreseen:

1. Annual prize "An Idea for Excellent Science" to reward internal researchers with promising track records and competitive research projects in line with ERC selection criteria
2. Annual call "UNIFI4Future" to support the best promising internal and external candidates to prepare an ERC Starting Grant Proposal
3. Dedicated helpdesk for ERC projects: the European and International Research Office assists all applicants to MSCA and ERC grants by providing financial, administrative and technical counselling and mentoring
4. Dedicated internal Task Force ERC including UNIFI Grant winners providing mentoring to future ERC applicants

<b>Status of Implementation</b>	EXTENDED
<b>Action Timing</b>	Q3 2026
<b>Responsible Unit</b>	Infrastructures and Research Services Area
<b>Indicator(s)/Target(s)</b>	<p>Indicators/Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annual prize "An Idea for Excellent Science", three prizes awarded each year</li> <li>- Annual Call for proposals "UNIFI4Future" to support up to 5 research projects of 50.000-70.000 EUR each providing each selected researcher with an employment contract of 18 months and dedicated research funds to prepare a ERC starting grant proposal</li> </ul>

<b>ACTION NUMBER 8 – COARA Coalition on Reforming Research Assessment</b>	
<b>Goal:</b> Promoting an update of research assessment criteria	
<b>Remarks:</b> The University of Florence has adhered since November 2022 to the newly established European Coalition on the Reform of Research Assessment deeming as crucial the need to promote an update in assessment practices for research and researchers, with the overarching goal to maximise the quality and impact of research.	
<b>Status of Implementation</b>	NEW
<b>Action Timing</b>	Q1 2024 - Q2 2026
<b>Responsible Unit</b>	HRS4R Working Group
<b>Indicator(s)/Target(s)</b>	Indicators/Targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Accession to the COARA Agreement</li> <li>● Preparation of a dedicated Action Plan- Dedicated measures to be finalized within 5 years to give proper application within the University of Florence to the COARA Commitments</li> </ul>

<b>ACTION NUMBER 9 : WELCOME KIT FOR EMPLOYEES</b>	
<b>Goal:</b> To prepare a welcome kit including relevant information about applicable contractual and legal obligations, as long as practical advice on available support services	
<b>Remarks:</b> The internal analysis carried out shows that all relevant contractual and legal obligations are mentioned in the appointment contracts or provided to the appointed researchers as separate annexes/documents.  However, through the survey researchers underlined the complexity of orienting themselves among the huge number of regulations, rules and guidelines applicable to each different topic. The Steering Committee decided to include in the new Action Plan 2024-2026 a new Action consisting in the preparation of a welcome kit, a guide, including applicable rules and relevant contact persons for each one of the following topics:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● contractual obligations</li> <li>● health and safety</li> <li>● social security rights</li> <li>● non discrimination, inclusion and gender related measures</li> <li>● research integrity principles- data protection</li> <li>● IPR</li> <li>● Complaints/Conflicts Management</li> <li>● Open Science (including open access, data management, etc.)</li> <li>● Mobility opportunities- Available research infrastructures and how to access them</li> <li>● Support for participation in funding schemes</li> <li>● Public Engagement Initiatives</li> <li>● HRS4R at UNIFI</li> </ul>	
<b>Status of Implementation</b>	NEW
<b>Action Timing</b>	Q3 2026
<b>Responsible Unit</b>	Working Group HRS4R
<b>Indicator(s)/Target(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Finalization of the Welcome Kit</li> <li>- Publication of the Welcome Kit on the Website</li> <li>- Delivery of the welcome kit to each newly appointed researcher and to each University Department so that they can as well distribute them among their personnel in case of need</li> </ul>

ACTION NUMBER 10 – IMPROVING TRAINING ON SOFT SKILLS	
<p><b>Goal:</b> To provide all researchers categories with high quality soft skills training</p> <p><b>Remarks:</b> Currently the University of Florence has a rich offer of training courses on soft skills but only for PhD students this set of courses has been organized in a unique annual catalogue with a centralized system for enrollment. For other researchers categories news about the courses available is promoted on a case by case basis.</p> <p>Within the recent survey delivered at the end of 2023, many researchers confirmed the need for an improvement of training courses offered about soft skills. The Steering Group therefore decided to rationalize the existing soft skills training offer also by cooperating with UNIFI Teaching and Learning Centre in order to update the training offer and identify suitable solutions for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- training on ethics</li> <li>- training on open science</li> <li>- training on IPR</li> <li>- training on research valorization through startup creation</li> <li>- training on European Projects</li> <li>- training on Public Engagement</li> </ul>	
<b>Status of Implementation</b>	NEW
<b>Action Timing</b>	Q2 2025
<b>Responsible Unit</b>	Working Group HRS4R
<b>Indicator(s)/Target(s)</b>	Indicators/Targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- drafting a general catalogue of soft skills courses offered</li> <li>- definition of the procedure for enrollment for each researchers' category</li> <li>- organization of at least one course on each one of the topic identified each year</li> </ul>



**ACTION NUMBER 11 – COMPLAINTS EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT**

**Goal:** Promoting awareness about available services to manage complaints/conflicts

**Remarks:** The Action proposed consists in promoting the proper knowledge among young researchers of available services they can access to in case of complaints/conflicts with their supervisors. Even though the University has an internal Ombudsman (Garante dei Diritti), a Guarantee committee for equal opportunities, non-discrimination and the well-being of employees (CUG - Comitato Unico di Garanzia) and a Whistleblowing service, the survey made evident that many researchers are not aware about them nor how to access these services in case of need. 80% of researchers declared not being aware about the whistleblowing service, 65% not being aware about the CUG services and approximately 50% not being aware about the Ombudsman.

It was therefore decided to include an Action aiming at promoting awareness about these services and publicize the mechanisms to access them by undertaking the following actions:

1. including a full description of these services under the Welcome Kit foreseen in Action 9
2. promoting information campaigns and news about the three services
3. further check about the level of awareness attained in the survey that is going to be delivered within the end of 2026

<b>Status of Implementation</b>	NEW
<b>Action Timing</b>	Q1 2025 Q2 2026
<b>Responsible Unit</b>	Working Group HRS4R
<b>Indicator(s)/Target(s)</b>	Indicators/Targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Full description about each one of the three services available included within the Welcome Kit foreseen in Action 9</li> <li>- Welcome kit delivered to each newly appointed researcher</li> <li>- Welcome kit delivered to each Department to be spread among their personnel</li> <li>- an internal news delivered about the services available</li> <li>- dedicated questions about this topic to be included in the survey delivered by the end of 2026</li> </ul>