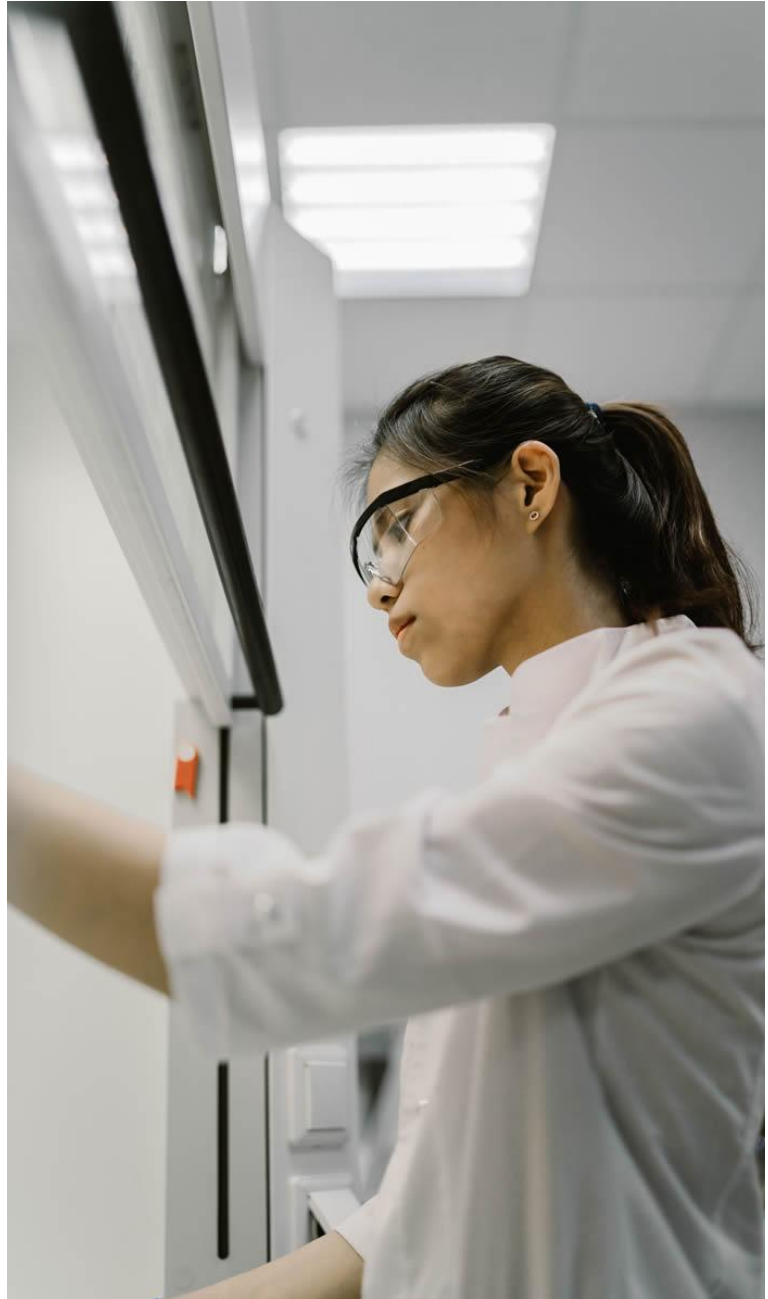
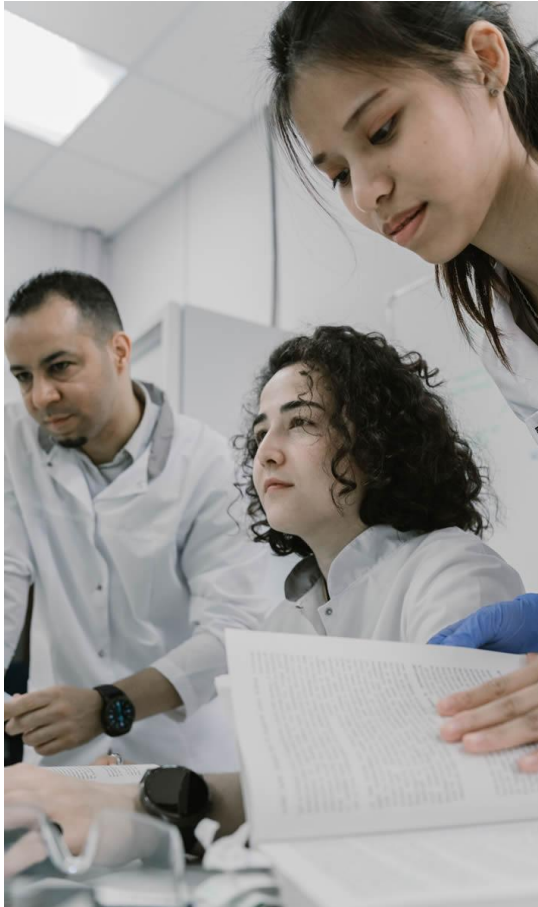




CASE nr. 2025IT366539

Name Organisation under review: Università degli Studi di Cassino e del Lazio Meridionale

Organisation's contact details: Viale dell'Università, 03043 Cassino (FR), Italy

Submission date: 28 July 2026

Endorsement for the European Charter for Researchers

1. Introduction: This gap analysis assesses the current status of the University of Cassino and Southern Lazio – European University of Technology in relation to the principles outlined in the new European Charter for Researchers, an umbrella document that incorporates and builds upon the principles of the previous "Charter and Code," which included the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. The new 2023 version, adopted in December 2023, is a single document that updates and streamlines the original Charter and Code of Conduct to address current challenges in the scientific environment, incorporating the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C_202301640). It identifies areas for improvement to align with the parameters of the former Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) and to achieve the HR Excellence in Research award. Therefore, this Gap Analysis is updated in accordance with the new European Charter for Researchers (2023–2024 version), which consolidates the Charter and the Code of Conduct into 20 principles.

The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers provide a framework for ensuring attractive research careers in Europe. They cover four thematic areas:

- **ETHICS, INTEGRITY, GENDER AND OPEN SCIENCE**
- **RESEARCHERS' ASSESSMENT, RECRUITMENT AND PROGRESSION**
- **WORKING CONDITIONS AND PRACTICES**
- **RESEARCH CAREERS AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT**

2. Analysis: The following scheme assesses to what extent UNICAS meets each of the 20 principles, which are the grounds on which the analysis is based, starting from the Regulatory Frameworks, at national and European level, which are the impediments to the implementation of the principles, how the community of UNICAS researchers perceives the issues, how deep is their knowledge of the regulatory framework and tools, and a brief overview of the initiatives that will be undertaken to address those impediments. This latter point will be further developed in the Action Plan.

Status ¹	Analysis – Current situation	Implementation impediments /gaps/comments	Action Plan
To what extent does this organisation meet the following principles?			Initiatives undertaken and/or suggestions for improvement:

¹ Implementation: ++ = fully implemented; +/- = almost but not fully implemented; -/+ = partially implemented; -- = insufficiently implemented. In case of --, -/+, or +/-, please indicate the actual "gap" between the principle and the current practice in your organisation. If relevant, list any national Declaration/regional legislation or organisational regulation currently impeding implementation for submitting Declaration.

1. Ethics & Research Integrity

+/-	Regulatory Framework European Union: European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/european-code-of-conduct-for-research-integrity_horizon_en.pdf. Italy: National Law 240/2010 (Article 2) requires all Universities to adopt an ethical code for their academic communities. UNICAS: adopted an Ethical Code for its entire community and established an Ethics Commission that verifies compliance with the norms of the Ethical Code. It also established a University Research Ethics Committee that provides opinions on research projects and promotes ethical awareness. Unicas Ethical Code, art. 5, passed by D.R. 568 on 20/11/2011 (https://www.unicas.it/ateneo/statuto-norme-e-regolamenti/ateneo/codice-etico/); Unicas Ethics in Research Committee (https://www.unicas.it/ricerca/etica-della-ricerca/), whose functioning is regulated by the D.R. 351 issued on 17/04/2024 (https://www.unicas.it/media/tsphu41z/dr-n-351_2024_commissione_etica_della_ricerca.pdf) Reception: The survey shows that 66.4% of the researchers totally agree with the statement that “UNICAS makes sure that the fundamental principles of research ethics and the principles within the Code for Research Integrity are applied”. However, 14.8% of the consultants either moderately agree (13.5%) or slightly agree (1.3%) with the statement and 18.8% don’t know whether UNICAS ensures ethical principles are applied (mostly PhD students).	None structural. The dedicated webpage, “Ethics in Research,” is very informative and provides information on international regulations (e.g., the Declaration of Helsinki) and forms to obtain support for submitting specific questions. GAP: The survey results reveal that the interviewees have limited knowledge of the Ethical Code.	- 1.a Strengthen the Ethical code in line with the new Charter requirements (Action Group 1). - 1.b Incorporate information and links about ethical issues in English (Action Group 6). - 1.c Enhance dissemination about Ethics in Research and disseminate knowledge about UNICAS Ethical Code (Action Group 6). - 1.d Introduce mandatory ethics & integrity training for PhD and research staff (Action Group 3). - 1.e Incorporate information and links about ethical issues in the official documents (Action Group 1).
-----	---	--	--

2. Freedom of Scientific Research

++	Regulatory framework: Italy: All national and institutional laws and rules comply with the statement "Art and science are free, as well as teaching them is free" as declared in Article 33 of the Constitution of the Italian Republic. Research freedom is confirmed in National Law n. 240/2010, which includes it among the inspiring principles (Article 1): "Universities are the primary seat of free research". Moreover, Article 7 of Legislative Decree n. 165/2001 states that public administrations are bound to guarantee freedom of teaching and professional autonomy in teaching and research. In compliance with the above-mentioned laws. UNICAS: The <u>Statute</u>, passed by D.R. 661/2018, art.I.1-2 (https://www.unicas.it/ateneo/statuto-norme-e-regolamenti/ateneo/statuto-di-ateneo/) and the <u>Strategic University Plan</u> (https://www.unicas.it/ateneo/pianificazione-strategica/piano-strategico-2023-2025/, at this stage under renewal for the triennium 2026-2028) acknowledge the freedom of research in full respect of individual and collective well-being, and social, scientific and cultural growth. Reception: According to the survey, 93.8% of the interviewed researchers agree (partially or fully) with the statement that UNICAS ensures the application of the principles of freedom of research. Furthermore, 79.9% of respondents confirm that research at the University is conducted in accordance with fundamental ethical standards and the institutional Ethical Code.	In accordance with the University's Statute, UNICAS endorses research freedom by establishing itself as a public institution independent of ideological, political, or confessional orientations. It respects the pluralism of opinions and operates under principles of liberty and responsibility to advance scientific and human knowledge. UNICAS fulfils European standards by: - Promoting Diverse Research: It supports scientific research in all forms across various disciplinary sectors. - Ensuring Open Dissemination: UNICAS champions full, open access to scientific literature, encouraging researchers to publish results in its institutional archive for broad public benefit. - Protecting Rights: A formal Ethical Code safeguards individual rights, ensures non-discrimination, and regulates intellectual property. - Fostering Cooperation: It actively engages in national and international research networks and partnerships. These principles are reaffirmed in the Strategic Plan 2023–2025, where the University endorses research freedom and fulfils the prescriptions of Article 2 of the European Charter for Researchers through the following principles: - Commitment to Freedom and Responsibility: UNICAS operates in respect of the principles of liberty and responsibility, promoting scientific research and the advancement of knowledge in all its forms. - Open Science and Knowledge Dissemination: The University explicitly adopts principles of full and open access to knowledge and the free dissemination of produced results. It aims to enhance the accessibility of research results and supports "open science" and "public science". - Ethics and Integrity: Central to its research action are the themes of ethics and research integrity. The University references its Ethical Code to maintain an environment based on dialogue and international exchange. - International Cooperation: UNICAS actively seeks to strengthen its international dimension, participating in European alliances and promoting the international mobility of researchers and doctoral students. - Broadening Knowledge Frontiers: The University encourages quality and excellence in research, positioning its activities on transdisciplinary and collaborative practices to benefit society and national growth. The analysis shows that at all levels (normative, implementation and reception) there is no structural impediment to the researcher's freedom. However, further internal information is needed. Additionally, we address the lack of information in English.	- 2.a Incorporate information and links in UNICAS' webpages about the freedom of research regulatory framework in Italian and English (Action Groups 1, 6). - 2.b Integrate research freedom clarifications into onboarding materials (Action Group 2).
-----------	---	---	--

3. Open Science

-/+	Regulatory Framework European Union: European Regulation (by which the Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Framework Program is created, and its participation and dissemination rules are established): <u>Commission Recommendation</u> (EU) 2018/790 of 25 April 2018 on access to and preservation of scientific information (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2018/790/oj/eng); Council Conclusions — “Research assessment and implementation of Open Science” (10 June 2022: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/56958/st10126-en22.pdf); Commission / EU policy updates: ERA Policy Agenda & Pact for R&I (2022–2024): https://european-research-area.ec.europa.eu/policy-agenda-2022-2024; Council Recommendation of 23 May 2024 on enhancing research security: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C_202403510. - Horizon Europe, open science – Early knowledge and data sharing, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/18252 - UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science, https://www.unesco.org/en/open-science/about Italy: National Plan for Open Science: https://www.mur.gov.it/sites/default/files/2022-06/Piano_Nazionale_per_la_Scienza_Aperta.pdf; National legislation (historical legal reference on Open Access): <u>Decree-Law No. 91 of 8 August 2013</u>, converted by Law No. 112 of 7 October 2013. UNICAS: Regulation on Policy for open access (D.R. 246/2019): https://archivio.unicas.it/media/3515035/Regolamento_policy_accesso_aperto_open_access_D_R_n_246_6_marzo_2019_1.pdf) RESEARCH SECURITY AND DUAL_USE Regulatory framework European Union: - Regulation (EU) 2021/821 -- Recommendation (EU) 2021/1700 - The European Union’s Strategy for Economic Security - Recommendation (EU) 2024/3510 on Research Security and its implications for dual-use research. Italy: the National Technical Working Group established by the Conference of Italian University Rectors – CRUI, held a meeting on 9/06/2024, at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, organised by the National Authority UAMA (Unit for Armament Material Authorisations) – Dual Use Division, with the participation of the US Department of Energy. The WG discussed the “Future Perspectives for the Development of a National Policy in the Field of Dual-Use Research”. However, Italian authorities have not yet reached a binding national policy on DURC (Dual-Use Research of Concern) similar to the U.S. model, including a national framework for safe research (Research Security). With regard to Research Security, a balance with Open Science is sought, with support from the recently appointed chair of the Committee for Research Security (covering dual-use technologies, foreign interference, and data protection). On the other hand, secure data management is entrusted to the Centre for Digital Services (CASI: https://www.casi.unicas.it/). This Centre is engaged in securing a wide range of apps and services provided by the institutional ID, a Google Workspace offering services for data storage, processing, and collaborative tools. CASI also provides training on their use and cybersecurity, supported by a specific VPN and a proxy for the intranet. However, larger, more structured data management tools could be provided, along with specific training. Reception: Overall, 65.8% of the surveyed researchers report being provided with opportunities to enhance their expertise and competencies through Open Science training initiatives, with 35.0% feeling highly supported and 30.8% moderately so. In contrast, 23.6% of respondents feel they are only slightly provided with such opportunities.	UNICAS seeks to promote open access to facilitate the international dissemination of scientific research, reduce the duplication of studies, encourage interdisciplinary research and promote transparency towards society, extending the concept of Open Science to other practices such as Open Data (sharing raw and processed research data), Open Educational Resources (open teaching materials), Open Methodology (use of open methodologies during the research cycle), Open Source (use of open software) and Open Peer Review (open peer review). As stated above (n. 2), the University’s Statute and the Strategic Plan ensure Open Dissemination, promoting full, open access to scientific literature and encouraging researchers to store their results in the University’s institutional archive (IRIS: https://iris.unicas.it/) for broad public benefit. UNICAS explicitly adopts principles of full and open access to knowledge and the free dissemination of results produced. It aims to enhance the accessibility of research results and supports “open science” and “public science”. The summary webpage on Research Issues (https://www.unicas.it/ricerca/), includes a clear tab to Open Science: https://www.unicas.it/ricerca/open-science/ UNICAS has made available the FOSTER portal (https://openscience.eu/article/project/foster), an e-learning platform offering resources to inform on Open Science and providing tools to develop strategies for integrating Open Science practices into daily workflows. However, the survey confirms that almost ¼ of the respondents are only moderately satisfied with these opportunities, indicating that stronger action is needed to provide information. Furthermore, the survey indicates that nearly 25% of respondents are moderately dissatisfied with current opportunities. This highlights the necessity for more impactful informational initiatives. UNICAS appointed a Rector's Delegate for Dual-Use Research Compliance, also serving as Coordinator for the Ethics Committee.	- 3.a Enhance internal information on Open Science (Action Group 1). - 3.b Strengthen policy in line with the new Horizon Europe Open Science requirements (Action Group 2). - 3.c Incorporate information and links about Open Science in English (Action Group 6). - 3.d Enhance dissemination and training about Open Science, Open Access tools and data protection in research beyond PhD students (Actions Group 3 and 6). - 3.e Formally approve institutional protocols regarding Research Security and Dual-Use Research of Concern, ensuring their publication on the official University portal for broader accessibility (Action Group 1).
------------	---	--	--

4. Gender Equality

-/+	Regulatory Framework European Union: <u>Directive 2006/54/EC</u> of the European Parliament and of the Council on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation, a fundamental standard for gender equality in the workplace. Italy: following the founding principle of non-discrimination firmly established in the <u>Italian Constitution</u>, art. 3, gender equality is reaffirmed, while art. 51 guarantees citizens of both sexes equal access to public office and positions, and commits the Republic to promoting equal opportunities; art. 37 establishes that working women have the same rights and the same remuneration as men for equal work, and art. 117 (in the 2001 reform) assigns to the State - and in some areas also to the Regions - concurrent legislation on issues including “equal opportunities” (social rights, work, etc.), thus allowing for a national and regional regulatory framework; Legislative Decree No. 198 of 11 April 2006 ‘Code of Equal Opportunities between Men and Women’. Art. 48 concerns positive action in public administrations, promoting measures to remove obstacles to the full participation of men and women and integrating the objective of equality into all policies and activities, including the management of employment relationships and career advancement, to overcome gender discrimination. UNICAS: The <u>Statute</u> implements the national regulation at art. III.4 (https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/atto/serie_generale/caricaArticolo?art.codiceRedazionale=18A00476&art.data PubblicazioneGazzetta=2018-01-27&art.flagTipoArticolo=1&art.idArticolo=1&art.idGruppo=0&art.idSottoArticolo=1&art.idSottoArticolo1=10&art.progressivo=0&art.versione=1), establishing a Guarantee Committee for Equal Opportunities (i.e. <u>Comitato Unico di Garanzia - CUG</u>) — a statutory body for parity, well-being and anti-discrimination that ensures gender equality and equal opportunities and strengthens the protection of workers, implementing preventive measures against any form of physical or moral violence, relating to gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, disability, religion, politics, and language. In addition to the CUG, other specific bodies monitor the application of such policies, namely: the <u>Collegio di disciplina</u>, the statutory disciplinary board for academic staff (Statute, art. III.3); and the <u>Ethical Committee</u> (https://www.unicas.it/media/xpsagavq/codice-etico_unicas.pdf), which works for the dissemination and respect of the Ethical Code. Additionally, UNICAS issued a code of conduct against mobbing, passed on 6 March 2008, D.R. 202: https://www.unicas.it/media/4jrjduyf/codice_condotta_contro_mobbing.pdf UNICAS <u>Gender Equality Plan (GEP)</u> contains the University’s actions and monitoring indicators for gender equality. https://www.unicas.it/media/4kmhstpg/gender-equality-plan.pdf Bilancio di Genere (Gender Report): UNICAS publishes a <i>Bilancio di Genere</i> (last edition 2024) which complements the GEP with data and indicators https://www.unicas.it/media/3gkbl54o/unicas_bilancio-di-genere_2024_fnl.pdf. The implementation of policies to address gender and diversity issues is also planned in the University PIAO (Integrated Plan for Activities and Organisations). The PIAO includes the Positive Action Plan (PAP) aimed at ensuring equal opportunities and organisational well-being. The PAP (Annex H) 26-28 also contains measures aimed at achieving gender balance. Reception: Survey results indicate that 81.9% of respondents believe (either strongly, 61.5%, or moderately, 20.4%) that gender equality is ensured across all staffing levels at UNICAS, including supervisory and management roles. However, only 62.8% confirm that selection committees are consistently gender-balanced, while 28.0% of respondents are unaware whether this is the case. Furthermore, only 60.9% of researchers perceive the UNICAS specific measures as sufficient to encourage both women and men to reconcile family and work, children and career (e.g., part-time, teleworking, sabbatical periods, etc.).	The summary webpage on Research Issues (https://www.unicas.it/ricerca/) includes a clear tab to the GEP: https://www.unicas.it/ricerca/gender-equality-plan/. Survey results show some dissatisfaction with the gender balance in the commissions. For this reason, it would be necessary to increase the presence of women in all positions and commissions. Some action has been already undertaken under the responsibility of CASE, the University Committee for Sustainability, in the framework of the activities of WG 2, task 2.1 of EU+ Accelerate project. With the occasion, a survey has been started and results will be processed shortly.	- 4.a Enhance internal information about gender and other diversity aspects (Action Group 1). - 4.b Update Gender Equality Plan in line with EU standard and the university’s PIAO (Integrated Plan for Activities and Organisations) and strengthen Gender equality in line with the new Charter requirements (Action Group 2). - 4.c Incorporate information and links about gender equality in English (e.g. the GEP) (Action Group 6). - 4.d Enhance dissemination and training on gender equality (Action Groups 3 and 6). - 4.e Enforce gender equality in commissions, committees, panels and staff (Action Groups 4, 5, 7).
-----	--	--	---

5. Embracing diversity

-/+	Regulatory Framework Italy: non-discrimination is a founding principle of the Italian Constitution, which states in art. 3 "all citizens have equal social dignity and are equal in front of the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions". <u>Law 183/2010, art. 21</u> establishes significant provisions in public administration employment law, primarily aimed at ensuring equal opportunities, employee well-being, and non-discrimination within public bodies by introducing the Unified Guarantee Committee (Comitato Unico di Garanzia - CUG) to promote gender equality and fight harassment, making its establishment mandatory and linking its absence to managerial accountability. <u>UNICAS Statute, art. I.3:</u> requires the adoption of the University Ethical Code, which "contains rules aimed at avoiding any form of discrimination and abuse". Sanctions and referral routes for violations are also foreseen. The Guarantee Committee for equal opportunities (i.e. <u>Comitato Unico di Garanzia (CUG)</u> — a statutory body for parity, well-being and anti-discrimination - ensures gender equality and equal opportunities and strengthens the protection of workers, implementing preventive measures against any form of physical or moral violence, relating to gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, disability, religion, politics, and language. In addition to the CUG, other specific bodies monitor the application of such policies: the <i>Collegio di disciplina</i>, the statutory disciplinary board for academic staff (Statute, art. III.3), and the Ethical Committee (https://www.unicas.it/media/xpsagavq/codice-etico_unicas.pdf), which disseminates and promotes the Ethical Code. Reception: In the internal survey, 91.8% of the interviewed researchers agree (partially + totally) with the statement "UNICAS pays attention to avoid discrimination on the basis of gender, age, national or social ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, language, disabilities, political opinions or social/economic conditions."	UNICAS has established a dedicated Service Centre for Disability, Inclusion, and Research (CUDIR: https://www.unicas.it/cudir/), catering to students with temporary or permanent disabilities, specific learning disorders (SLD), and special educational needs (SEN), enabling them to fully enjoy the university experience in an independent and participatory manner. However, the Centre is dedicated to students. This highlights an institutional bias in which support infrastructure overlooks staff needs. The survey shows that UNICAS researchers are almost fully satisfied with the measures taken to avoid discrimination and support diversity. The gap lies therefore mainly in the lack of information in languages other than Italian.	- 5.a Extend the services to University Researchers, abolishing barriers for hiring researchers with disabilities (Action Group 5). - 5.b Enhance internal information about provisions of internal regulation and Ethical Code for the right to diversity and non-discriminatory policies (Action Group 1). - 5.c Incorporate information and links about anti-discriminatory policy in English (Action Group 6). - 5.d Enhance dissemination of anti-discriminatory initiatives and policies (Action Group 6).
-----	---	---	---

6. The Researcher

Regulatory Framework

UNICAS: Researchers are expected to be familiar with the University's research strategic goals, which are outlined in the University Strategic Plan (PSA) and implemented in the five Departmental Strategic Plans (PSDs). These plans are defined and approved by the Academic Bodies and published on the University website: <https://www.unicas.it/ateneo/pianificazione-strategica/piano-strategico-2026-2028/>

These plans comply with the programmatic documents published periodically by the Italian Ministry for University and Research (MUR), which aim to identify research areas that are more strategic in addressing societal needs and are therefore considered priorities in both national and international contexts.

The research of Early Stage Researchers is regulated by the University Regulations on Doctoral Programmes, issued by Rectoral Decree no. 326 of 13 May 2022 and amended by Rectoral Decree no. 783 of 7 October 2022, Rectoral Decree no. 497 of 13 July 2023 and Rectoral Decree no. 404 of 23 May 2025:

<https://www.unicas.it/media/1lygt4qo/regolamento-di-ateneo-in-materia-di-dottorato-di-ricerca-finale-2025.pdf>.

With regard to research projects funded by external organisations and in response to competitive calls for proposals, researchers comply with the obligations and timeframes set out in the calls for proposals and/or in the agreements and contracts with external funders. To support researchers in the application process, UNICAS organises periodic training with APRE (Agency for the Promotion of European Research, the Italian National Contact Point for European Research Programmes) and has established a Grant Office. To improve scouting for available funding opportunities and the project design assistance provided to all researchers, UNICAS has a partnership with other institutions (e.g., Technopole:

<https://www.rometechnopole.it/>)

The summary webpage on Research Issues (<https://www.unicas.it/ricerca/>) includes a clear tab to access support for Research Management and competitive projects application:

<https://www.unicas.it/ricerca/settore-ricerca/ufficio-progetti-competitivi-e-auditing/>.

The new strategic plan (years 2026-2028) includes specific actions to enhance training for ESRs in project writing, project management and reporting. It provides actions to amplify UNICAS attractiveness for external talents (action R1.5).

Reception: According to survey results, researchers are well aware of the University's and Departments' strategic goals governing their research activity: the large majority of respondents (82.2%) believe that UNICAS regularly and transparently communicates its strategic plans and research funding policies to its researchers.

However, R3 and R4 appear to be familiar with funding mechanisms and the strategic orientations of national and international programmes that lead research activity in their scientific area, whereas R1 and R2's awareness in this field is insufficient (26.1% of PhD students and postdoctoral fellows reported actual unawareness). Training strategies in these respects should therefore be improved to make early career researchers more familiar with funding schemes and national and international R&D strategic goals.

- 6.a Enhance staff involvement in strategic planning (Action Group 1).

- 6.b Implement a structured, annual "EU Funding and Research Management Masterclass Series" explicitly designed for R1 (PhD students) and R2 (Postdoctoral /temporary) researchers, covering competitive European call scouting, proposal design methodology, budget architecture, and project management (Action Group 3).

- 6.c Provide instructions for project submission, scientific production validation and scientific assessment in English (Action Group 6).

++

6B. Accountability and Transparency

++

Regulatory Framework

UNICAS: The university community, composed of lecturers and researchers, students, and technical and administrative staff, finds in the Statute the reference point and definition of its autonomy and responsibilities, further detailed in the Ethical Code.

The activities and actions of the University's staff are inspired by the principles of publicity and transparency of acts, simplicity and streamlining of procedures, and individual responsibility in the implementation of decisions, commensurate with the level of autonomy.

All researchers, including doctoral students, have personal research funds, annually distributed within each Department, to support their research activities (e.g., publication expenses, conference organisation, travel and subsistence, research equipment, etc.). Regarding public funding from national or international funding organisations, the University Grant Office supports researchers with their financial reporting for their grants. If required by the reporting rules for the action, UNICAS appoints committees responsible for internal audits and/or cooperates with external authorised auditors, to ensure transparency and proper management of public resources. Internal audits are also conducted by the Board of Auditors (*Collegio dei revisori dei conti*). The Board of Auditors is the internal control body for the regularity of the University's administrative, financial and accounting management. Its composition is defined in the University Statute - The use of the University's material and financial resources is communicated in accordance with the same principle of transparency, through comprehensible forms and channels. Furthermore, the Statute, art. III.3, establishes the Collegio di disciplina (Disciplinary Board), its composition, competences and timelines for disciplinary procedures (procedure for professors/researchers, transmission of acts by the Rector, role of C.d.A.). This is the statutory body competent to take serious disciplinary action.

The composition of the *Collegio dei Revisori* (Board of Auditors) is displayed on the webpage:

<https://www.unicas.it/ateneo/organizzazione/organi-di-governo/collegio-dei-revisori-dei-conti/>.

The annual budget, financial statements and other relevant documents are made available on the website on the pages devoted to administration and transparency:

<https://www.unicas.it/ateneo/amministrazione-trasparente/bilanci/bilanci-preventivi-e-consuntivi/>.

- 6.d The CV of the member of the Board of Auditors should be accessible via a link from UNICAS' webpage (Action Groups 1 and 4).

- 6.e Introduce training in budget management and financial reporting (Action Group 3).

6C. Professional Responsibility

Regulatory Framework

UNICAS: Following the Statute, art. 1.3.1, determining the fundamental values and rules of conduct within the university community, promoting the recognition and respect of individual rights, as well as the acceptance of duties and responsibilities towards the institution to which they belong and the society, The Ethical Code identifies the university community as the target audience for the rules, and is designed to regulate the conduct of teachers, technical and administrative staff, students and collaborators with a view to fairness, integrity, transparency, respect and responsibility. Specifically, art. 5 imposes compliance with regulations on intellectual property and plagiarism, ensuring that the publication of research results from responsible, adequately documented and correct scientific initiatives and activities. It refers to specific Regulations for the generation, exploitation and management of intellectual property relating to research results

(https://www.unicas.it/media/x4alfeny/dr-pubblicazione_n_61_2020.pdf).

Reception: 61.5% of the researchers who answered the survey stated that they are aware of their responsibilities towards society and the scientific community. Therefore, they are strongly committed to respecting intellectual property and avoiding plagiarism. An additional 23% of the respondents admit only a basic knowledge of the Ethical code.

The webpage

<https://www.unicas.it/ateneo/amministrazione-trasparente/disposizioni-general/atti-general/codice-disciplinare-e-codice-di-condotta/> contains national and university regulations on disciplinary matters and staff conduct.

A webpage under the menu of “regulatory framework” provides information about the IPRs: <https://www.unicas.it/ateneo/statuto-norme-e-regolamenti/ateneo/regolamento-per-la-generazione-valorizzazione-e-gestione-della-proprietà-intellettuale-sui-risultati-della-ricerca/>.

- 6.f UNICAS has to undertake specific actions to promote the “Code of Good Practice in Research”, incorporating information and links on anti-plagiarism software and IP norms and rights (Action Group 1).
- 6.g relevant dispositions and regulations have to be made available in English (Action Group 6).

7. Free Circulation of researchers

-/+	Regulatory framework Italy: National Law 240/2010, DD.MM. 243/2011 and 344/2011, in accordance with the principles outlined in the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment, and in compliance with D.M. 330/2022, establish that the assessment of researchers for the purposes of recruitment or career evaluation has to consider intersectoral and interdisciplinary mobility and experience. Europe: At the European academic level, initiatives are taken to standardise the evaluation criteria, with action such as the ARRA's process (Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment), a multi-stakeholder initiative carried out within the framework of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) to transform how research and researchers are evaluated, of which UNICAS is a part. UNICAS: Although UNICAS acknowledges free circulation of researchers, scientific knowledge and technology, and recognises the value of geographical, inter-institutional, inter-sectoral, inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary mobility as important means of enhancing knowledge and professional development at any stage of a researcher's career, the current national legislation adopts a Research Assessment System based on a strict division in different research areas and scientific areas, defined by National Law 240/2010 - Art.15 and defined by D.M. 639/2024 which determines the scientific-disciplinary groups and the related declarations, as well as the rationalisation and updating of the scientific-disciplinary sectors. Different scientific areas have slightly different assessment criteria, therefore mobility from one area to another might bring to an incomplete recognition of research outputs. Concerning mobility between the public and private sectors, new provisions have been introduced by D.M. 330/2022 (https://www.mur.gov.it/atti-e-normativa/decreto-ministeriale-n-330-del-30-03-2022), which address the mobility experiences of researchers from Universities and Research Institutes to private companies. Here, Art. 5, § 1, specifies the value of these experiences and the research outputs achieved during the mobility period in the assessment of researchers' career development. In contrast, UNICAS researchers do not factor international mobility into their assessment parameters: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1t85mnyTTDdKqTmqIhDKRlDsodrD7a1h6/edit#:~:text=Il%20regolamento%20in,stipendiali%2D1.pdf. Reception: 81.2% of the respondents state that opportunities for researchers to engage in geographical, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary mobility are both guaranteed and actively promoted. However, the recognition of intersectoral mobility is a concern, as indicated by the survey results. Only 44.0% of respondents agreed that opportunities for researchers to experience mobility between the public and private sectors are actively promoted and guaranteed. Notably, 33.4% responded that they did not know.	Currently, in each selection procedure, the committee considers the geographic/international mobility experience of each candidate during his/her training phase: experiences in Italy and abroad, cooperation with foreign and international organisations and research centres, lectures given at international conferences, teaching activity in international Universities and/or research centres, and achievement of international awards. UNICAS firmly considers internationalisation as one of the key principles of its strategy, especially thanks to the Alliance EUT+, which stimulates and supports participation in European projects, international networks, and the establishment of scientific-didactic collaboration agreements with several foreign universities, aimed at fostering the mobility of students, researchers, and professors. The University's Statute and the Strategic Plan foster cooperation at the national and international levels. UNICAS actively seeks to strengthen its international dimension, participating in European alliances and promoting the international mobility of researchers and doctoral students. With the support of other institutions (e.g. Regione Lazio) and stakeholders (e.g. SMEs), intersectoral mobility is promoted and supported for ESRs (especially R1). On the other hand, UNICAS researchers' concerns about the assessment of international mobility suggest taking initiatives to develop more efficient databases for the recognition of international and intersectoral mobility.	- 7.a Enhance information to researchers about their possibilities for international, intersectoral and interdisciplinary mobility (Action 1). - 7.b Further implementation of the CoARA principles (Actions 4, 5 and 7). - 7.c Include international mobility among the parameters for researchers' recruitment, issuing of an official document establishing procedures for certification of international activity to be valorised in recruitment and career progression (Action 4). - 7.d Multiply efforts to enhance UNICAS' international ranking in widespread and bespoke classifications (e.g. QS).
------------	--	---	---

8. Sustainability of research

Regulatory framework

Europe: The European Commission adopted regulations and took initiatives to promote the sustainable implementation of research activities in line with current and future policy initiatives, such as the European Green Deal, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The European Commission's MSCA Green Charter, developed within the framework of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), can serve as a reference point.

Italy: Italian legislation in this area largely implements and operationalises EU policies. Key reference points are the European Green Deal, Horizon Europe regulations, the EU Taxonomy Regulation, and the "Do No Significant Harm" (DNSH) principle under Regulation (EU) 2021/241. These instruments impose binding sustainability conditions on publicly funded research, particularly when linked to innovation, infrastructure, and technology transfer. The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) is the central regulatory and financial vehicle for sustainability-oriented research in Italy. It was implemented through Decree-Law No. 77/2021 (converted into Law No. 108/2021), which establishes governance, monitoring, and compliance mechanisms. All PNRR-funded research projects and all calls for proposals opened by the Italian Ministry for Research and University (MUR) must comply with DNSH, climate tagging, gender equality, and social inclusion requirements. This has had a systemic effect on research design, evaluation criteria, reporting, and auditing.

Other research activities are subject to Italy's Environmental Code (Legislative Decree No. 152/2006), which governs environmental protection, impact assessment, resource use, waste management, and emissions. Research infrastructures and experimental activities must comply with environmental impact assessment (VIA/VAS) rules where applicable, reinforcing sustainability obligations at the operational level. Sustainability is embedded in public research funding through green public procurement rules. The Minimum Environmental Criteria (CAM), adopted via ministerial decrees under the Public Procurement Code (Legislative Decree No. 36/2023), apply to goods, services, and works purchased for research. This indirectly shapes research practices, especially in large laboratories and infrastructure projects. The National Research Programme (PNR), adopted by the Ministry of Universities and Research (MUR), explicitly integrates sustainability, climate transition, and SDG alignment as strategic priorities. Universities and public research organisations are increasingly required to adopt sustainability plans, gender equality plans, and ESG-style reporting as conditions for accessing national and EU funds. Sustainability in research is also reinforced through ethical review requirements, open science policies, and long-term societal impact assessments. These are promoted through MUR guidelines, ANVUR evaluation criteria, and alignment with international frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

UNICAS: through its Comitato di Ateneo Sostenibilità - CAsE (University Committee for Sustainable Development), UNICAS intends to apply an integrated, transdisciplinary approach to transform and develop social responsibility. In this context, the Committee pursues knowledge development and transmission through the Art. 1.2 'Institutional Purposes' of the Statute of the University, making an organic and coherent combination of research, teaching and the third mission regarding scientific, cultural, civil, economic and social progress.

UNICAS is part of the RUS — Rete delle Università per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile (Universities Network for Sustainable Development), the main coordinated sustainability initiative involving Italian universities. RUS was established within the *Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane (CRUI)* in July 2016 and represents the first experience of systematic coordination and sharing among universities on environmental sustainability and social responsibility, with the goal of disseminating sustainability culture and best practices within and beyond universities. Universities participating in RUS form thematic Working Groups (e.g., climate change, mobility, energy, waste, education, food), fostering inter-institutional collaboration, knowledge exchange, and joint projects.

The identified gap thus lies in internal and external communication.

- 8.a UNICAS' policies for sustainability and sustainable research, and the guidelines for integrating European acts for sustainability of research (e.g. the Green Deal, the DNSH principles) should be made available in English (Action Group 6).

++

9. Researchers' assessment

+/-	Regulatory Framework Italy: Following the decrees DL 74/2017 and DL 150/2009, the researchers' assessment is carried out corporately, intended per department and university, although based on individual scientific production. Performance evaluation ensures that resources and processes are aligned with institutional objectives by identifying areas for improvement and fostering organisational change. The DPCM of 26 January 2011 assigned ANVUR, the National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research, the task of identifying, in agreement with the Commission for the Evaluation, Transparency and Integrity of Public Administrations (later replaced by the National Anti-Corruption Authority – ANAC), specific objectives, indicators, and standards to define operational methods for ensuring a performance management cycle consistent with the mission of these institutions. UNICAS: In addition to the national evaluation of scientific production, which assesses departments rather than individual researchers (VQR, under the supervision of ANVUR, the national Agency for evaluation of Universities and Research), the evaluation of faculty staff follows a specific procedure outlined on the webpage https://www.unicas.it/media/i4en43cy/procedimento-2.pdf. The regulation of UNICAS (https://www.unicas.it/media/u0idgfl1/dr-n-721_2022_emanazione-regolamento-scatti-stipendiali-1.pdf), updated in 2022, follows the national law 240/2010, establishing biannual wage increases provided that the evaluation is positive. This process ensures a comprehensive assessment of researchers' contributions and performance within the department, aligning with our institutional goals and standards. Early-stage researchers, such as doctoral students, are due for periodic review of the progress of their research programme, in accordance with an evaluation report prepared by the tutor(s). Their participation in the training programme is yearly carried out by the permanent committee of each doctoral school (<i>Collegio di Dottorato</i>). Fixed-term Tenure Track Researchers (RTT) are evaluated based on the regulations available at https://www.unicas.it/ateneo/statuto-norme-e-regolamenti/ateneo/regolamento-criteri-per-la-disciplina-da-parte-degli-atenei-della-valutazione-dei-ricercatori-a-tempo-determinato-in-possesto-dellabilitazione-scientifica-nazionale-ai-fini-della-chiamata-nel-ruolo-di-professore-di-seconda-fascia-65/. The evaluation requires a scientific qualification pursuant to Article 16 of Law 240/2010. Upon successful evaluation, the fixed-term researcher will be hired by UNICAS as an associate professor (with a permanent contract). UNICAS utilises a digital platform, called Criterium, providing support for the assessment and selection of scientific publications selected for the national evaluation (performed according to art. 2, comma 1 and art. 4 of the national law D.Lgs. n. 19 issued on 27/01/2012; art. 3 of law D.P.R. 01/02/2010, n. 76, modified by Law 11/12/2016, n. 232). The evaluation models implemented by the platform are those adopted by ANVUR within the framework of national research evaluation procedures, and specifically: - Evaluation Model for the VQR (Quality of Research Assessment); - Model for the National Scientific Habilitation (ASN) (Art. 16 of Law No. 240/2010 and subsequent implementing Ministerial Decrees). Reception: 83.5% very (54.9) or moderately (28.6) perceive that both research and teaching activities for all researchers are subject to regular and transparent evaluation.	UNICAS, with the support of CoARA (the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment, see <i>supra</i> n. 7), intends to update the evaluation parameters, emphasising qualitative, responsible methods over simple quantitative metrics, with member organisations creating action plans for implementation. UNICAS has subscribed to the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA), according to which the assessment of researchers and their careers should be primarily based on qualitative judgement and the recognition of the diversity of research activities, practices, and outputs. Together with the other Italian Universities and HEIs that have subscribed to the Agreement, the University is participating in the meetings and discussions organised by the Italian Board of Rectors (CRUI) to develop a national proposal for the reform of the assessment of research and researchers. At this stage, research outputs are stored in a database named IRIS, connected to the national database CINECA for the management of Italian researchers' careers and roles (including their participation in doctoral committees, their scientific national habilitation, and their achievements and track record: https://iris.unicas.it/). The “quantitative” data are processed via another e-tool, called Criterium (https://criterium.svelto.tech/login), a platform designed to support universities and research institutions in self-assessment activities and the measurement of research performance. Criterium implements the national models adopted by ANVUR (the National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research) to enable universities to analyse their positioning within national evaluation campaigns, and to assess the scientific outputs of the individual researchers, providing invaluable suggestions about the “rating” of their scientific production based on impact factors and other parameters. The summary webpage on Research Issues (https://www.unicas.it/ricerca/) includes a clear tab to the Research assessment and Evaluation of research outputs: https://www.unicas.it/ricerca/valutazione-della-ricerca/. There are no procedures in place to evaluate the research activities of researchers hired for specific research projects.
-----	--	---

- 9.a In compliance with the requirements of the ARRA process, UNICAS will draft general guidelines for assessing researchers' track records in competitions (Action Group 2).
- 9.b The procedure has to be explained and made available in English (Action Group 6).

10. Recruitment (OTM-R)

-/+	Regulatory framework Italy: According to National Law 240/2010 ss.mm.ii., selection criteria should include the quality of scientific publications, the researcher's CV and their teaching experience, awarding a score to each publication submitted for evaluation and to each qualification or documented experience in the field of research, as well as to the knowledge of a foreign language. D.M. 243/2011 clarifies the criteria to be considered by the selection committees appointed for the recruitment of fixed-term researchers (RTD-a, RTD-b – RTT): a) Doctorate or equivalent degree; b) teaching activities in HEIs in Italy and abroad; c) training or research activities carried out in HEIs in Italy and abroad; d) clinical experience (if applicable); e) project design activities (if applicable); f) organisation, overseeing and coordination of, or participation in, national and international research groups; g) patent ownership; h) participation to national and international congresses; i) national and international prizes for research activity; j) European specialisation diploma recognised by international boards (if applicable). UNICAS: The research selection calls comply with Italian regulations. The national regulation is implemented into UNICAS procedures and regulations (e.g. Professors: https://archivio.unicas.it/ateneo/norme-e-regolamenti/didattica/regolamento-per-la-disciplina-della-chiamata-dei-professori-di-prima-e-seconda-fascia-in-attuazione-degli-articoli-18-e-24-della-legge-30-dicembre-2010-n-240.aspx; researchers: https://www.unicas.it/ateneo/statuto-norme-e-regolamenti/didattica/ricercatori-con-contratto-a-tempo-determinato-di-cui-allart-24-comma-3-lettera-a-e-lettera-b-della-legge-2402010-e-per-i-ricercatori-con-contratto-a-tempo-determinato-in-tenure-track-rtt-di-cui-alla-legge-792022/). A dedicated webpage for recruitment calls for researchers is available on the UNICAS website https://www.unicas.it/ateneo/bandi-di-concorso/. The calls are also published on the Ministry website and on EURAXESS (with an abstract in English). With regard to the PhD programmes offered annually by the University, the relevant calls for applications are published in both Italian and English on the following webpage: https://www.unicas.it/dottorato/bandi-di-concorso/ Both sections, in Italian and in English, include detailed Guidelines for the application procedure that candidates must complete through the GOMP online platform. Since the platform may not be immediately intuitive for first-time users, the Guidelines provide step-by-step instructions for the submission procedure. Reception: Survey results show that researchers recognise the merit-based character of UNICAS' recruitment procedures. Selection criteria are based on merit, both quantitatively and qualitatively (funding, publications, impact of the research, technology transfer, management, mobility, soft skills, seniority, etc.; see OTM-R checklists 12 and 19). The survey results show that the UNICAS selection process is perceived as essentially adequate: 79.0% believe that at every career stage, selection processes ensure that candidates' comprehensive competencies, including mobility, academic/professional qualifications, and their full career history, are appropriately assessed. Furthermore, 88.2% of the surveyed researchers report that selection procedures are conducted transparently. However, only 64.5% state that candidates receive appropriate feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their candidacy upon completion of the process (e.g., through access to official records). Notably, 24.3% of respondents reported being unaware of how feedback is provided.	Although the university has established recruitment procedures (selection, contract, and incorporation), it does not have a written document outlining the Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment policy. In some research project calls, recruitment selection requires a specific qualification.	In the framework of Action Groups 1, 2, 4 and 5, UNICAS should: 10.a Update recruitment regulations integrating the open, transparent and merit-based strategy for the recruitment of researchers, in accordance with the European OTM-R recommendations (https://cdn1.euraxess.org/sites/default/files/policy_library/otm-r-finaldoc_0.pdf) 10.b Create a section dedicated to selections on the UNICAS website in English and publish the announcement for posts in two languages (Action Group 6). 10.c Enhance the feedback provided to candidates after completion of the recruitment procedures (Action Groups 4 and 6). 10.d Issue a document with guidelines addressing international and intersectoral mobility as criteria for ranking in recruitment and career progression (see 7.c).
-----	--	---	--

11. Selection

-/+

The Selection Committee is composed of three tenured professors, at least two of whom are external and at least two of whom are full-time professors.

All members of the Committee must have been confirmed in their respective roles.

The Committee members are chosen, preferably, from professors belonging to the same field as acknowledged in the national list of "scientific sectors"

(https://abilitazione.mur.gov.it/public/aspirantiCommissari_2023.php), or, in case of justified need, from similar sectors. In the case of fixed-term research contracts for externally funded research projects involving interdisciplinary contributions, the institution that requested the call appoints the internal member after consulting the project manager.

Full-time members from outside the University must be included in the "Lists of eligible candidates" for the juries in competitions for the national scientific qualification, pursuant to Law No. 240/2010.

Gender equality is guaranteed within commissions in accordance with Law n. 215 of 23 November 2012, which provides for gender equality in boards and juries for competitions in public administrations.

Members of selection committees do not typically receive standard instructions on how to proceed.

Publication of calls in EURAXESS is already a standard procedure.

Reception: The survey results show that 62.8% of the researchers are aware that selection panels always ensure an appropriate gender balance.

GAP: enhance the gender balance in selection panels and standardise procedures.

- 11.a Guidelines for the juries of competitive selections should be elaborated centrally, establishing an open, transparent and merit-based strategy for the recruitment of researchers. The document related to the Human Resources Recruitment Policy should establish clearer evaluation criteria and foresee full documentation for candidates regarding their evaluation (Action Groups 2, 4, and 5). The following concrete measures will also be taken: See 10.b English version of the calls (Action Group 6).
- 11.b Improve the description of working conditions and rights in the texts of calls that do not currently detail them (Action Groups 1, 2 and 6).
- 11.c Improve UNICAS' website to make job offers more visible, with clear descriptions about what is required of potential candidates (including templates) (Action Group 6).

12. Career Progression

+/-	Regulatory framework Italy: According to Italian legislation (Law 204/2010), there are no automatic mechanisms to ensure career progression unless a national competition is held at the recruiting institution. The only mechanism facilitating postdoctoral researchers' access to advanced teaching positions is the new Tenure Track Researcher research contract, as provided for in Laws 240/2010 and 36/2022. UNICAS: The University's recruitment strategy is defined with a six-year time horizon, in accordance with the priorities and objectives defined in the triannual University Strategic Plan and based on the criteria established by the University Governance (https://www.unicas.it/ateneo/pianificazione-strategica/piano-triennale-di-programmazione-del-personale/). Each year, this plan is updated and approved by the Department Boards and the Academic Senate to address new needs that may have arisen. In compliance with national legislation, the specific resources (so-called "punti organico") necessary for the hiring of new research staff units or for the career progression of faculties are distributed among the departments. Conversely, the transition of a tenure-track Senior fixed-term researcher (RTD-b) to Associate Professor is set aside at the planning stage. Upon expiration of the RTT contract or when the researcher meets the requirements set by national regulations, an evaluation for promotion to Associate Professor can be initiated (https://www.unicas.it/ateneo/statuto-norme-e-regolamenti/ateneo/regolamento-criteri-per-la-disciplina-da-parte-degli-atenei-della-valutazione-dei-ricercatori-a-tempo-determinato-in-possesso-dell'abilitazione-scientifica-nazionale-ai-fini-della-chiamata-nel-ruolo-di-professore-di-seconda-fascia-65/). Reception: Overall, 84.8% of surveyed researchers believe (either very much or moderately) that calls for applications across all career levels are adequately advertised nationally and in accordance with current regulations. Furthermore, 88.3% acknowledge that these calls provide a comprehensive description of selection criteria, working conditions, and rights, alongside career prospects and required competencies. However, a significant knowledge gap exists regarding international dissemination: only 35.5% are aware that UNICAS publishes all calls internationally via the EURAXESS portal, while 57.6% explicitly state they are unaware of this practice. A large majority of surveyed researchers (84.8%) are satisfied that calls for applications for all career levels are adequately advertised nationally and comply with current regulations. Similarly, 88.3% agree that these calls clearly describe the selection criteria, working conditions, rights, career prospects, and required competencies. However, a notable deficit in awareness exists regarding international outreach: less than two-fifths (35.5%) of researchers are aware that UNICAS posts all calls internationally on the EURAXESS portal, and 57.6% explicitly confirm they are unaware of this practice.	Given the insufficient financial resources, the gap lies in the inadequate clarity about the timing for career progression.	- 12.a Enhance information among researchers on the shared criteria for career development (Action Group 1).
-----	---	--	---

13. Working Conditions, Funding and Salaries

+/-	Regulatory framework Europe: Following the art. 1, Pillar 3, of the European Charter for Researchers, the working conditions for researchers, including those with disabilities, have to ensure “the flexibility and accessibility deemed essential for successful research performance, in accordance with existing national legislation... They should aim to provide working conditions that support the integration of personal life, family, caring, health, safety, and overall well-being, without prejudice to research careers... Employers should ensure that the most stimulating research or research training environment is created that offers appropriate equipment, facilities and opportunities... [providing] adequate resources in support of the agreed work programme. In particular, it is important to have qualified support staff (e.g. research managers and administrators)”. Researchers should be represented in the relevant information, consultation and decision-making bodies of the institutions for which they work, to protect and promote their individual and collective interests, and to contribute to the institution's workings actively. Italy: Italian researchers at all levels are included in the Italian legislation concerning working conditions, security and safety <u>D. Lgs. 81/2008 (Testo Unico sulla Salute e Sicurezza sul Lavoro)</u>. Wages, social security and welfare, including sickness, healthcare and parental benefits, pension rights and unemployment benefits, old age and survivor's benefits, invalidity benefits and benefits related to work accidents and occupational disease, are regulated in accordance with existing national legislation and national or sectoral collective bargaining agreements. Additionally, UNICAS has stipulated a private health insurance for all employers. It covers them also abroad. Employers can extended the benefits to their family, upon payment of a fee. Reception: Survey findings indicate that 63.8% of respondents believe UNICAS ensures competitive salaries and benefits across all career stages and contract types, in compliance with legal requirements. However, 17.4% expressed only slight agreement, and 9.9% were undecided. Regarding institutional governance, 85.2% of researchers feel their participation in decision-making and communication processes, such as joint committees, Study Program Councils, and Department Boards, is effectively guaranteed. Furthermore, a significant majority (83.6%) perceive the departmental work environment as both stimulating and supportive of their research endeavours.	UNICAS complies with national regulations and provides support for additional services such as tax declaration and retirement consultancy.	- 13.a UNICAS should develop standard procedures to facilitate onboarding for international researchers (Action Groups 1 and 6). - 13.b Define guidelines for flexible work arrangements (Action Group 2).
-----	--	---	---

14. Stability of Employment

+/-	Regulatory Framework European Union: Council Directive 1999/70/EC laid down the principles and conditions to ensure and promote the stability of employment conditions for researchers. Italy: In Italy, the legislation concerning fixed-term employment contracts is primarily set out in Legislative Decree 6 September 2001, n. 368, which implemented Directive 1999/70/EC. For researchers, the reference law governing employment stability is Law 240/2010. This law originally defined both fixed-term contracts (Article 24, paragraph 3, letters a and b) and permanent contracts (Article 18). However, subsequent amendments introduced by Law 79/2022 significantly changed the legal framework. Specifically, Law 79/2022 eliminated the fixed-term researcher contract previously defined in Article 24, letter a. It concurrently introduced the concept of the Tenure Track Researcher, who is eligible for a permanent contract if they hold the National Scientific Qualification (ASN) as per Article 16 of Law 240/2010 and receive a positive evaluation from a dedicated Commission https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:2010-12-30;240). UNICAS: At UNICAS, 100% of teacher-researchers in categories R3 and R4 are civil servants with permanent contracts. UNICAS has successfully stabilised all fixed-term researchers (100%). Furthermore, the stabilisation of the new fixed-term researchers (RTTs) is already planned, with the intention to prioritise the hiring of RTDAs. Six people are currently being recruited for research projects and benefit from project contracts (provided for by Article 22 of Law 240/2010).	The constraints are not structural, but rather financial and normative (specifically, the hiring threshold set by the "punti organico", a sort of "staff points" calculation established by the Ministry, see point n. 12).	- 14.a Enhance information about contractual conditions (Action Group 1).
-----	--	--	--

15. Contractual and Legal Obligations

++	Regulatory Framework Europe: Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 establishes the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation): https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/679/oj), UNICAS Human Resources Office ensures that hired personnel comply with the requirements and job conditions. Researchers are informed about the specific requirements of their contracts when they start working at UNICAS and are invited to read the University Ethical Code (https://www.unicas.it/ateneo/statuto-norme-e-regolamenti/ateneo/codice-etico-di-ateneo/). The HR Office website (https://www.unicas.it/ateneo/organizzazione/organigramma/area-risorse-umane/settore-personale-docente/) includes national and institutional regulations governing contractual and legal obligations applicable to UNICAS researchers. UNICAS <u>Data Protection Office</u>: https://www.unicas.it/privacy/privacy-e-ricerca-scientifica/ is in charge of the implementation of the European Regulation. If the research activity involves not only the processing of participants' personal data but also poses a risk to their mental and physical well-being, it is advisable to seek the prior opinion of the DPO (University Data Protection Officer), who will also conduct an integrated assessment of aspects related to personal data protection.	None structural. UNICAS has developed guidelines for the protection of personal data in scientific research to provide researchers with an overview of key concepts and obligations related to personal data protection, with a particular focus on the context of scientific research.	- 15.a Incorporate information about GDPR, confidentiality, patents, conflicts of interest, etc., into the contracts (Action Groups 1 and 2).
----	--	--	--

16 Dissemination and Exploitation of Results

+/-	Regulatory Framework Italy: The National legislation on industrial property (D.Lgs.30/2005), including patents and new product development, was updated on 23/08/2023, in accordance with National Law 240/2010 - Art. 6.9, establishing that researchers are committed to exploiting their research results (e.g. patents, spin-offs, etc.). Dissemination and exploitation are part of the so-called “University’s Third Mission”, which encompasses all outreach activities related to social impact and knowledge and technology transfer. With Legislative Decree No. 19 of 27 January 2012, establishing the national university evaluation system, tools and criteria for accreditation and periodic evaluation have been defined, setting a comprehensive reference for the full inclusion of Third Mission activities among those subject to official evaluation. UNICAS: issued the <u>Regulations for the generation, exploitation and management of intellectual property arising from research results</u> (D.R. 61/2020: https://www.unicas.it/media/x4alfeny/dr-pubblicazione_n_61_2020.pdf), available on a dedicated webpage, where application templates are also available (https://www.unicas.it/ateneo/statuto-norme-e-regolamenti/ateneo/regolamento-per-la-generazione-valorizzazione-e-gestione-della-proprietà-intellettuale-sui-risultati-della-ricerca/). The Technological Transfer Office provides consultancy and support. At UNICAS, the dissemination of results is incentivised by adhering to the principles of open access (OA) to scientific literature through: - implementation of the Institutional Repository IRIS that allows researchers at all stages of their career to store and disseminate their research products; - Unicas Academy Press (Centro Editoriale di Ateneo CEA); - transformative agreements to support the transition to Open Access publications, including the recent agreement with Elsevier, ensuring not only access to bibliographical resources online, but also through contract mediated by CRUI-CARE, allowing affiliated authors to publish in Open Access (OA) for the majority of hybrid journals with APC (Article Processing Charges). Access to the website https://www.sciencedirect.com/ is ensured by the institutional e-mail. - The same Conference of Italian Rectors (CRUI) ensured eligibility of affiliated corresponding authors in Italy to publish open access at no cost to themselves in most Taylor & Francis and Routledge Open Select (hybrid) journals. This agreement with CRUI combines continued access to Taylor & Francis journals with the opportunity for researchers in Italy corresponding at a participating CRUI institution to publish open access in over 2,000 Open Select titles: https://www.tandfonline.com/openaccess/members/crui?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=S7615990576_0839_EMENAC_cross-network&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=S7615990576_0839_EMENAC_FA1_LP1_CSPYP&creative=&keyword=&network=&device=m&cid=23619887433&agid=&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=23625344126&gbraid=OAAAAADAVp8H-ZLuJlZS8_VUlkxfu_CoQw&gclid=CjwKCAjwxITRBhBYEiwA6mZm7TkMBx1UxzG7fJePr1ptwUQuYyf8Ja8msXioyTrdHNe0GFOabHlxCoCE80QAvD_BwE. - Furthermore, researchers can disseminate their research results thanks to the participation in conferences and scientific congresses in Italy and abroad, using their personal research funds to cover travel and subsistence expenses. Reception: 86.5% of respondents believe that UNICAS promotes and supports researchers in disseminating their research findings. The summary webpage on Research Issues (https://www.unicas.it/ricerca/) includes a clear tab for Dissemination of research results.	There are no structural gaps, but the insufficient allocation of resources for scientific missions and organisation of scientific events.	In the action plan, measures are taken to enhance the impact of UNICAS Researchers’ scientific production. Among them, - 16.a Foresee training for UNICAS staff about IPRs, patents, and spin-offs (Action Groups 1 and 3). - 16.b Incorporate information and links about IPRs in the official documents (Actions 1 and 2). - 16.c Provide English translation of the webpage, regulations and forms (Action Group 6). - 16.d Enhance the access to OA publications via the institutional repository IRIS (Action Group 6). - 16.e If aligning with the university’s financial stability, increase the allocation of individual research funds (Action Groups 4 and 5). - 16.f Create awareness sessions on IP, patents and spin-offs (Action Groups 1 and 3).
-----	---	--	---

16B. Public Engagement

+/-	Regulatory framework Italy: Since 2012, the Italian regulatory framework has formally established that social impact and knowledge transfer are among the dimensions to be considered in measuring academic performance. Their classification – in line with international best practices – was incorporated into the drafting of the Manual for the Evaluation of the Third Mission published by ANVUR in 2015: https://www.uer.it/terzamissione/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2023/10/ANVUR-Manuale-di-valutazione-della-Terza-Missione.pdf The 2015 Manual provided operational definitions (e.g. Public Engagement as “the set of non-profit activities with educational, cultural and societal development value”) and systematically listed the categories of activities considered, thus laying the methodological foundations for more systematic and comparable evaluations between universities. The next evolution, called the Self-Evaluation and Accreditation System AVA 3.0, was launched in 2021 with the update to the accreditation system, as per Ministerial Decree No. 1154 of 14 October 2021. In this most recent phase, the issues of the Third Mission and social impact assume even greater regulatory significance. The evaluation criteria for the National Quality Assessment of the Italian Universities’ Third Mission are presented in the document: https://www.anvur.it/sites/default/files/2024-11/VQR-2020-2024-Modalita-valutazione-GEV_VdC.pdf.	UNICAS invests significant human and financial resources in Public Engagement, and its achievements are impressive. Activities are publicised and promoted across many channels, and the success rate, measured by the number of attendees, is very satisfying. Indeed, the reception is very positive. The survey results indicate that 83.2% of researchers perceive that UNICAS encourages and supports public engagement and knowledge transfer activities.	The GAP lies in insufficient information among affiliated researchers (Action Group 1) and in communication activities in languages other than Italian (Action Group 6). The goal of the action plan is to provide an institutional webpage in English.
-----	---	---	--

17. Valuing Diverse Research Careers

-/+	Regulatory Framework Europe: The European Charter for Researchers promotes the establishment of evaluation criteria, particularly for early-career researchers, and highlights the relevance of intersectoral and diversified career paths. Home institutions should promote a culture of career diversification for better personal and professional development. The European Charter for Researchers emphasises the importance of establishing evaluation criteria, especially for early-career researchers, that recognise intersectoral and diversified career paths. Home institutions should foster a culture that supports career diversification to enhance personal and professional development. Italy: According to D.M. 243/2011 and D.M. 344/2011, the selection Committee "must assess the overall consistency of the candidate's scientific production, the intensity and temporal continuity of the same production, without prejudice to the periods, properly documented, of career break. UNICAS: aims at fulfilling the need for career advisory, mentoring and support services to stimulate inter-sectoral, inter-disciplinary and geographical mobility, by means of its centres for: Job Placement (https://www.unicas.it/info-laureati-job-placement/job-placement/); Technological Transfer Office (https://www.unicas.it/trasferimento-tecnologico/) and support for post-graduate students intending to embrace a research career (https://www.unicasorienta.unicas.it/). The Job Placement Office ensures a direct link with industries and stakeholders (https://www.unicas.it/info-laureati-job-placement/job-placement/aziende-imprese-enti/), whereas UNICAS established collaboration agreements with hundreds of SMEs, Public Institutions, local administrations and stakeholders (https://www.unicas.it/info-laureati-job-placement/job-placement/studenti/convenzioni/convenzioni/). Reception: The survey reveals that 71.4% of respondents believe specific training programs, including courses, workshops, and seminars, are regularly available to enhance researchers' competencies at all career stages. Also, 73.0% agree that post-doctoral positions effectively foster the experience needed for research careers in both academic and non-academic sectors; however, 20.4% expressed uncertainty ('don't know') on this matter. Overall, a significant majority (87.7%) feel that UNICAS successfully guarantees autonomy and creativity for every researcher from the very beginning of their career.	None structural. The Gap lies in the insufficient confidence in the acknowledgement of non-academic experience and in the scarce information about opportunities provided for expanding the curricular portfolio.	- 17.a Enhance information for researchers, especially early-stage ones, about possibilities for international, intersectoral and interdisciplinary career pathways (Action Group 1). - 17.b Disseminate information about diverse career opportunities in English (Action Group 6). - 17.c Extend Job Placement initiatives to ESRs.
-----	---	---	---

18. Career development and advice

--	Regulatory Framework Europe: According to the European Charter for Researchers, Pillar 4.2, employers and funders must develop a specific career development strategy, preferably within human resources, for researchers at all career stages and contract types. This support should include helping researchers create individual career plans to identify necessary training and research, and providing mentors for personal and professional guidance to boost motivation and reduce professional insecurity. Additionally, employers and funders should ensure accessible, up-to-date career guidance and job placement assistance, either internally or through external collaboration, offering information and support for career development both within and outside the institution, available to researchers at all stages and contractual situations. UNICAS: see point n. 17. Reception: 59.6% of surveyed researchers strongly or moderately agree that UNICAS provides adequate teaching training, whereas 21.4% agree only slightly, and 10.9% expressed no opinion. Regarding career advancement, 64% of respondents feel that progression strategies and processes are clearly defined and communicated, while 16.1% slightly agree, and 11.8% were unable to provide an answer.	None structural. The Gap lies in the internal communication.	- 18.a Expand dissemination among the research community regarding available mechanisms and resources for professional advancement, encouraging researchers to assume an active role in steering their individual career trajectories (Action Group 1). - 18.b Disseminate information about career development opportunities and consultancy in English (Action 6).
----	--	--	---

19. Continuous Professional Development

+/-	Regulatory Framework Italy: National legislation recognises the right to lifelong vocational training. Docents and researchers must be able to receive training beyond their own area of expertise. (https://www.funzionepubblica.gov.it/it/il-dipartimento/area-di-interesse/formazione/direttiva-del-ministro-in-materia-di-formazione-del-14-gennaio-2025/) Researchers at all stages of their careers should seek continuous improvement by regularly updating and developing their abilities and skills. This can be achieved through a variety of means, including, but not limited to, formal training, workshops, conferences and e-learning. Reception: On average, 67.7% of researchers believe the University offers sufficient opportunities to enhance their expertise through training in key areas such as teaching innovation, grant writing, open science, and academic spin-off creation. In these areas, an average of 23.6% slightly agree, while 8.8% disagree.	In line with national legislation, UNICAS plans regular training events to enhance staff's professional and soft skills. The initiatives of the last few years have been particularly aimed at developing skills to ensure the safety of people and property, to preserve health and quality of life at work, to enhance project management and proposal preparation, and to improve the ability to use available digital tools for teaching and data management. However, as shown by the survey, researchers perceive these training sessions as being primarily intended for administrative staff. The summary webpage on Research Issues (https://www.unicas.it/ricerca/) includes a clear tab for training events and a link to the "mapping of researchers' skills" (https://www.unicas.it/ricerca/mappatura-delle-competenze/).	- 19.a Collect and disseminate information about possible training for researchers in soft and transversal skills on one webpage linked to job placement and HR (Action Group 1) - 19.b Disseminate information about training in soft and transversal skills in English on the UNICAS webpage (Action Group 6).
-----	--	--	---

20. Supervision and Mentoring

+/-	Regulatory framework UNICAS: The only context where supervision and mentoring at the post-graduation level are expected to be active is within the doctoral schools. For that, each one of the five UNICAS Doctoral Schools is enforced. General regulation of the Doctoral schools of UNICAS, published in the University Register on 26 May 2025, issued with D.R. no. 326 of 13 May 2022 and amended with D.R. no. 783 of 7 October 2022, with D.R. no. 497 of 13 July 2023, and with D.R. no. 404 of 23 May 2025, is available at: https://www.unicas.it/media/1lygt4qo/regolamento-di-ateneo-in-materia-di-dottorato-di-ricerca-finale-2025.pdf. Individual Regulations are available on each Doctoral schools webpage: https://www.unicas.it/media/1lygt4qo/regolamento-di-ateneo-in-materia-di-dottorato-di-ricerca-finale-2025.pdf. For early-stage researchers at post-doc level, hired with term contracts or in the framework of projects, supervision and mentoring are provided by the PIs and the senior staff of the laboratories to which they are attached. Reception: 77.6% of the surveyed researchers consider supervisors to serve as institutional points of reference for early-career researchers, providing guidance and support for their academic and professional growth.	The summary webpage on Research Issues (https://www.unicas.it/ricerca/) includes a clear tab to the Doctoral programmes and their regulations. GAP: Supervision and mentoring are managed in an informal way.	- 20.a Early Stage Researchers (especially R1 and R2) require improved and formalised communication regarding their rights, duties, and available options for supervision and mentoring (Action Group 1). - 20.b The doctoral regulations of each of the five doctoral schools should be made available in English (Action Group 6).
-----	---	--	---

Summarising, we can highlight the following points:

3.A and 3.B General Information Sections (Qs A1-A4; B1-B3)

A total of 439 questionnaires were distributed for the survey, 300 of which were completed and returned. The response rate is therefore 68.3%, which is highly positive, especially for the first edition of the study.

Of the respondents, about 57% are permanent faculty and researchers, while the remaining 43% consist of PhD students, research fellows, and fixed-term researchers (RTDA). The gender distribution shows strong female participation in the survey: female researchers account for 33.3% of respondents, compared to 30% of women in the university staff (in 2023). All departments are fairly and equally represented.

Academic position	
Professor	51.0%
Tenured researcher	6.0%
Fixed-term researcher	11.0%
Research fellow	6.3%
PhD student	25.0%
Other	0.7%

Gender	
Male	66.7%
Female	33.3%
Non-binary	-

Research experience	
<1 year	5.7%
1-3 years	18.0%
4-10 years	15.3%
>10 years	61.0%

Department	
Civil and mechanical engineering.	21.0%
Electric engineering	24.7%
Economics and law	27.7%
Humanities and Philosophy	14.0%
Human and Social Sciences, Health and Sport	12.6%

The apparent “seniority bias” in the survey population can be explained by the Italian careers in research framework, affected by an endemic delay between graduation and access to doctoral or post-doctoral positions. Indeed, while the survey data seem to show an overwhelming demographic tilt toward senior staff, with 61% of respondents with >10 years of experience, whereas early-stage researchers (<1 year) make up only 5.7%, the above-presented scheme, with almost ¼ of PhD students and ¼ of researchers holding an R2 position, confirms the survey validity and trustworthiness.

3.C Ethical and Professional Aspects (Qs C1-C9)

Current Status: The university has general ethical guidelines but lacks a structured approach specific to research integrity, open science policies, and researcher responsibilities. **Identified Gaps:**

- Absence of a dedicated research integrity policy and training.
- Limited awareness of Open Science and Open Access initiatives.
- No formalised procedure for handling research misconduct cases.

Proposed Actions:

- Develop and implement a university-wide Research Integrity Policy.
- Organise regular training sessions on ethical research practices.
- Enhance the Ethics Committee's range of action and efficiency through clear guidelines and oversight mechanisms.

3.D Recruitment and Selection (Qs D1-D8)

Current Status: The university follows national hiring regulations, but recruitment lacks transparency and alignment with the Open, Transparent, and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) principles.

Identified Gaps:

- No formalised OTM-R policy.
- Lack of structured feedback to candidates.

Proposed Actions:

- Develop an OTM-R policy and integrate it into HR practices.
- Establish standardised candidate feedback mechanisms.

3.E Working Conditions and Social Security (Qs E1-E9)

Current Status: Researchers benefit from national labour laws, but there is inconsistency in contract terms and insufficient career support structures.

Identified Gaps:

- Lack of clear career progression frameworks for postdoctoral researchers.
- Limited access to work-life balance initiatives (e.g., flexible working arrangements, childcare support).
- Insufficient mechanisms to support dual-career researchers.

Proposed Actions:

- Establish a structured career development plan for researchers at all levels.
- Implement flexible working policies and family-friendly initiatives.
- Develop a dual-career support program in collaboration with partner institutions.

3.4 Training and Career Development (Qs F1-F6)

Current Status: Training opportunities exist but are fragmented across departments, with no central strategy for continuous professional development.

Identified Gaps:

- Lack of a university-wide career development strategy.
- Insufficient mentoring and training for early-career researchers.
- No formalised process for recognising transferable skills training.

Proposed Actions:

- Develop and implement a Researcher Development Framework.
- Establish a university-wide mentorship program for researchers.
- Introduce formal training recognition through micro-credentials or certification programs.

3.5 General Assets and Attractiveness, Internationalisation

Identifies Gaps:

- The recent integration of UNICAS into the Erasmus Alliance of European Universities, known as the European University of Technology (EUT+), has undoubtedly accelerated our efforts toward internationalisation. This collaboration offers invaluable opportunities to expand UNICAS' academic and research networks across Europe. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that significant gaps still exist within UNICAS current internationalisation strategy.
- Concurrently, with an insufficient number of students engaging with international pathways, we are experiencing delays in staff international mobility. Faculty and administrative personnel play a vital role in bridging connections and fostering collaborations with global institutions.
- Additionally, UNICAS needs to enhance its attractiveness to international talent at all academic ranks, from early-career researchers (R1) to experienced professionals (R4).
- Strengthening initiatives to attract a diverse pool of international scholars will not only enhance UNICAS research capabilities but also contribute to a more vibrant and globally minded academic environment.

Proposed Actions

- Reinforce incentives and rewards, also in terms of career development opportunities, for UNICAS researchers who embrace international experience, and recognise achievements in the international environment. Currently, the database of research products (IRIS) already addresses the international aspects of publications. These aspects have to be taken into account in the assessment of scientific production.
- UNICAS' attractiveness to external and international talent is not constrained by structural limitations but has been hindered by policies that restrict the circulation of recruitment calls and by a disaffection towards international communication. The lack of an institutional website in English also contributes to this. For this reason, the insistence on translating relevant documents and making information available in English can be considered a proxy for structural change. Although website updates can be seen merely as dissemination tools, a radical change in approach could prompt an update of policy interventions.
- UNICAS's investment in tools to measure the international ranking and academic reputation marks a significant change in the governance's attitude. The improvement in the ranking will measure UNICAS' capability to address this gap.

4. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

UNICAS acknowledges the gaps identified in implementing the European Charter and Code of Conduct. A comprehensive action plan will be developed to address these areas, ensuring full alignment with HR Excellence Award principles. The university commits to continuous monitoring and improvement to foster an open, transparent, and supportive research environment.

In respect of the internationalisation process, we can summarise that, while our participation in the EUT+ initiative marks an important step forward, addressing gaps in student mobility, staff internationalisation, and the attraction of global talent, all essential to fully realising the benefits of our internationalisation efforts, remains a primary goal of the action plan.

Next Steps:

1. Establish a task force to oversee HR Excellence Award implementation.
2. Develop a detailed action plan with timelines and responsibilities.
3. Engage stakeholders (researchers, HR staff, management) to ensure commitment.
4. Regularly review progress and update policies accordingly.

By addressing these gaps, UNICAS will strengthen its research environment and enhance its attractiveness to national and international researchers, reinforcing its commitment to excellence in research and innovation.