

**ACTION PLAN
FOR THE AWARD RENEWAL
OF THE HRS4R AT ICFO**

July 2026

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1. DESCRIPTION

ICFO is a public research centre devoted to the science and technologies of light, with the core mission to perform research at the highest international level by fostering an environment where talented people can develop their full potential, generate extraordinary ideas, and transform them into new knowledge and applications that benefit society. Founded in 2002, ICFO has grown to over 450 ICFOians from more than 60 nationalities across 25 research groups, with more than 360 PhD theses defended and over 4,600 authored publications.

Research spans six areas of photonics with direct impact on health, energy, quantum technologies, and industry, supported by 54 ERC grants, 135 European projects, and 15 spin-off companies launched. ICFO holds the Severo Ochoa Excellence distinction for four consecutive periods since 2011, one of only three Spanish research centres to have achieved this.

In January 2014, ICFO endorsed a Declaration of Commitment to the Principles of the Charter for European Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. In 2015, ICFO was granted the HR Excellence in Research award by the European Commission. In 2018 we undertook the self-audit which allowed us to highlight our achievements and identify further actions to be strengthened. With this process we successfully passed the Interim assessment step. In 2021 we presented a new action plan, the site visit took place, and the award was renewed. We are now preparing the submission for the next renewal, presenting the progress made against the 2021 action plan and setting out the priorities and actions for the 2026–2029 period.

The present document summarizes the actions to be accomplished between 2026 and 2029, identified through an internal audit involving relevant key actors across the institution. It reflects ICFO's ongoing commitment to continuous improvement in all areas covered by the Charter and Code, and sets out the priorities that will guide the institution's HR strategy in the coming period.

2. METHODOLOGY

The internal review was conducted following the methodology established during the implementation of ICFO's Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) and refined through successive review cycles, ensuring continuity while incorporating lessons learned from previous evaluations.

The process combined a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of the 2021 Action Plan with a forward-looking review of institutional priorities. Evidence on the implementation of each action was compiled by the relevant operational teams, while the standing committees responsible for the different HRS4R thematic areas reviewed progress, assessed the effectiveness of existing actions, and identified opportunities for further improvement.

The review also considered the recommendations received during the 2022 HRS4R renewal assessment, together with ICFO's own strategic priorities, ensuring that the revised Action Plan reflects both continuous institutional improvement and alignment with the European Charter for Researchers.

The Executive Direction oversaw the review process to ensure consistency with ICFO's institutional strategy and approved the resulting Action Plan.

3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

We hereby include the Strategic Objectives that were identified in the initial GAP analysis with the aim of streamlining improvements in key areas we identified to work on in the scope of the HRS4R at ICFO. These key strategic objectives remain valid, and remain in-place for this award renewal-stage implementation plan and work packages:

- Continuous enhancement of the **Recruiting and Hiring Life-Cycle**, aiming to attract an increasing number of competitive and outstanding candidates for ICFO research and operational positions, and to improve the candidate and onboarding experience through modern, OTM-R-compliant tools and processes.
- Continuous enhancement of **Career Development** for researchers and operational staff, with the aim of offering the best opportunities for personal and professional growth, fostering researcher independence and leadership at all career stages, and supporting long-term career trajectories both within and beyond ICFO.
- Continuous enhancement of **Good Practices in Research**, with the aim of strengthening research integrity, open science, and ethical responsibility across the institution and embedding these as core elements of ICFO's research culture.
- Continuous enhancement of the **Research Environment**, with the aim of providing the most fair, inclusive, transparent, and stimulating environment for world-class research, including through strengthened supervision practices, well-being support, and diversity and inclusion initiatives.
- Continuous enhancement of **Employment Transparency and Working Conditions**, ensuring that all researchers and operational staff have access to clear, accurate, and up-to-date information about their employment conditions and rights.

4. ACTION PLAN 2026-2029

The work packages in this Action Plan are numbered from WP7 onwards, maintaining continuity with the numbering established in the Euraxess platform and with the work packages presented in ICFO's previous HRS4R action plans that have been completed. This ensures coherent tracking and cross-referencing of actions across successive implementation cycles. In this section the new actions that will be done during the 2026-2029 period are presented.

WP7: Supervision and relationship with the Supervisor

The relationship between researchers and their supervisors is central to scientific development. ICFO promotes a culture of supervision based on trust, open communication, mutual respect and shared responsibility, fostering successful and rewarding research collaborations.

Action 1: Strengthen good practices in PhD students' supervision

ICFO will review and update its Code of Good Practices for Students and Supervisors, reinforcing the responsibilities of both doctoral candidates and their supervisors and ensuring the document reflects current institutional expectations and EC recommendations on supervision quality. The revised Code will be actively disseminated to all research groups, not simply made available on the intranet. In parallel, ICFO will develop and launch a supervision training program targeted specifically at supervisors, with particular emphasis on early-career researchers who are taking on co-supervision responsibilities for the first time. Training will cover pedagogical practice, feedback mechanisms, and the institutional framework within which supervision takes place.

Indicators

- WP7.1.1 Updated Code of Good Practices published on intranet and disseminated to all research groups. Target: by Q2 2027.
- WP7.1.2 Supervision training program launched, with at least one cohort delivered. Target: by Q4 2027.
- WP7.1.3 Percentage of PhD students reporting satisfaction with the quality of supervision in the annual PhD student survey. Target: ≥75% reporting satisfaction by end of 2028.
- WP7.1.4 Percentage of supervisors who have completed supervision training by end of action plan period. Target: 100% of new supervisors taking on first co-supervision since 2027; ≥60% of all active supervisors by 2028.

Action 2: Foster good relationships between PhD students and supervisors

Effective supervision depends not only on scientific guidance but on the quality of the working relationship between student and supervisor. ICFO will review and update the policy on student support and conflict resolution, ensuring that procedures are clear, accessible, and known to all parties before conflicts arise. The revised policy will be disseminated alongside the updated Code of Good Practices. ICFO will also develop and offer training in communication and conflict resolution skills for both supervisors and doctoral candidates, equipping them with practical tools to manage the challenges that commonly arise in long-term supervisory relationships.

Indicators

- WP7.2.1 Revised student support and conflict resolution policy published and disseminated. Target: by Q2 2027.
- WP7.2.2 Communication and conflict resolution training offered, with number of attendees tracked. Target: first delivery by Q4 2027.
- WP7.2.3 Percentage of PhD students aware of the conflict resolution procedure, measured via PhD student survey. Target: ≥80% aware by end of 2027.
- WP7.2.4 Percentage of PhD students who report feeling they have access to appropriate support if a problem arises with their supervisor. Target: ≥75% by end of 2028.

Action 3: Define and launch a teaching training program for postdoctoral researchers

Postdoctoral researchers at ICFO increasingly take on teaching and co-supervision responsibilities as part of their professional development, yet formal training in pedagogy and teaching practice is not currently structured or systematically offered. ICFO will design and launch a teaching training program specifically for postdoctoral researchers, covering core competencies in university-level teaching, course design, and assessment. The program will complement existing co-supervision training and will be positioned as a career development opportunity for postdocs with aspirations to academic positions.

Indicators

- WP7.3.1 Teaching training program defined and launched. Target: by Q4 2027.
- WP7.3.2 Number of postdoctoral researchers completing the program tracked annually. Target: first cohort ≥15 participants.
- WP7.3.3 Percentage of participants reporting that the program improved their confidence and competence in teaching, as measured by post-program evaluation. Target: ≥80% rating the program as effective or highly effective.

WP8: Public Engagement

As a publicly funded research institution, ICFO recognizes its responsibility to share scientific knowledge with society. Public engagement is therefore an integral part of the Institute's mission, fostering dialogue with citizens, inspiring future generations, strengthening trust in science, and maximising the societal impact of research.

Action 1: Consolidate career development events that bring visibility to professional opportunities

ICFO will consolidate and expand its portfolio of career development events that expose researchers to the full breadth of professional opportunities in photonics, deep tech and related fields. These multi-session symposia will be designed for master students, PhD students, and early-stage postdoctoral researchers, and will present the professional landscape across academic research, industry, and entrepreneurship. Events will bring in external speakers from diverse career paths, introduce participants to the non-technical skills valued across these sectors, and actively grow researchers' professional networks beyond the ICFO circle. The program responds directly to researcher feedback indicating that career pathway visibility is one of the most valued forms of institutional support at early career stages.

Indicators

- WP8.1.1: number of career development events held per year. Target: ≥ 2 events per year from 2027.
- WP8.1.2: Post-event feedback report produced after each event, recording attendance and participant feedback. Target: For every event.
- WP8.1.3: Percentage of participants reporting that the event improved their understanding of career pathways including those outside academia, as measured by post-event survey. Target: $\geq 75\%$ of respondents at each event.
- WP8.1.4: Total unique researcher participants across all career development events per year. Target: ≥ 150 unique participants per year by 2028.

Action 2: Define and launch an outreach training

ICFO will develop and launch a structured outreach training program for master students and PhD students, equipping them with the skills to communicate their research and the science they work in to diverse audiences and using a range of formats from public talks and science festivals to interactive demonstrations, and engagement with schools. The program will cover the theory and practice of science communication, the development of accessible content, the design of interactive outreach activities and the opportunity to practice the content learned in real outreach activities. It will be coordinated between the Outreach team and Academic Affairs, drawing on ICFO's existing outreach infrastructure and networks.

Indicators

- WP8.2.1: Outreach training program documented and launched. Target: by Q2 2027.
- WP8.2.2: Number of researchers completing the program annually. Target: ≥ 20 per year from 2027.
- WP8.2.3: Indicator: Percentage of program graduates who go on to design or lead at least one outreach activity within 12 months of completing training. Target: Baseline to be established from first cohort (2027/28); $\geq 50\%$ by end of action plan.
- WP8.2.4: Indicator: Number of researcher-led outreach activities per year. Target: Baseline to be established in 2026 (current level); 20% increase by end of 2028.

WP9: Publish PI Evaluation and Professional Development framework

Excellent research environments are built by excellent scientific leaders. Through a clear framework for evaluation and professional development, ICFO seeks to support Principal Investigators in strengthening their leadership, supervision and mentoring capabilities.

Action 1: Update and publish the PI evaluation framework

ICFO Group Leaders (Principal Investigators) are subject to several formal evaluation processes during their tenure. These include: the tenure review process at the end of the initial contract period; mid-tenure review for tenured Group Leaders; ICREA evaluation for Group Leaders holding ICREA professorships; and assessment conducted in coordination with UPC for Group Leaders with joint academic appointments. In addition, the Director holds responsibility for the overall performance assessment of Group Leaders as part of the institution's executive governance. ICFO will update and publish internally a clear overview of the existing PI evaluation framework, making the process transparent and accessible to current and prospective Group Leaders.

Indicators

- WP9.1.1: PI evaluation framework document published internally, covering all evaluation processes Target: By Q2 2027.
- WP9.1.2: Framework communicated directly to all current Group Leaders Target: Within 1 month of publication.
- WP9.1.3: Percentage of Group Leaders who report being aware of and understanding the full PI evaluation framework, as measured in a targeted survey. Target: ≥85% by end of 2027.

Action 2. Introduce structured mid-tenure feedback for Tenure-Track Group Leaders

ICFO will develop a structured mid-tenure feedback process for Tenure-Track Group Leaders, providing a formal checkpoint that is separate from and in addition to the formal tenure review. This process will provide Group Leaders with constructive feedback on their scientific leadership, team management, mentoring quality, and contribution to institutional culture. The feedback will draw on structured input from institutional leadership, peers, and group members.

Indicators

- WP9.2.1: Mid-tenure feedback process designed, documented, and approved by the Executive Leadership. Target: By Q4 2026.
- WP9.2.2: Process piloted with all currently eligible Tenure-Track Group Leaders. Target: By Q2 2027.
- WP9.2.3: Percentage of Group Leaders who received mid-tenure feedback reporting that the process was useful for their professional development, as measured by post-feedback survey. Target: ≥80% rating the process as useful or very useful.
- WP9.2.4: Process formally embedded into the PI evaluation cycle for all new Tenure-Track Group Leaders from 2027 onward. Target: Confirmed by Executive Leadership minute or policy document.

Action 3. Provide professional development resources for Group Leaders

ICFO will identify and make available professional development opportunities specifically designed for Group Leaders, covering areas such as scientific leadership, team management, supervision best practice, and grant strategy. This will draw on existing BIST and ICREA programs, external leadership development resources, and targeted internal workshops.

Indicators

- WP9.3.1: Minimum number of professional development resources or events made available to Group Leaders per year. Target: ≥1 per year from 2027
- WP9.3.2: Participation rate per activity recorded and reported to ET annually. Target: Reported each year.
- WP9.3.3: Percentage of Group Leaders who have accessed at least one professional development resource within the action plan period. Target: ≥60% by end of 2028.
- WP9.3.4: Satisfaction score from post-activity evaluation. Target: ≥4.0/5.0 average rating.

WP10: Career Development for Operational Teams

Research excellence depends on the contribution of the entire institution. ICFO therefore invests in the continuous professional development of its operational teams, recognising that outstanding professional staff are essential partners in enabling world-class research.

Action 1. Run an annual training needs assessment for all operational teams

ICFO conducts an annual training needs assessment for all operational teams, launched each year in Q4 to inform the training offering for the following calendar year. Team Leaders gather development needs from their team members and submit them to the Professional Development unit, which consolidates the inputs and identifies the key training priorities for the year ahead. The needs assessment process ensures that the training offer is demand-driven and reflects the actual development needs of operational staff, rather than a fixed catalogue of courses. Input from 100% of Team Leaders is required before the plan is finalized.

Indicators

- WP10.1.1: Annual training needs assessment completed with 100% Team Leader participation and published on intranet. Target: By Q4 each year for the following year's plan.
- WP10.1.2: Percentage of training activities in the approved Training Plan that are directly traceable to a need identified in the annual assessment. Target: ≥75%.

Action 2. Develop and publish an annual Training Plan for operational teams, covering all training activities from January to December

Based on the consolidated needs assessment, the Professional Development team develops a Training Plan covering all training activities for the following calendar year. The plan identifies the most demanded courses, assigns training providers or internal trainers with the relevant expertise, and sets a schedule for delivery across the year. Before publication, the Training Plan is submitted for formal approval to the Executive Leadership, the Work council, and the Board of Trustees, ensuring governance-level accountability for the investment in operational staff development. The approved plan is then communicated to all teams before the start of the calendar year.

Indicators

- WP10.2.1: Training Plan approved by Board of Trustees and communicated to all operational teams before the start of the calendar year. Target: Each year from January 2027.
- WP10.2.2: Percentage of Team Leaders confirming the Training Plan addresses their team's development priorities, measured by brief survey after the plan is communicated. Target: ≥80%.

Action 3. Implement the approved Training Plan and monitor participation and satisfaction throughout the year

Throughout the year, the Professional Development unit implements the approved Training Plan and monitors delivery, participation, and quality. Attendance is tracked for each activity, and a short satisfaction survey is distributed to participants after each course. The number of training activities offered is maintained or increased year-on-year. The participation rate per activity is recorded and reported annually. The target for employee satisfaction with the training offering is a score above 4 out of 5 in annual feedback. Results are shared with team leaders and inform the following year's needs assessment cycle.

Indicators

- WP10.3.1: Number of training activities delivered per year. Target: Maintain or increase year-on-year; minimum floor to be set from 2023–2025 baseline data.
- WP10.3.2: Participation rate per activity recorded and reported annually. Target: Reported each year.
- WP10.3.3: Employee satisfaction with the overall training offering. Target: $\geq 4.0/5.0$ in annual operational staff feedback survey.
- WP10.3.4: Percentage of operational staff completing at least one training activity per year. Target: Baseline to be established in 2026; $\geq 70\%$ by end of 2028.

WP11 Enhancement of the Relocation and Onboarding resources and processes

Joining ICFO means becoming part of a shared scientific community. Beyond supporting relocation, ICFO seeks to ensure that newcomers quickly understand the Institute's mission, values and culture, enabling their successful integration into both the institution and its research environment.

Action 1: Review and improve relocation resources

ICFO will conduct a structured review of all pre-arrival and relocation assistance information, updating and republishing it on the ICFO website by the end of 2026. The review will ensure that information is accurate, accessible, and comprehensive, covering the full range of practical needs faced by international researchers and their families: administrative registration, housing, healthcare, schooling, and orientation to Barcelona. The target is that more than 80% of newcomers report, via a post-arrival survey, that the relocation information and services met their individual and family needs.

Indicators:

- WP11.1.1: Relocation information reviewed, updated, and republished on the ICFO website. Target: By Q4 2026.
- WP11.1.2: Post-arrival survey instrument in place to collect newcomer feedback on relocation services. Target: From January 2027.
- WP11.1.3: Percentage of newcomers reporting, via post-arrival survey, that relocation information and services met their individual and family needs. Target: $\geq 80\%$ by end of 2027, maintained throughout the action plan period.

Action 2: Define and launch Onboarding actions that align newcomers with institutional missions and culture

ICFO will define and launch a structured institutional onboarding program designed to systematically align all newcomers, researchers and operational staff alike, with ICFO's mission, culture, and ways of working. An updated onboarding protocol will be approved by the Executive Leadership and published internally by the end of 2026. From 2027 onwards, all newcomers will undergo the structured onboarding program. The program is designed to ensure that, within six months of joining, more than 80% of newcomers can clearly articulate how their work contributes to the institution's objectives and understand the functions of the teams they need to collaborate with to perform effectively.

Indicators:

- WP11.2.1: Institutional onboarding protocol approved by ET and published. Target: By Q4 2026.
- WP11.2.2: Program delivered to 100% of newcomers joining from Q1 2027. Target: Tracked per cohort.
- WP11.2.3: Percentage of newcomers who, at the 6-month check-in, report understanding of ICFO's mission, their contribution to institutional objectives, and the functions of teams they work with, measured via structured 6-month survey or check-in instrument. Target: ≥80% from 2027 cohort onward.

WP12: Embed Open Science principles into ICFO's research culture and practices

Open Science strengthens the quality, transparency and impact of research. ICFO therefore promotes the progressive integration of Open Science principles into its research culture, supporting collaboration, reproducibility and the responsible dissemination of knowledge.

Action 1. Update existing policies to increase the number of scientific outputs published via open access

ICFO will update two existing institutional policies — the Open Access Policy for scientific publications and the Research Data Management Policy — to reflect current EU and funder requirements and reinforce ICFO's commitment to making its research outputs as openly accessible as possible. Both policies build on existing frameworks and will be revised through a consultative process with key institutional stakeholders, including the Library, Research Support, and representative Group Leaders. The updated policies will be published on the ICFO website and communicated to all researchers. They will serve as the reference documents for open access and data management practice across the institution.

Indicator

- WP12.1.1: Updated Open Access Policy and Research Data Management Policy published on ICFO website. Target: By Q2 2027.
- WP12.1.2: Policies communicated to all research groups via group leader meeting or equivalent. Target: Within 1 month of publication.
- WP12.1.3: Percentage of ICFO peer-reviewed publications deposited as Open Access Target: Baseline 85%; ≥baseline +10 percentage points by end of 2028.

- WP12.1.4: Number of datasets deposited in recognized repositories per year. Target: Baseline 41; ≥baseline +20% by end of 2028.

Action 2: Develop a new policy for the management of research software

ICFO currently has no institutional policy governing the management, documentation, or publication of software produced by its research groups. ICFO will develop and publish a Research Software Management Policy, establishing institutional expectations for software produced in the course of research, including documentation standards, licensing requirements, and deposition in recognized software repositories. The policy will be developed with input from relevant Group Leaders and research support staff, and will be aligned with best practice frameworks such as the FAIR4RS principles.

Indicators

- WP12.2.1: Research Software Management Policy developed and published, covering documentation standards, licensing, and repository deposition. Target: By Q4 2027.
- WP12.2.2: Policy communicated to all research groups. Target: Within 1 month of publication.
- WP12.2.3: Number of software artifacts deposited in recognized repositories per year. Target: Baseline1; if baseline is zero or near-zero, absolute target of ≥10 software artifacts per year by 2028.

Action 3. Consolidate policies into a single ICFO Open Science Policy and build public visibility

ICFO will consolidate the updated Open Access Policy, Research Data Management Policy, and new Software Management Policy into a single, coherent ICFO Open Science Policy that presents the institution's full commitment to open science in one accessible document. A dedicated section of the ICFO website will be created to publish this consolidated policy and showcase ICFO's open science commitments and outputs. Researchers will be informed of the policy framework at onboarding and through the expanded Research Integrity training under WP4, ensuring that awareness of open science obligations is integrated into the institutional culture from the moment researchers join ICFO.

Indicators

- WP12.3.1: Consolidated ICFO Open Science Policy published on dedicated website section. Target: By Q1 2028.
- WP12.3.2: Open science obligations integrated into institutional onboarding and WP4 Research Integrity training. Target: From first delivery in 2027.
- WP12.3.3: Percentage of researchers aware of ICFO's open science obligations, as measured in annual community survey. Target: Baseline to be established in 2027 before policy consolidation; ≥80% awareness within 12 months of policy publication.
- WP12.3.4: Percentage of new researchers completing onboarding who receive open science orientation as part of the onboarding program. Target: 100% from 2027 onward.

WP13: Employment Transparency and Working Conditions

Outstanding people thrive in an environment built on fairness, transparency and mutual respect. ICFO continuously works to strengthen employment practices and working conditions that support wellbeing, professional development and long-term institutional excellence.

Action 1: Provide clear information on researcher employment conditions

ICFO employs researchers under multiple contract types, each with different employment conditions, duration limits, renewal possibilities, and transition pathways, which map onto the various position types available at the institute (PhD student, postdoc, research engineer, staff scientist, etc.). ICFO will consolidate and publish a single, accessible Researcher Employment Guide covering all researcher position and contract types, the conditions and duration of each, the applicable criteria and procedural steps that govern renewal extension or change of contract type, where relevant, and the practical steps a researcher may take as they move through the institution. The guide will be available on our Intranet and distributed at onboarding. It will be reviewed periodically, and at least when material regulatory or institutional changes occur. Indicator: Researcher Employment Guide approved and made available internally, with an external summary published where appropriate, covering researcher contract types and the applicable renewal, extension and transition procedures. Target: By Q2 2027.

Indicators

- WP13.1.1: Guide distributed to all incoming researchers as part of onboarding from the date of publication onward. Target: 100% of incoming researchers from Q3 2027.
- WP13.1.2: Percentage of researchers who report, in the annual researcher survey, that they have a clear understanding of the terms and conditions of their contract. Target: Baseline to be established in 2027 survey; improvement target to be defined after baseline, with the objective of reaching a satisfactory level by end of 2028.

Action 2: Review salary structures and strengthen transparency

The EU Pay Transparency Directive (2023/970) establishes a new framework for pay transparency and equal pay, to be implemented in accordance with its transposition into Spanish law and the applicable public-sector framework. ICFO will conduct a structured review of researcher salary structures across all contract types, assessing consistency with ICFO's internal salary policy, applicable funding rules, public-sector constraints, internal equity and relevant market or sector references where available. Based on this review, ICFO will prepare a pay transparency statement or equivalent salary information framework setting out the salary framework for each researcher category, the criteria that determine individual placement within that framework, and the process for salary review. The statement will be published internally and, where appropriate, externally or through recruitment documentation, in line with applicable legal requirements.

Indicators

- WP13.2.1: Salary structure review completed, with findings reported to the Executive Leadership. Target: By Q4 2026.
- WP13.2.2: Institutional pay transparency statement or equivalent salary information framework approved and made available to researchers and relevant institutional stakeholders. Target: By Q2 2027.

- WP13.2.3: Salary framework or salary-range information, as applicable, included in recruitment communications and position documentation from date of publication. Target: Applicable new job postings from Q3 2027, subject to the approved salary framework and legal requirements
- WP13.2.4: Percentage of researchers who report, in the annual survey, that they have a clear understanding of the criteria that determine their salary. Target: Baseline to be established in 2027; improvement target to be defined following the baseline, with progress reviewed by end of 2028.

Action 3: Conduct a gender gap analysis and define corrective measures where needed

The EU Pay Transparency Directive strengthens gender pay transparency and reporting requirements. A dedicated analysis, disaggregated by contract type, seniority, and career stage, and by other relevant categories where statistically meaningful and compliant with confidentiality requirements, will provide the evidence base needed to identify whether unjustified gaps exist, to design corrective measures if required, and to demonstrate to EC reviewers that ICFO's commitment to gender equality extends to the structural dimension of compensation. Analysis by individual research group will only be carried out where the sample size allows meaningful and confidential interpretation. The results will be published internally in aggregated form, in coordination with the Gender Equality Plan and other applicable reporting instruments. Where unjustified gaps are identified, ICFO will define appropriate corrective or preventive measures and submit them to the Executive Direction for consideration and follow-up.

Indicators

- WP13.3.1: Gender pay gap analysis conducted, disaggregated by contract type and career stage and by other relevant categories where statistically meaningful and compliant with confidentiality requirements. Target: By Q4 2026.
- WP13.3.2: Results reported internally in an accessible aggregated summary. Target: By Q1 2027.
- WP13.3.3: Where a statistically significant and unjustified gender pay gap is identified in any relevant category, corrective or preventive measures proposed to the Executive Direction. Target: Within 3 months of publication of results.
- WP13.3.4: Follow-up analysis conducted to assess the evolution of any identified unjustified gender pay gaps. Target: By the end of 2028.
- WP13.3.5: Evidence of progress on corrective or preventive measures adopted where unjustified gaps were identified. Target: Progress reviewed by the end of 2028, without prejudice to the nature, cause and statistical significance of any identified gap.

WP14 Implementation of an Applicant Tracking System (ATS)

Attracting outstanding researchers begins with a professional, and transparent recruitment experience. ICFO is committed to replacing its current recruitment platform with a modern system that fully supports the recruitment lifecycle, ensures compliance with OTM-R principles, and delivers the operational efficiency and candidate experience that a research institution demands. Building on extensive evaluation work carried out in the previous period, ICFO will select and fully implement a new platform during this action plan period.

Action 1. Select and implement a new Applicant Tracking System (ATS) tool

ICFO's current recruitment platform, ICFOjobs, has been in operation since the institute's early years and can no longer support the operational demands, candidate experience expectations, or compliance requirements of a competitive research institution. Previous efforts to identify a replacement have informed a clear understanding of what a suitable platform must deliver: full coverage of the recruitment lifecycle, compliance with OTM-R principles, compatibility with ICFO's existing systems, and the operational efficiency and sustainability the institution requires. A new evaluation process is now underway, and ICFO is committed to selecting and fully implementing a new platform.

Indicators

- WP14.1.1: New ATS selected, contracted, and procurement process completed. Target: By Q2 2027.
- WP14.1.2: New ATS fully operational, with all open positions published via the new platform and ICFOjobs decommissioned. Target: By Q4 2027.
- WP14.1.3: New ATS integrated with SAP HR system and Microsoft 365, enabling automated data flow between recruitment and onboarding workflows. Target: Confirmed by IT sign-off at go-live.
- WP14.1.4: Percentage of Selection Committee members and Talent Attraction staff who have completed training on the new platform. Target: 100% before go-live.
- WP14.1.5: Average time-to-offer from job posting to accepted offer, measured annually from the first full year of operation. Target: Baseline to be established in 2026 using ICFOjobs data; ≥15% reduction by end of 2028.

5. WORK-PACKAGES TABLES AND WORKPLAN

WP7- Supervision and relationship with the Supervisor		
ACTION	Responsible	TIME FRAME
Action 1: Strengthen good practices in PhD students' supervision	Academic Affairs	Q2-Q4
Action 2: Foster good relationships between PhD students and supervisors	Academic Affairs	
Action 3: Define and launch a teaching training program for postdoctoral researchers	Academic Affairs	

WP8- Public Engagement		
ACTION	Responsible	TIME FRAME
Action 1: Consolidate career development events that bring visibility to professional opportunities	Outreach	Q2-Q12
Action 2: Define and launch an outreach training	Outreach	

WP9- Publish PI Evaluation and Professional Development framework		
ACTION	Responsible	TIME FRAME
Action 1: Update and publish the PI evaluation framework	Executive Leadership	Q1-Q12
Action 2: Introduce structured mid-tenure feedback for Tenure-Track Group Leaders	Executive Leadership	
Action 3: Provide professional development resources for Group Leaders	Executive Leadership	

WP10- Career Development for Operational Teams		
ACTION	Responsible	TIME FRAME
Action 1: Run an annual training needs assessment for all operational teams	Professional Development	Q1-Q12
Action 2: Develop and publish an annual Training Plan for operational teams, covering all training activities from January to December	Professional Development	
Action 3: Implement the approved Training Plan and monitor participation and satisfaction throughout the year	Professional Development	

WP11- Enhancement of the Relocation and Onboarding resources and processes

ACTION	Responsible	TIME FRAME
Action 1: Review and improve relocation resources	Culture & Engagement	Q1-Q2
Action 2: Define and launch Onboarding actions that align newcomers with institutional missions and culture	Culture & Engagement	

WP12- Embed Open Science principles into ICFO's research culture and practices

ACTION	Responsible	TIME FRAME
Action 1: Update existing policies to increase the number of scientific outputs published via open access	Library	Q3-Q6
Action 2: Develop a new policy for the management of research software	Library	
Action 3: Consolidate policies into a single ICFO Open Science Policy and build public visibility	Library	

WP13- Employment Transparency and Working Conditions

ACTION	Responsible	TIME FRAME
Action 1: Provide clear information on researcher employment conditions	Labour Affairs	Q1-Q4
Action 2: Review salary structures and strengthen transparency	Labour Affairs	
Action 3: Conduct a gender gap analysis and define corrective measures where needed	Labour Affairs	

WP14- Implementation of an Applicant Tracking System (ATS)

ACTION	Responsible	TIME FRAME
Action 1: Select and implement a new Applicant Tracking System (ATS) tool	Talent Attraction	Q3-Q5

6. WORKPLAN

The table below provides the implementation timeline across the 2026–2029 period (Q1–Q12).

	2026	2027					2028				2029		
Action	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	
WP7- Supervision and relationship with the Supervisor													
Action 1: Strengthen good practices in PhD students' supervision													
Action 2: Foster good relationships between PhD students and supervisors													
Action 3: Define and launch a teaching training program for postdoctoral researchers													
WP8- Public Engagement													
Action 1: Consolidate career development events that bring visibility to professional opportunities													
Action 2: Define and launch an outreach training													
WP9- Publish PI Evaluation and Professional Development framework													
Action 1: Update and publish the PI evaluation framework													
Action 2: Introduce structured mid-tenure feedback for Tenure-Track Group Leaders													
Action 3: Provide professional development resources for Group Leaders													
WP10 – Career Development for Operational Teams													
Action 1: Run an annual training needs assessment for all operational teams													
Action 2: Develop and publish an annual Training Plan for operational teams, covering all training activities from January to December													
Action 3: Implement the approved Training Plan and monitor participation and satisfaction throughout the year													
WP11 – Enhancement of the Relocation and Onboarding resources and processes													
Action 1: Review and improve relocation resources													
Action 2: Define and launch Onboarding actions that align newcomers with institutional missions and culture													
WP12 – Embed Open Science principles into ICFO's research culture and practices													
Action 1: Update existing policies to increase the number of scientific outputs published via open access													
Action 2: Develop a new policy for the management of research software													
Action 3: Consolidate policies into a single ICFO Open Science Policy and build public visibility													
WP13 – Employment Transparency and Working Conditions													
Action 1: Provide clear information on researcher employment conditions													
Action 2: Review salary structures and strengthen transparency													
Action 3: Conduct a gender gap analysis and define corrective measures where needed													
WP14- Implementation of an Applicant Tracking System (ATS)													
Action 1: Select and implement a new Applicant Tracking System (ATS) tool													