

## MID TERM SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT

### ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

Please provide a limited number of key figures for your organisation. Figures marked \* are compulsory.

<b>STAFF &amp; STUDENTS</b>	<b>FTE</b>
<i>Total researchers = staff, fellowship holders, bursary holders, PhD. students either full-time or part-time involved in research</i>	1037
<i>Of whom are international (i.e. foreign nationality)</i>	22
<i>Of whom are externally funded (i.e. for whom the organisation is host organisation)</i>	24
<i>Of whom are women</i>	681
<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>	253
<i>Of whom are stage R2 = in most organisations corresponding with postdoctoral level</i>	274
<i>Of whom are stage R1 = in most organisations corresponding with doctoral level</i>	479
<i>Total number of students (if relevant)</i>	6081
<i>Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff)</i>	1482
<b>RESEARCH FUNDING (figures for most recent fiscal year)</b>	€

<i>Total annual organisational budget</i>	44 788 706
<i>Annual organisational direct government funding (designated for research)</i>	385 701
<i>Annual competitive government-sourced funding (designated for research, obtained in competition with other organisations – including EU funding)</i>	1 166 169

"Ethics and Professional Aspects" section of HRS4R report at the Medical University of Varna (MUV):

#### Strengths

1. **Commitment to Ethical Standards:** MUV demonstrates a strong adherence to ethical research principles through rigorous procedures ensured by the Ethics Committee, which is tasked with resolving ethical dilemmas and maintaining standards in clinical practices.
2. **Promotion of Open Access and Transparency:** The institution's commitment to transparency is evident through its publishing house that issues 11 open access journals, widespread use of anti-plagiarism software, and double-blind review processes that ensure the authenticity of scientific results. Additionally, the university promotes openness by publishing PhD theses, making these valuable research contributions accessible to the wider academic community.
3. **GDPR Compliance and Data Protection:** Strict compliance with GDPR regulations, with a dedicated Data Protection Officer, highlights MUV's commitment to privacy and data security.
4. **Support for Research Visibility and Accessibility:** Efforts to enhance the visibility and accessibility of research outputs are well-supported by activities such as broadcasting university events, maintaining personalized Google Scholar, Researchgate, ORCID profiles for researchers, and participation in European databases and the DART Europe portal.
5. **Integration of Research with Broader Societal Goals:** The strategic focus on translational research projects under the Research Development Strategy (2021-2025) aims to strengthen the connection between science, business, and society, facilitating practical applications of research discoveries.

Comments: According to a survey conducted prior to the interim report, 68.9% of respondents in 2024 believe that MU-Varna's research has practical applications with international significance, slightly down from 74% in 2021. This slight change indicates the need to continually assess and possibly expand the international relevance of our research activities

### **Weaknesses**

1. **Limited Financial Incentives for Researchers:** A significant gap has been identified in the incentive system for researchers, where the financial recognition primarily depends on external research grants. Although there has been a recent amendment to improve remuneration for publications in indexed journals, there is still a need for a more comprehensive system of incentives that rewards overall research achievements.
2. **Lack of Technology Transfer Unit:** Despite the adoption of regulations on the Commercialization and Transfer of Research Results, the absence of a dedicated Technology Transfer and Innovation Unit limits the university's capability to fully capitalize on research outputs.
3. **Evaluation and Support for Technical Staff:** The current system focuses primarily on the attestation of academic staff, with less attention given to the regular evaluation and development of technical staff, highlighting a need for a more inclusive evaluation framework.

4. **Need for National Reforms:** The report identifies a broader systemic issue that extends beyond MUV, suggesting that national reforms are necessary to ensure equitable opportunities and career development paths for researchers across various disciplines.

"Recruitment and Selection" section of interim report at the Medical University of Varna (MUV):

### **Strengths**

1. **Regulatory Compliance and Merit-Based Selection:**

- MUV strictly adheres to the national legal framework for recruitment, ensuring transparent and merit-based selection processes.
- Compliance with the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in Bulgaria guarantees that all requirements are met for academic positions.

2. **Support for Researchers Post-Leave:**

- MUV offers reintegration support to R2-R4 researchers returning from parental or long-term sick leave, demonstrating a commitment to continuity and support for researchers' careers.
- Proposals to extend the duration of R1 researchers' contracts during long leaves highlight a forward-thinking approach to researcher welfare.

3. **Fair and Inclusive Selection Procedures:**

- Recruitment processes are designed to be fair and inclusive, with a policy of acknowledging career interruptions and not penalizing them, which promotes a diverse and supportive academic environment.
- The survey data from a questionnaire prior to the Interim report reveals an improvement in perceptions of recruitment transparency at MU-Varna. In 2024, 47.35% of respondents felt that recruitment procedures were definitely transparent, compared to 59% in 2021, suggesting an area for ongoing focus and improvement in our recruitment policies.

### **Weaknesses**

1. **Limited Use of Specialized Recruitment Platforms:**

- MUV's job advertisements are not consistently posted on specialized academic and research job portals like EURAXESS, which may limit visibility among international and diverse candidate pools.

2. **Underestimation of Managerial Skills and Diverse Experiences:**

- Current selection criteria might benefit from greater emphasis on managerial skills, "micro-qualifications," and experiences from different sectors to identify candidates with broader capabilities and innovative potential.

3. **Postdoctoral Career Development:**

- There is a lack of a regulatory framework for postdoctoral positions and defined career paths at MUV, leading to potential uncertainties in career progression for postdoctoral researchers.

“Working conditions” can be split into strengths and weaknesses based on the updated text:

### **Strengths**

#### **1. Regulatory Compliance and Merit-Based Recruitment:**

- MUV adheres to the national legal framework and the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, ensuring that all recruitment processes meet rigorous national standards.
- Recruitment is conducted on a competitive, merit-based system, which emphasizes the qualifications and achievements of candidates.

#### **2. Supportive Policies for Research Staff:**

- Permanent employment contracts for R2-R4 researchers and fixed-term contracts for R1 researchers demonstrate a structured approach to employment stability.
- Proactive support measures for researchers returning from parental or long-term sick leave facilitate their smooth reintegration into the academic environment.

#### **3. Inclusive and Fair Selection Procedures:**

- MUV's recruitment procedures are transparent, with all positions publicly announced and candidates informed in writing whether they meet the job specifications.
- Acknowledgment of career interruptions in the selection process ensures that candidates are not penalized for gaps in their professional journeys, promoting a supportive and inclusive culture.

#### **4. Adaptability to Legal and Professional Needs:**

- The proposal by the rectors of medical schools, including MUV, to extend employment contracts for R1 researchers reflects responsiveness to the needs of early-career researchers and adaptability to potential legal reforms.

Comments: Staff feedback on support for young researchers shows a consistent positive trend, with 64.8% of respondents in the survey prior to the Interim report in 2024 feeling supported by their colleagues, compared to 67.7% in 2021. This consistency is a testament to our sustained efforts to foster a supportive environment for emerging researchers.

### **Weaknesses**

#### **1. Limited Contractual Stability for Early Career Researchers:**

- Despite the permanent contracts for senior researchers, R1 researchers are only offered fixed-term contracts, which might limit job security and long-term planning for new entrants into academia.

## **2. Potential for Improved Policy Implementation:**

- While the proposal to extend R1 researchers' contracts is a positive development, it remains a proposal and has not yet been implemented, indicating a gap between advocacy and actual policy change.

"Training and Development" section of interim report for the Medical University of Varna (MUV):

### **Strengths**

#### **1. Comprehensive Training Programs:**

- MUV offers a wide range of training opportunities through its Postgraduate Training Department, covering over 100 specialties in clinical practice, education, and research management. This extensive program is accessible to all staff regardless of their career stage or contract type, ensuring broad professional development.

#### **2. Support for Scientific Engagement:**

- The university actively organizes annual scientific conferences and forums, inviting renowned specialists as guest speakers. This enriches the academic environment and provides continuous learning opportunities for staff.

#### **3. Effective Communication of Opportunities:**

- MUV effectively disseminates information about training and development opportunities through a regularly updated news on the website and its Facebook page . This ensures that all researchers are well-informed about available resources and opportunities for growth.
- Concerning workplace atmosphere, the 2024 survey noted that 89.1% of respondents believe MU-Varna adheres to its scientific research ethical code, maintaining the high standard set in 2021 at 90.7%. This demonstrates our commitment to upholding ethical standards in research.

#### **4. Promotion of External Collaborations:**

- The ongoing development of a strategy for partnership with business sectors aims to enhance practical training opportunities, aligning academic research with industry needs and fostering practical skill applications.
- The survey among MU-Varna staff prior to the Interim report indicates that 71.6% of the staff in 2024 felt fully supported in publishing and disseminating their research, a slight decrease from 75.2% in 2021. This highlights the need to further enhance our support systems to maintain high levels of encouragement for research dissemination.

### **Weaknesses**

#### **1. Limited Formal Mentoring for Young Scientists:**

- Despite various initiatives, there is a noted gap in formal mentoring for young scientists and postdoctoral students. The current system lacks a structured mentoring framework, which is crucial for detailed follow-up and career training of early-stage academic staff.

## 2. Need for Enhanced Career Support:

- While there are individualized training and development programs, the absence of a comprehensive career support system for postdoctoral researchers and young scientists indicates a potential area for improvement in ensuring consistent career progression and satisfaction.

## Action plan

### 1. Ethical and Professional Aspects

#### 1.1. Update current internal regulations of MUV on funding of frontier research

**Overview:** The Medical University of Varna (MUV) is in the process of updating its internal regulations concerning the funding of frontier research. These changes are being made in response to alterations in the "Science Fund" and national requirements set by the Ministry of Education and Science (MOH) and are being voted for by the academic assembly on the 13.12.2023.

#### Key Changes:

- **Labor Funding:** Previously, 40% of funding was allocated to labor costs. Under the new regulations, this will be adjusted to 35% to align with the national requirements.
- **Infrastructure Project Funding:** Funding for infrastructure projects is set to increase significantly, from BGN 50 000 to BGN 80 000, as per the decision made by the Academic Council on December 13, 2023
- **Scientific Research Funding:** The funding allocation for scientific research projects will increase from BGN 7 000 to BGN 12 000, as per the decision made by the Academic Council on December 13, 2023.

**Conclusion:** These regulatory updates reflect MUV's ongoing commitment to adapting its research funding strategies to comply with national policies and optimize the allocation of resources. This will ensure that the university continues to support critical research activities effectively while responding to evolving financial and regulatory landscapes.

#### 1.2. Update current internal regulations on commercialization and transfer

**Overview:** The Medical University of Varna is currently in the process of updating its internal regulations on valorization, technology transfer and commercialization. This ongoing update aims to streamline the path from research discoveries to market, enhancing the university's capacity to capitalize on innovative developments and create long term social benefits.

#### Focus Areas:

- **Clarification of Processes:** The updates seek to clarify procedures for intellectual property management, ensuring that innovations are properly diligently disclosed, stimulated, awarded, processed, filed, (registered), protected and commercialized.
- **Enhanced Collaboration:** The regulations are being revised to facilitate easier and of initiation, coordination, and more productive collaborations with industry partners.
- **Support for Start-ups and Spin-offs:** Enhanced support mechanisms for the creation and development of start-ups and spin-off companies are likely to become a key major component of the revised regulations.

**Conclusion:** The ongoing updates to the regulations are crucial for maintaining a competitive edge in **valorization** in general, technology transfer in particular, and ensuring that the university's research outputs have a tangible impact on society and the economy.

### 1.3. Establish an office for Technology Transfer and Innovations:

Overview: The Medical University of Varna has successfully established the Office for Technology Transfer and Innovations (OTTI) on 20.04.2022 (protocol from the Academic council 45/20.04.22), significantly enhancing the university's capabilities in managing and commercializing research outputs: : [https://www.mu-varna.bg/EN/AboutUs/Pages/Office-of-Technology-Transfer-and-Innovation-\(OTTI\).aspx](https://www.mu-varna.bg/EN/AboutUs/Pages/Office-of-Technology-Transfer-and-Innovation-(OTTI).aspx)

According to a strategic evaluation by the EU, Bulgaria's technology transfer systems provides:

IP Management: OTTI has implemented efficient strategies for intellectual property management, ensuring the protection and maximization of research commercialization potential.

- **Industry Collaboration:** The office has established robust partnerships with leading industry figures, transforming academic research into market-ready medical innovations.
- **Startup Support:** OTTI provides essential support to startups, fostering a thriving entrepreneurial environment within the university.

Achievements:

- **Enhanced Innovation:** OTTI has positioned the Medical University of Varna as a leader in medical innovation and research commercialization within Bulgaria.
- **Economic Impact:** The office is planning to drive economic growth and attracted significant investment into university-led innovations.

Reference Links:

According to a recent evaluation of the technology transfer and IPR protection systems of Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania (<https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC136807>), OTTI has been identified as rapidly developing regional TT Office (p.40 of the Evaluation report).



#### 1.4. Training in research management and entrepreneurship

**Overview:** The Medical University of Varna has implemented a series of structured thematic trainings to enhance knowledge and skills in Intellectual Property Rights, Technology Transfer, and Entrepreneurship. These sessions are strategically designed to equip participants with the essential tools required for effective engagement in technology transfer and research commercialization.

##### **Details of the Training Sessions:**

##### **Training #1 – July 28th, 2022: Intellectual Property Rights**

Topics include the economic impact of IP, details about patents and IP rights, biotechnology patent types, and the patenting process in Europe, including strategic "Freedom to Operate" considerations. Participants: researchers, teaching staff, administration, management, students – 29

##### **Training #2 – September 20th, 2022: Technology Transfer**

This session covered the basics of technology transfer, its importance within universities, the impact of such activities, the role of university spin-offs, and detailed OTTI functions. Participants: researchers, teaching staff, administration, management, students - 29

##### **Training #3 – December 15-16, 2022**

Advanced topics in technology transfer tailored to ongoing projects and emerging trends were discussed. Detailed content is available in the attached file. Participants [researchers, teaching staff, administration, management – 16](#)

##### **Training #4 – March 21, 2024**

Focuses on Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer in Medicine, featuring a lecture by Dr. D J Nag. The lecture is available online <https://youtu.be/NRs35j2dFvA> Participants: researchers, teaching staff, administration, management

- **Additional Seminar: Collaboration and Commercialization**
- February 16-17, 2024, this seminar emphasizes collaboration between academia and business in developing and commercializing innovative projects by doctoral students and young scientists.
  - **First Panel:** Discusses strategies for business collaboration in project development.
  - **Second Panel:** Focuses on financing innovative projects in the BioTech and MedTech fields.
  - **Third Panel:** Shares best practices for commercializing the results of innovative projects.

Participants: researchers, teaching staff, administration, management 29, from whom 20 are from MU-Varna

**Conclusion:** Through these comprehensive training sessions and seminars, the Medical University of Varna significantly bolsters its community's capacity to manage research, engage in technology transfer, and protect intellectual property effectively. This



initiative fosters an innovative and economically impactful environment, preparing participants for successful entrepreneurship in the scientific and medical fields.

### 1.5.Update Data Management Policy and Guidelines on Cybersecurity

**Overview:** The Medical University of Varna has strengthened its cybersecurity measures through updated data management policies and guidelines.

**Key Updates:**

- **Password Policy:** Implementation of strong, unique passwords and multi-factor authentication for all accounts.
- **Access Control:** Restricted access to sensitive information, backed by data encryption.
- **Data Backup:** Regular backups of critical data to facilitate recovery in the event of a cyberattack.
- **Employee Training:** Ongoing training on cyber threat recognition and phishing simulations to enhance awareness.
- **Network Security:** Network segmentation to limit malware spread and restrictions on personal device usage.
- **Software Maintenance:** Regular updates of all software with the latest security patches and continuous network monitoring.
- **Incident Response:** A proactive incident response plan developed in collaboration with law enforcement.

**Conclusion:** These updates significantly bolster the university's resilience against cyber threats, safeguarding sensitive information and infrastructure.

### 1.6. Training in ethics in research

**Overview:** To uphold the highest standards of research integrity and ethics, the Medical University of Varna mandates that all doctoral students enrolled in the "Doctor" program complete a series of essential courses. These courses are offered through the Blackboard online platform, ensuring accessible and comprehensive training in key areas of research and ethics.

**Mandatory Courses for Doctoral Students:**

- **Legal Framework Regulating Doctoral Training:** This course provides doctoral students with a thorough understanding of the legal regulations and policies governing their education and research activities.
- **Methodology of Scientific Research:** Students learn about various research methodologies, how to design and conduct studies effectively, and the critical evaluation of research findings.
- **Ethics of Scientific Research:** A crucial course that covers ethical principles and dilemmas in scientific research, including issues related to misconduct, ethical approval processes, and the responsible conduct of research.

### 1.7 Foreign Reviewers at MUV Publishing House

**Overview:** The MUV Publishing House at the Medical University of Varna has engaged a diverse group of esteemed foreign reviewers and editorial team members for its scientific journals. These international experts bring a wealth of knowledge and experience from prestigious institutions worldwide, enhancing the quality and credibility of the publications.

**Notable Foreign Members of the Editorial Team:**

- **Ehab Hanna** - University of Texas, United States
  - An esteemed expert in medical sciences, contributing to the rigorous review process and enhancing the international visibility of the journals.
- **Manlio Vinchiguerra** - Transtem, Italy
  - Specializes in translational medicine, offering valuable insights into cutting-edge research and clinical applications.
- **Maria Street** - University of Parma, Italy
  - Focuses on biomedical sciences, providing in-depth evaluations of research manuscripts and contributing to the journals' academic rigor.
- **Sian Ellard** - University of Exeter, United Kingdom
  - Renowned for her work in genetics, Ellard's contributions ensure the high scientific standards of the publications are maintained.
- **Stenvert Drop** - Erasmus MC Sophia Children's Hospital, Rotterdam, Netherlands
  - A pediatric endocrinology specialist, Drop brings a unique perspective to the review process, particularly in pediatric research.
- **Tetsumori Yamashima** - Kanazawa University Graduate School of Medicine, Japan
  - Known for his research in neuroscience, Yamashima adds depth to the journals' focus on new medical technologies and techniques.
- **Hasan Diab** - National Medical Research Center for Otorhinolaryngology of the Federal Medico-Biological Agency of Russia, Moscow, Russian Federation
  - Diab's expertise in otorhinolaryngology expands the scope of the journals' medical and surgical content.
- **Eugene Myers** - University of Pittsburgh, United States
  - A leader in otolaryngology, Myers enhances the editorial standards and helps bridge the gap between clinical practice and academic research.

**Conclusion:** The inclusion of such distinguished international reviewers and editorial team members is pivotal for maintaining the scholarly excellence and international standards of the Medical University of Varna's scientific journals. This global collaboration not only enriches the content but also broadens the international impact and recognition of the university's publications.

### 1.8 Equal Opportunities Policy Document

**Overview:** The Medical University of Varna has adopted a comprehensive Equal Opportunities Policy, which is publicly accessible and details the institution's

commitment to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion across all its operations and activities.

решение на АС по протокол № 66 от 03.04.2023 г.

**Key Highlights of the Policy:**

- **Purpose and Scope:** The policy applies to all members of the university community, including students, faculty, staff, and contractors. It aims to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and with respect, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances.
- **Main Principles:**
  - **Non-Discrimination:** The university prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other legally protected status.
  - **Equal Access:** Ensures equal access to educational and employment opportunities, aiming to eliminate barriers that traditionally have prevented full participation.
  - **Inclusivity:** Encourages a culture of inclusivity where diversity is embraced and valued as a critical component of academic excellence.
- **Implementation and Monitoring:**
  - The policy is implemented through various programs, training sessions, and initiatives designed to raise awareness and educate the university community about equality and diversity issues.
  - Regular monitoring and evaluation are conducted to assess the effectiveness of the policy and to make adjustments as needed.
- **Complaints and Grievances:**
  - Establishes clear procedures for addressing complaints related to discrimination or harassment, ensuring that all grievances are investigated thoroughly and resolved promptly.
- **Responsibilities:**
  - The responsibility for upholding the principles of the Equal Opportunities Policy is shared among all university members, with specific roles and responsibilities designated to policy officers and diversity committees.

**Conclusion:** The Equal Opportunities Policy of the Medical University of Varna is a robust framework designed to foster an equitable and inclusive environment. This document not only reflects the university's legal and ethical commitments but also its dedication to creating a diverse and supportive community where all members can thrive.

For more detailed information and to view the full document, please visit the [Equal Opportunity Policy at MUV](#).

### 1.9 Ombudsperson Institution Established

**Overview:** The Medical University of Varna has established an Ombudsperson institution, reflecting its commitment to upholding the highest standards of fairness and integrity within the academic community. (решение на Общото събрание по

Протокол 1 от 07.03.2024 г.) This initiative is designed to provide a confidential, impartial, and independent avenue for resolving conflicts and addressing concerns within the university.

**Key Features of the Ombudsperson Institution:**

- **Role and Function:**
  - The Ombudsperson acts as a neutral party to assist students, faculty, and staff in addressing and resolving various issues and disputes that arise within the university setting.
  - They provide confidential consultations, facilitating communication and negotiation between conflicting parties, and helping to find fair and equitable solutions.
- **Scope of Services:**
  - The institution handles a wide range of issues including academic disputes, administrative difficulties, interpersonal conflicts, and concerns about university policies or procedures.
  - It does not participate in formal processes or legal proceedings but focuses on informal resolution methods.
- **Accessibility and Confidentiality:**
  - Services provided by the Ombudsperson are accessible to all members of the university community.
  - All consultations are confidential, ensuring that individuals can seek advice and assistance without fear of retaliation or prejudice.
- **Benefits:**
  - Helps maintain a positive and productive university environment by providing a safe platform for voicing concerns.
  - Enhances the university's accountability and transparency by addressing issues proactively and constructively.
- **Appointment and Oversight:**
  - The Ombudsperson is appointed based on their expertise in mediation and conflict resolution, ensuring they have the necessary skills to handle complex issues effectively.
  - They operate independently from university administration to maintain objectivity and impartiality.

**Conclusion:** The establishment of the Ombudsperson institution at the Medical University of Varna is a significant step towards enhancing the university's supportive and responsive infrastructure. It plays a crucial role in fostering a culture of respect, fairness, and open communication.

For more details about the Ombudsperson and their services, please visit the <https://www.mu-varna.bg/EN/AboutUs/Pages/academic-ombudsman.aspx> of the Medical University of Varna.

### 1.10. Updated Directive on attestation of MUV researchers (Charter and Code)

Regarding the attestation cards and related procedures, there have been no changes since our documents were previously submitted. The attestation cards are regulated under the Higher Education Act (Закон за висшето образование, ЗВО) and are exclusively applicable to periodic attestation of faculty members, both habilitated and non-habilitated. There are no other groups included in this process.

## 2. Recruitment and selection

### 2.1. Involvement of external evaluators in the MUV selection process

**Overview:** The Medical University of Varna (MUV) faces challenges in integrating external evaluators into its selection processes due to strict regulations by Bulgaria's National Centre for Information and Documentation (НАЦИД) [НАЦИД \(nacid.bg\)](http://nacid.bg)

**Key Points:**

- **Regulatory Constraints:** Bulgaria's National Centre for Information and Documentation mandates that members of the scientific jury must be established researchers within the Bulgarian hierarchy, limiting the involvement of foreign experts.
- **Impact:** This restricts MUV from incorporating international perspectives directly into its selection committees, potentially affecting the diversity of expertise.
- **Possible Solutions:** While foreign evaluators cannot participate directly, they could serve in advisory roles or partake in partnerships that provide indirect input.

**Conclusion:** Adhering to Bulgaria's National Centre for Information and Documentation's requirements, MUV must explore alternative avenues to integrate international expertise within the constraints of Bulgarian regulations.

### 2.2 Vacancies Publication in EURAXESS

**Overview:** The Medical University of Varna (MUV) actively utilizes EURAXESS, a platform dedicated to supporting researchers in their mobility and career development, to publish vacancies. This approach not only aligns with the university's commitment to transparency but also broadens the recruitment process to attract diverse talent from across Europe.

**Recent Vacancies Published:**

- [Job Reference 128428](#) - Details a specific opportunity at MUV without specifying the position, allowing a broad scope of applicants.
- [Postdoc Position Job Reference 100037](#) - Aims at recruiting postdoctoral researchers in a specialized field, enhancing research capabilities at MUV.
- [Job Reference 99548](#) - Another vacancy that targets professionals to fill significant roles within the university's various departments.
- [Postdoc Position Job Reference 69180](#) - Specifies a postdoctoral position, indicating a focus on advancing research in specific scientific areas.
- [Postdoc Position Job Reference 69185](#) - Similar to the previous, focusing on integrating fresh postdoctoral talent into ongoing projects.

**Inactive Links and Archived Positions:**

- Older links related to 11 positions for the TRANSTEM project are inactive. However, screenshots and text from these job postings have been preserved in a separate archive, including information about other postdoctoral opportunities.

**Conclusion:** By publishing vacancies on EURAXESS, MUV ensures wide visibility and access to a pool of international talent. This practice not only supports the university's strategic goals of enhancing research and academic excellence but also aligns with European standards of openness and transparency in academic recruitment.

### 2.3. Translate internal regulations in English (Gergana)

Here are the translated internal regulations documents for the Medical University of Varna:

1. **Regulations on Commercialization and Transfer of Research Results** - Outlines processes for commercialization and research transfer.
2. **Directive for Attestation of Academic Staff and Lecturers** - Details attestation procedures for academic staff.
3. **Principles of Publishing Ethics** - Sets ethical standards for university publications.
4. **Erasmus Selection Procedure** - Explains selection processes for Erasmus+ mobility programs.
5. **Regulations on Managing Intellectual Property** - Governs intellectual property created at the university .
6. **Open Access Policy** - Details the open access requirements for university research outputs.
7. **Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)** - Outlines the strategy for researcher development and rights.
8. **Regulations for PhD Studies** - Specifies guidelines for doctoral studies and requirements.
9. **Ethical Norms for Research** - Provides ethical guidelines for conducting research at the university.
10. **Research Promotion Regulations** - Describes the support structures for promoting research activities.
11. Regulations on the Commercialization and Transfer of Research Results:
  - This document outlines the processes and organizational structures for managing and commercializing research results at the university. It includes information on establishing structural units for commercialization, licensing agreements, and the use of research results in production or through legal entities.
12. Directive for Attestation of Academic Staff and Lecturers:
  - This directive covers the procedure and criteria for the attestation of academic positions such as professors and associate professors, focusing on periodic assessments based on research, educational activities, and expert work.
13. Principles of Publishing Ethics:
  - This document sets the ethical standards for publishing within the university's journals and publications, adhering to international guidelines to ensure integrity and ethical compliance in all scholarly communications.
14. Erasmus Selection Procedure:



- This document details the selection process for participants in the Erasmus+ mobility programs, outlining the criteria and procedures to ensure fairness, transparency, and impartiality in selecting candidates for international educational and research opportunities

#### 2.4. Synchronization of the MUV Regulations on academic staff with the OTM-R policy

Updated MUV's policy for the evaluation and career development of the academic staff is in place with the attestation card recognizing key areas and giving additional points for:

- **Mobility:** Acknowledges international forums participation and lectures at foreign institutions.
  - **Multidimensional careers:** Credits roles in both national and international scientific projects, reflecting diverse academic pursuits.
  - **Recognition of "micro-qualifications"** through participation in various academic and scientific engagements.
  - **Innovation and patenting:** Offers points for patents and utility model registrations.
  - **Public engagements:** Offers points for engagement in public activities, also forums and dissemination of research, which is also considered a form of public engagement.
- The attestation process thus supports a holistic evaluation that aligns with modern academic and research career pathways.

Имаме ли такава примерна атестационна карта да покажем при визитата на експертите?

#### 2.5. IT tool to follow career progression

**An IT Tool for Career Progression at Medical University of Varna has been recently introduced:**

**Overview:** The Medical University of Varna has implemented a new IT tool to manage training and career progression for its "Doctor" degree program, supported by EU funding under Project BG05M2OP001-2.016-0025.

**Key Features:**

- **Administration:** Manages the training lifecycle for doctoral programs.
- **Career Tracking:** Analyzes and visualizes user career development.
- **Integration:** Syncs with academic records for up-to-date management.

**Implementation:**

- The tool is detailed on the university's <https://www.mu-varna.bg/BG/Pages/muvarna-zapochva-obucheniya-za-rabota-s-noviya-softuer-za-administrirane-i-upravlenie-na-obucheniето-i-kariernoto-razvitie-.aspx>, with ongoing training sessions to assist users in adapting to the system.



## 2.6. Institutional policy for offering postdoctoral appointments

To frame an institutional policy for offering postdoctoral appointments within the R2-R4 range, the recent statistic of 86 newly appointed postdocs in projects over the last two years indicates active engagement with early-career researchers. The policy of MUV could be outlined as follows: Acknowledging the diversity of funding sources for projects involving postdoctoral researchers is crucial for institutional policy, which includes engagements in projects funded at various levels:

- International projects supported by European Union funding.
- National projects backed by the National Science Fund.
- Local projects financed by the MU-Varna fund "Science."

## 2.7. Job description for the postdoctoral position

**Overview:** The Medical University of Varna offers postdoctoral positions focused on biomedical and healthcare research, detailed in postings on EURAXESS.

**Key Responsibilities:**

- Conduct and publish research.
- Collaborate on interdisciplinary projects.
- Apply for research funding.
- Engage in academic activities and mentorship.

**Qualifications:**

- Recent PhD in a relevant field.
- Demonstrated research ability with publications.
- Proficient in English.

**Application Details:**

- For specific postings and application procedures, visit the EURAXESS links:
  - [Job Reference 100037](#)
  - [Job Reference 69180](#)
  - [Job Reference 69185](#)

These positions aim to enhance research skills and academic credentials through rigorous research and community involvement.

## 3 Working Conditions and Social Security

### 3.1. Strategy for career development of MUV researchers

With the recent change in the university's management, including a new rectorship, the strategy for the career development of MUV researchers will likely be reviewed to align with the new leadership's vision. This could involve reassessing current programs and potentially introducing new initiatives to support the progression and professional growth of researchers within the institution.

### 3.2. Labour regulations with respect to mobility

The new ordinance from the rector of MU-Varna P-100-819/23.11.23 on staff mobility provides guidelines on mobility for staff, focusing on arrangements for travel and temporary assignments under specific labor contracts. This includes stipulations for coverage of travel expenses, use of transport, and accommodation provisions during assignments.

### 3.3. Remuneration for supervision of PhD thesis

**Overview:** Changes in the remuneration for supervision of PhD theses at the Medical University of Varna (MUV) are indirectly influenced by adjustments in the funding structures of various research projects. Supervisors, who are typically also the leaders of funded projects, are affected by changes in the financial support from sources like the "Science Fund," the Ministry of Education and Science's "Research Fund," and other MUV-specific projects.

**Context of Changes:**

- **Funding Sources:** The funding for projects supervised by PhD thesis advisors often comes from the "Science Fund" or the "Research Fund" of the Ministry of Education and Science (MOH), which dictates the budget allocation for labor, including remuneration for supervision.
- **Indirect Impact on Remuneration:** As project funding adjusts, so too does the financial compensation available for supervisors. This is due to the integrated nature of project management and PhD supervision within university settings where research grants typically cover various staffing costs.

**Conclusion:** The adjustment in remuneration for PhD thesis supervision is a reflection of broader changes in funding allocations for research projects. By understanding these financial dynamics, MUV ensures that its funding strategies align with national educational and research priorities while adequately compensating academic staff for their supervisory roles.

### 3.4. Regulate teaching vs research work load

**Overview:** At the Medical University of Varna, adjustments to balance teaching and research workloads for faculty are currently under consideration but have not yet been formalized. However, the rector has authorized flexible working hours under the guidance of the academic council, including approved days off as listed. (Решение AC?, протокол №?)

**Details:**

- **Flexible Work Hours:** The rector has allowed for a flexible working day, which enables faculty members to better manage the balance between their teaching responsibilities and research activities.
- **Academic Council Oversight:** This flexibility is monitored and approved by the academic council, ensuring that the adjustments align with both individual needs and institutional goals.

**Conclusion:** While formal regulations to reduce teaching loads in favor of research have not yet been established, the implementation of flexible working hours represents a step towards accommodating the diverse professional demands faced by faculty members. This approach facilitates a more manageable and productive balance between teaching and research commitments.

### 3.5. Establish spin-off company

"Medical University - Varna (MUVE-TEAM) Competition for Internal Projects on Applied Science and Innovation Research," on February 16, 2024

refers to an internal competition for applied and innovative research projects under the MUVE-TEAM initiative at the Medical University of Varna. This competition is an integral part of the university's strategy to foster innovation. Within this initiative, there are 13 projects that are funded with the explicit goal of driving innovation, securing patents, and facilitating the establishment of spin-off companies. Projects are starting April 2024 and they will finish in September 2025

Each funded project under the MUVE-TEAM banner is expected to contribute to the overarching goal of translating research and innovation into commercial ventures. The establishment of spin-off companies is a common outcome for successful projects within such programs, as they allow for the development of business models based on the scientific findings and technologies developed through university research. This not only encourages the practical application of research but also promotes entrepreneurship within the academic community.

### 3.6. Agreements related to results produced in a partnership with business

**Overview:** For the 13 innovative projects under the MUVE-TEAM initiative at the Medical University of Varna, members of the business community participated in the project evaluations and presentations on February 16th-17th. This involvement indicates a strategic approach to integrate practical business insights and potential for commercialization right from the evaluation phase.

**Significance:**

- **Business Participation:** The participation of business professionals in the evaluations signifies the importance of aligning research objectives with market viability and business strategies.
- **Future Agreements:** Agreements are anticipated to be crafted concerning the outcomes of these projects, detailing collaboration, intellectual property management, and routes to market, with direct input from these evaluations.
- **Mutual Benefit:** The collaborative evaluation process is designed to benefit both the academic and business sectors, ensuring that the research has practical applications and meets industry standards.

**Conclusion:** The presence of business members during the presentations and evaluations on February 16th reflects a proactive stance towards fostering partnerships that could lead to the successful commercialization of research results. This approach enhances the potential for future agreements that facilitate the transition of academic research into market-ready innovations.

Линкове към компаниите

Линкове към компании на обучаващите в семинара

Another Point Advisors - <https://www.apadvisers.net/en/>

Serdika Capital - <https://www.serdicacapital.com/en>

BioInfoTech lab - <https://sofiatech.bg/en/activities/laboratories/laboratoriya-po-bioinformatika-bioinfoteh/>

## 4 Training and Development

### 4.1. Training in mentoring for R2-R4 researchers

To enhance the skills of R2-R4 level researchers in mentoring within research and academia settings, the university has organized postgraduate pedagogical 2-day courses. These courses are designed to provide researchers with the necessary training to effectively guide less experienced colleagues, ensuring the transfer of knowledge and fostering a supportive academic environment. This initiative not only strengthens individual mentoring capabilities but also contributes to the overall quality of the university's research output and academic excellence. Participants: 47, Date 09.22 prof. Toncheva (CME course)

### 4.2. Strategy for business-university relationship

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### 4.3. Training in Technology Transfer and Entrepreneurship

**Overview:** Training in Technology Transfer and Entrepreneurship is an integral part of the Medical University of Varna's efforts to bolster innovation and business acumen among its researchers and students. A pivotal element of this training was a lecture by

Dr. D J Nag, which contributes significantly to the university's educational offerings in these areas (University MUVE-TV has recorded the lecture and made it available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRs35j2dFvA>).

**Highlights of Dr. D J Nag's Lecture:**

- **Expert Insights:** Dr. Nag provided expert knowledge on the nuances of technology transfer and the entrepreneurial process in the medical and scientific fields.
- **Practical Strategies:** The lecture covered practical strategies for identifying research with commercial potential and the steps necessary for successful technology transfer.
- **Entrepreneurial Skills:** Emphasis was placed on equipping attendees with the skills to navigate the startup

#### 4.4. Soft skills courses for PhD students

**Overview:** PhD students at the Medical University of Varna are required to complete specific soft skills courses as part of their "Doctor" degree program. These courses, delivered through the online platform Blackboard, are designed to equip students with essential skills that complement their technical and scientific knowledge.

**Mandatory Soft Skills Courses:**

- **Communication Techniques and Presentation Skills:** This course focuses on enhancing students' abilities to effectively communicate complex ideas and present their research in a clear, engaging manner.
- **English for Academic Purposes (Specialized Course):** Tailored for non-native speakers, this course aims to improve English language proficiency, particularly in academic contexts, facilitating better integration into the international research community.

**Conclusion:** Soft skills are increasingly recognized as critical components of doctoral training. By integrating these courses into the PhD curriculum, the Medical University of Varna ensures its graduates are not only proficient in their scientific fields but also well-prepared to engage with wider audiences, both within and beyond the academic sphere.

#### Comments on the implementation of OTM-R principles during the interim assessment phase:

**Interim Assessment of OTM-R Implementation at Medical University of Varna**

**Overview:** The Medical University of Varna has been proactive in aligning its recruitment and selection processes with the principles of Open, Transparent, and Merit-based Recruitment (OTM-R) as outlined in the Charter and the Code. The university's strategic efforts are directed towards enhancing the integration of these principles into everyday practices, ensuring that recruitment is both fair and effective in attracting high-quality candidates.

**Achievements:**

1. **Electronic Platform Development:** The creation of an electronic platform for online applications, which is currently in development, marks a significant step towards improving accessibility and efficiency in the application process for academic and doctoral positions.

2. **Enhanced Legal Framework:** The national and university legal frameworks have been rigorously applied to establish clear rules for the appointment of gender-balanced selection committees, with a focus on professional experience and competence.
3. **Communication with Candidates:** MUV maintains transparency by informing all candidates about the outcomes of their applications, demonstrating a commitment to clear and open communication.
4. **Supportive Work Environment:** Efforts to create a non-discriminatory and supportive working environment are evident. The university provides infrastructure accessible to researchers with varying needs and ensures a workplace conducive to combining professional and family life.

#### **Areas for Improvement:**

1. **Recognition of Micro-Qualifications and Mobility:** Some weaknesses have been identified in the recognition of "micro-qualifications" and the evaluation of candidates' mobility experiences. The university plans to adjust its internal regulations to better acknowledge these aspects, enhancing the professional development opportunities for researchers.
2. **Implementation of New Policies:** While the development of new policies and the electronic platform are positive steps, the full implementation of these initiatives is still underway. Accelerating these processes would further strengthen MUV's adherence to OTM-R principles.

**Conclusion:** The Medical University of Varna has demonstrated a strong commitment to integrating the OTM-R principles into its recruitment practices. Significant progress has been made in terms of policy development and the implementation of supportive measures for recruitment and selection. Continued focus on enhancing the recognition of diverse qualifications and experiences, alongside speeding up the implementation of pending initiatives, will be crucial for maintaining momentum and achieving comprehensive adherence to the OTM-R principles.

## Implementation

### Detailed description and duly justification (max. 500 words)

1. **Data Collection and Analysis:**
  - **Action:** Continued and expanded the use of questionnaire surveys and monitoring of quantifiable indicators from the Action Plan.
  - **Justification:** This approach was chosen to ensure a continuous evaluation of the impact of implemented policies and to detect any shifts or trends that could influence future decisions. Regular data collection allows for real-time adjustments and ensures that the actions remain aligned with the objectives.
2. **Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms:**
  - **Action:** Facilitated additional seminars and established a structured feedback loop within departments.
  - **Justification:** Engaging a broad spectrum of the university's community ensures that the implementation process is inclusive and considers the needs and



opinions of all stakeholders, particularly those who are directly affected by the changes. This approach enhances buy-in and adherence to new policies.

### 3. **Steering and Implementation Committees Activities:**

- **Action:** The Steering Committee reviewed progress reports, and the Implementation Committee managed daily oversight. (Протоколи от заседанията)
- **Justification:** Active and ongoing governance by these committees ensures strategic oversight and operational execution are well-coordinated. The committees serve as a bridge between strategy formulation and practical implementation, essential for sustaining momentum and addressing any issues promptly.

### 4. **Documentation and Reporting:**

- **Action:** Systematic documentation of all procedural changes and development of interim reports.
- **Justification:** Maintaining detailed records and transparent reporting are fundamental for accountability and for evaluating the effectiveness of the initiatives. Documentation also supports continuity in the implementation process amidst changes in personnel or university policies.

### 5. **Public Communication and Involvement:**

- **Action:** Regular updates on the university's internal website and proactive communication through various channels.
- **Justification:** Continuous and open communication maintains transparency, builds trust, and ensures that the university community is well-informed about the changes and their impacts. It also facilitates engagement and feedback, which are crucial for the adaptive management of the Action Plan.

### 6. **Evaluation and Adaptation:**

- **Action:** Conducted an interim evaluation to align with ERA policies and adapted the Action Plan accordingly.
- **Justification:** An interim evaluation allows the university to measure its alignment with broader European standards and make necessary adaptations to its policies. This ensures that the university not only complies with international standards but also addresses the evolving needs of its researchers and the academic community effectively.

How have you involved the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?\*

**Overview:** MUV has engaged its research community in the OTM-R implementation process through targeted and practical methods. The approach has focused on involving researchers in discussions, gathering feedback, and ensuring transparency throughout the process.



## Key Actions:

### 1. Committee Participation:

- **Action:** Researchers were included in the Implementation Committee, allowing them to directly participate in shaping the OTM-R policies and practices.
- **Justification:** Their involvement ensures that the policies are aligned with the actual needs and expectations of the research staff.

### 2. Feedback Mechanisms:

- **Action:** MUV utilized existing channels like departmental meetings and internal surveys to gather feedback on the OTM-R implementation.
- **Justification:** These mechanisms provided a straightforward way for researchers to express their views and concerns, which were then considered in policy adjustments.

### 3. Information Sharing:

- **Action:** Updates and information about the OTM-R process were regularly shared through the university's internal communication platforms (+Интранет документи).
- **Justification:** Keeping the research community informed fosters transparency and helps in building trust in the implementation process.

### 4. Focused Discussions:

- **Action:** MUV held focused discussions during regular academic and departmental meetings to solicit feedback and discuss the implementation of OTM-R policies.
- **Justification:** These discussions ensured that researchers could directly contribute to and influence the ongoing changes.

By keeping the involvement strategies straightforward and directly linked to existing structures, MUV ensured that the implementation of OTM-R principles was practical and grounded in the real-world context of the university's operations. This approach facilitated a manageable and effective engagement with the research community.

Do you have an implementation committee and/or steering group regularly overseeing progress?\*

Yes, at the Medical University of Varna (MUV), we have established both an Implementation Committee and a Steering Committee to oversee the progress of our initiatives, including the implementation of the OTM-R principles.

## Implementation Committee:

- **Role:** This committee is directly responsible for the day-to-day management and implementation of the Action Plan. It includes the Deputy Deans in Science from each

faculty, representatives from the Research Institute, Human Resource Department, and Career Development Department.

- **Functions:** The committee coordinates the HRS4R implementation, ensures smooth project management, and facilitates the translation of ideas and initiatives from the research community into actionable solutions. They are tasked with regularly reporting progress to the Steering Committee.

#### **Steering Committee:**

- **Role:** This committee provides high-level oversight and strategic guidance for the implementation of the Action Plan.
- **Functions:** It reviews progress reports submitted by the Implementation Committee, makes strategic decisions, and approves any necessary changes to the Action Plan. This committee also ensures that the implementation aligns with the broader goals and policies of MUV.

#### **Regular Meetings and Reports:**

- Both committees meet regularly to discuss progress and address any challenges. The frequency of these meetings ensures that both committees can respond promptly to the dynamics of the implementation process and make timely adjustments as needed.
- Regular progress reports are prepared by the Implementation Committee and reviewed during the Steering Committee meetings to ensure that all actions are aligned with the set objectives and timelines.

This structured oversight mechanism is crucial for maintaining momentum in the implementation process and ensuring that all initiatives are effectively aligned with MUV's strategic goals.

[Is there any alignment of organisational policies with the HRS4R? For example, is the HRS4R recognized in the organisation's research strategy, overarching HR policy](#)

Yes, at the Medical University of Varna (MUV), there is a clear alignment of organizational policies with the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R). This alignment is evident in how the HRS4R is integrated into MUV's research strategy and overarching HR policies.

#### **Integration in Research Strategy:**

- **Research Prioritization:** The HRS4R principles are recognized and embedded in MUV's research strategy, which prioritizes creating an environment conducive to research and innovation. This includes supporting the professional development of researchers and ensuring open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment (OTM-R), which are central tenets of the HRS4R.
- **Funding and Support:** The research strategy also aligns with HRS4R by providing adequate funding and support mechanisms that encourage research excellence and foster a collaborative research environment.

## Inclusion in HR Policy:

- **Recruitment and Career Development:** MUV's HR policies have been adapted to incorporate the HRS4R to ensure that recruitment processes are open, transparent, and merit-based, directly supporting the career development paths for researchers at all stages.
- **Training and Development:** Consistent with HRS4R guidelines, MUV has implemented comprehensive training and development programs that are aimed at enhancing the skills and competencies of researchers. This includes leadership and management training, research management, and other skills crucial for career progression.
- **Work-life Balance:** The HR policies include measures to support work-life balance, which is a significant aspect of the HRS4R, aiming to create a supportive working environment that attracts and retains talented researchers.

## Policy Reviews and Updates:

- **Regular Reviews:** MUV regularly reviews its policies to ensure they remain aligned with HRS4R principles. These reviews help to identify areas for improvement and update policies as needed to address the evolving needs of the research community.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The process of aligning policies with HRS4R involves engagement with various stakeholders within the university, including researchers, to gather insights and feedback. This participatory approach ensures that the policies are not only compliant with HRS4R but also effectively meet the needs of the staff.

Overall, MUV's alignment of its organizational policies with HRS4R demonstrates a strong commitment to enhancing the working conditions and career development opportunities for researchers, thereby fostering an excellent and supportive research environment. This alignment is crucial for maintaining the university's reputation as a leading institution in medical research and education.

## How has your organisation ensured that the proposed actions would be also implemented?\*

At the Medical University of Varna (MUV), ensuring the effective implementation of proposed actions within the framework of HRS4R and other strategic initiatives involves several key mechanisms and strategies. These are designed to ensure accountability, promote transparency, and guarantee that actions are not only proposed but also actively implemented.

### 1. Clear Definition and Planning

- **Action:** Each proposed action within the HRS4R framework is clearly defined with specific, measurable objectives, responsible parties, and timelines.
- **Justification:** This approach ensures that every action has a clear pathway to implementation, with designated responsibilities and deadlines that help in tracking progress and accountability.

### 2. Dedicated Committees

- **Action:** MUV has established both a Steering Committee and an Implementation Committee to oversee and manage the implementation process.
- **Justification:** These committees are crucial for maintaining oversight of the HRS4R actions. The Steering Committee provides strategic direction and ensures alignment with overall institutional goals, while the Implementation Committee focuses on the day-to-day management of the actions, ensuring they are executed as planned.

### 3. Regular Monitoring and Reporting

- **Action:** Regular progress reports are required from all parties involved in implementing actions. These reports are reviewed during committee meetings and are essential for monitoring the advancement of each action.
- **Justification:** Continuous monitoring allows MUV to assess the effectiveness of the implementation process, identify any issues early, and adjust strategies as necessary to stay on track.

### 4. Integration into Institutional Frameworks

- **Action:** Actions proposed under the HRS4R are integrated into the broader institutional policies and frameworks to ensure they are part of the core operational strategies of MUV.
- **Justification:** By embedding these actions into the larger framework of the university's operations, MUV enhances the sustainability and importance of the actions, making them central to the university's mission and daily activities.

### 5. Resource Allocation

- **Action:** Adequate resources, both financial and human, are allocated to support the implementation of each action.
- **Justification:** Ensuring that each action has the necessary resources is vital for effective implementation. Without proper support, even well-planned initiatives can fail to be implemented successfully.

### 6. Stakeholder Engagement and Communication

- **Action:** Ongoing engagement with and communication to all stakeholders involved in or affected by the HRS4R actions.
- **Justification:** Regular communication ensures transparency and builds trust among the stakeholders. It also allows for the incorporation of feedback into the implementation process, which can improve the effectiveness and acceptance of the actions.

### 7. Training and Development

- **Action:** Training programs and workshops are conducted to equip those involved with the necessary skills and knowledge to implement the actions effectively.

- **Justification:** Providing training and development opportunities ensures that the staff have the competencies required to carry out their roles in the implementation process, thereby enhancing the likelihood of successful outcomes.

By employing these mechanisms, MUV ensures that the proposed actions under the HRS4R are not only planned and initiated but are also effectively implemented, monitored, and integrated into the university's broader goals and operations. This comprehensive approach helps MUV maintain its commitment to improving the conditions and opportunities for its research community.

How are you monitoring progress (timeline)?\*

#### 1. Committee Meetings:

- **What They Do:** The committees meet a two times a year to check on how well the HRS4R actions are being implemented.

#### 2. Simple Progress Reports:

- **What They Do:** Key people in charge of implementing the actions provide basic updates on what has been done.

#### 3. Casual Feedback Collection:

- **What They Do:** Collect feedback during routine meetings or through informal discussions with researchers to understand their views and any challenges.

#### 4. Regular Updates:

- **What They Do:** Share updates on the HRS4R actions in University news or emails to keep everyone informed.

This approach ensures MUV monitors the HRS4R implementation in a practical and manageable way.

How will you measure progress (indicators) in view of the next assessment?\*

For measuring progress toward the goals of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) at the Medical University of Varna (MUV), we plan to use a set of straightforward and meaningful indicators. These indicators will help us track how well we are implementing the actions and prepare for the next assessment effectively:

#### 1. Action Item Completion:

- **Indicator:** Track the percentage of HRS4R actions that have been completed.
- **Purpose:** Shows how many of the planned actions are finished.

#### 2. Training Participation:

- **Indicator:** Count how many researchers attend new training sessions.
- **Purpose:** Measures involvement in developmental opportunities.

#### 3. Recruitment Adherence:

- **Indicator:** Number of recruitment processes following the new open and merit-based guidelines.
- **Purpose:** Checks compliance with fair recruitment policies.

These straightforward indicators will help MUV keep track of progress simply and effectively.

#### How do you expect to prepare for the external review?\*

Preparing for an external review of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) at the Medical University of Varna (MUV) involves several straightforward steps to ensure that the process is both thorough and efficient. Here's how MUV can prepare:

### 1. Organize Documents:

- **What to Do:** Gather all relevant documents that show what has been done for HRS4R, like reports and records of training sessions.
- **Why:** To have clear evidence ready to show the reviewers.

### 2. Self-Check:

- **What to Do:** Conduct a self-assessment to see how well MUV meets the HRS4R standards.
- **Why:** To identify and fix any issues before the external review.

### 3. Practice Run:

- **What to Do:** Have a practice session to prepare for the actual review.
- **Why:** To make sure everyone knows what to expect and feels ready.

### 4. Brief the Team:

- **What to Do:** Make sure all key people involved know their roles and what they need to talk about.
- **Why:** To ensure everyone presents a unified and informed front during the review.

### 5. Final Checks:

- **What to Do:** Double-check all setups and arrangements for the review day, such as meeting rooms and technology.
- **Why:** To avoid any last-minute problems and ensure everything runs smoothly.

This streamlined approach will help MUV be well-prepared and confident going into the external review.