

### Important message to institutions:

**Site Visits:** All HRS4R in-house audits planned for 2021 and the foreseeable future in 2022 will be conducted remotely with the consent of the host institution. Should your institution be at renewal stage, once you submit your self-assessment online via the e-tool, the EC will be in contact with you to set a date for the remote visit together with a panel of independent experts. Should the institution prefer a classic on-site visit, the audit will be postponed. Meanwhile, institutions involved in the process can continue using the HR Excellence in research award.

### Initial Assessment - EC Consensus Report

**Case number:** 2020SK574179

**Name Organisation under assessment:** Slovak University of Technology

**Submission date of initial GAP-Analysis, HR Strategy and Action Plan:** 12/11/2021

This report was drafted by the Lead-Assessor in consensus with the members of the assessment team

**Submission date:** 30/03/2022

### Eligibility assessment

Please rate the state of achievement ("yes", "no" or "partly"). If any statements have prompted a "no" or "partly" in the evaluation, please provide recommendations:

	YES / NO / PARTLY	Recommendations
Have the Strategy and Action Plan been published on the organisation's website?	Yes	The university has a dedicated HRS4R page containing detailed information on the process and extensive background documentation for the application. Several attachments are available from this page, including the entire application package, the time plan for the application, the composition of the working groups, the presentations delivered during the preparation phase etc.

	<b>YES / NO / PARTLY</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
Have the Strategy and Action Plan been published in English?	Yes	Most of the information on the HRS4R page is in Slovak, which is appropriate considering the composition of the university community. However, the process description, OTM-R checklist, Gap Analysis, and Action plan are uploaded in English, and an additional Gap analysis results document is also available in both languages. The University adds a lot of additional interesting materials, presentations, news, and stakeholders but only in Slovak.
Have the Strategy and Action Plan been published in a visible place?	No	The link for the Slovak HRS4R page is provided in the application document. The Slovak language version of the Strategy can be found only using the search engine. There is no direct link or logo (HRS4R) on the English version.

**YES / NO / PARTLY**

**Recommendations**

Have the following elements of the templates for the Gap Analysis and the HR Strategy and Action Plan been completed with sufficient details and quality?

- Gap Analysis
- HR Strategy and Action plan
  - 🕒 Organisational information
  - 🕒 Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice
  - 🕒 Actions
  - 🕒 Implementation

Partly

The Gap Analysis is detailed, with the results of the survey informing the identified gaps. The survey results are available on the university website in two languages. The initiatives undertaken and the new proposals are both described in detail. The university openly describes gaps; even ambiguities in judging specific gaps (e.g., Principle 27, Gender balance) are included. This open approach is beneficial. At the same time, certain stock phrases keep returning in describing the majority of principles. This causes unnecessary repetition and would be better positioned among the overall strengths/weaknesses of the institutional practice. More concise but individually formulated descriptions would be better (e.g. Principle 32, 34). The Action Plan covers most of the gaps identified, although some important issues revealed by GAP Analysis are not covered. There are only 11 actions for two years and 2 (like GEP) with timing in 2021. Actions are typically more overarching, with broader end results instead of smaller, more targeted actions. Some actions would benefit from more specific details provided, especially regarding their uptake by the university community (e.g. 4, 5, 9). In the actions described, usually, the end result is described without many details on how they would be used or introduced in the institution (e.g. 3, 4, 10).

### Quality assessment

The quality assessment evaluates the level of ambition and the quality of progress intended by the organisation.

Rate the state of achievement ("yes", "no" or "partly"). If any statements have prompted a "no" or "partly" in the evaluation, please provide recommendations:

	YES / NO / PARTLY	Recommendations
	YES / NO / PARTLY	Recommendations
Is the organisational information provided sufficient to understand the context in which the HR Strategy is designed?	Yes	The organisation is sufficiently described.
Is the Action Plan coherent with the Gap Analysis?	Partly	While the Gap Analysis is very detailed, the actions proposed in the Action Plan are formulated with less detail than the gaps. Linkages between the two documents are evident, but the actions do not address some gaps. Some important issues revealed by GAP Analysis are not covered (e.g. Principle 4. Professional Attitude, 5. contractual and legal obligations, 11. evaluation/ appraisal system, 24. working conditions, 26 funding and salaries, 32. co-authorship) There are areas of GAP marked as “fully implemented” (according to the survey) but still with designed actions and suggestions (7. good practice in research, 10. non-discrimination, 17. variations in the chronological order of CVs, 21. post-doctoral appointment, 25. stability of employment 27. gender balance, 33. teaching, 34. complaints, 35. participation in decision-making bodies, 40. supervision). There is no further explanation of how 20. seniority is fully implemented. The Action Plan seems a bit condensed into 11 actions (with no sub-actions or further details); it responds to the GAP Analysis summarizing the solutions and without providing the necessary indicators and targets. It should be reorganized (keeping/dividing actions and adding sub-actions and more details, making it easier to follow and monitor progress).

**YES / NO / PARTLY      Recommendations**

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Have a steering committee and working group been established to guarantee the implementation of the HRS4R-process?

Yes

The university established a two-level working group with all the faculties represented as sub-groups within the university-level working group. This is appropriate, taking into account the size and complexity of the institutions. While organised in a top-down manner, major managerial and administrative positions are well represented in this model. The consultation format, as well as the contributions to the GAP analysis, are identical for all stakeholders. This is not necessarily a bad thing; however, it must be customised depending on each category, i.e. between R1-R4-type researchers and administration staff, since their input would be different in coverage and expertise.

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Has the research community been sufficiently involved in the process, with a representation of all levels of a research career?

Yes

The dedicated questionnaire performed in 2020. According to the information provided, 192 (of 1900 +) responses were collected, so to correctly assess the level of implementation of each rule, further analysis would be recommended for the next implementation phase. The university reported a low response rate for the survey, but the content of the feedback is well represented in the gap analysis. The applicant specified that the Action Plan was also "commented on and refined by members of the Steering Committee, Faculty Working Groups and a working group of the Institute of Management". It is recommended to include researchers from different career levels R1-R4 and internationals in working groups and to indicate male/female in the description.

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	YES / NO / PARTLY	Recommendations
Are the relevant management departments sufficiently involved in the process so as to guarantee a solid implementation?	Yes	The implementation is well planned, and the administrative bodies/research departments will be well involved. The institution plans a multi-level implementation and control structure that fits its internal complexity. For the next phase it is recommended to describe involvement of community in implementation in a more clear way. Some of the issues in the GAP Analysis are described in plenty of detail; however, they do not show how the stakeholders' feedback is being considered and incorporated into the HRS4R plan.
Have adequate targets and indicators been provided in order to demonstrate when/how an action will be/has been completed?	Partly	Most of the indicators submitted in the Action Plan are actually milestones, deliverables or just confirmation of execution of a certain task. Therefore it makes it very difficult to measure progress or performance. It is recommended to add proper and substantial targets and indicators to improve the assessment of the successful completion of proposed (and further detailed) actions. For easier and more effective monitoring it could be helpful to include long-term plans and actions and add more measurable and quantitative targets (number of, increase per .. % ). Many actions have synthetic targets without the details on intermediate steps included that would enable seeing how the overall target would be reached. It is recommended that the institution for itself further breaks down the implementation to these steps leading to the target.
Is the organisation establishing an OTM-R policy?	Partly	It is hard to assess OTM-R Policy because there is no English version. The Slovak version should be updated (from 2014) to include all principles of OTM-

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**YES / NO / PARTLY      Recommendations**

R. The OTM-R checklist describes achieved elements and missing ones, indicating the current status of the OTM-R policy as a mixed set of more and less successful components. But on the other hand, some issues marked with 'yes-substantially' or 'yes-completely' are not verified by the comments on the indicator column. The assessment for OTM-R checklist should be more honest with detailed explanations (control system, encouraging external candidates, training, rules for using euraxess, answer about administrative burden). The university mentions that the recruitment process is based on individual interviews (or procedures), and STU does not have a detailed description of the recruitment process and career development (including a formal document describing the hiring and evaluation policy and procedures). OTM-R training and the assessment whether the policy works are two gaps not sufficiently addressed. The actions point towards narrowing the gaps, but specific information on how they intend to achieve this result is missing. However, as a result of the action plan the university is likely to make tangible progress toward the OTM-R principles by the end of the period that the plan covers. More explanation is needed on: - English version of the webpage for candidates, public documents, subpages for recruitment, - the rules for postdocs and PhD students - which links are included in vacancies [https://www.stuba.sk/english/news/news/postdoctoral-research-positions-at-stu-2020.html?page\\_id=13573](https://www.stuba.sk/english/news/news/postdoctoral-research-positions-at-stu-2020.html?page_id=13573),

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YES / NO / PARTLY

Recommendations

Are the goals and ambitions sufficiently ambitious considering the context of the organization?

Yes

Many actions cover the regulatory or compliance-based context targeting technical objectives (e.g. creating support tools or setting up new platforms). For this level of ambition, details would also be needed on how these regulations would be embedded or the tools getting known and regularly used by the research community (e.g. 6, 10). Action 2 does foresee academic staff training, but some of the non-academic staff would also need to be trained to ensure the proper use of the Ethics Code. Institutional strategies, where relevant, are aligned with the proposed actions which is a plus. Having included the Gender Equality Plan among the actions could contribute to covering a number of gaps over time. The University has the ambition to influence the internal community and the national level. It would be very interesting to add information about when and how the lobbying will be organised (to improve funding of research and the school system in Slovakia, improve the systemic support of education according to the real needs of the profession in demand of the labour market.

## General Assessment

Accepted

Pending **minor** modifications

Pending **major** revisions





## Explanation

- **Accepted: This application meets the criteria and the HR award is granted.**  
The assessors might have commented on your file asking for future focus on a particular aspect/criterion, so please refer to the comments given above.
- Pending **minor** modifications: This application **broadly meets the criteria**, but the assessors have some concerns/questions about specific areas/criteria. Please reflect about the feedback given above and update your file before **re-submitting within 2 months**.
- Pending **major revisions**: This application does not meet the criteria; please make the appropriate changes taking into account the comments of the assessors before **re-submitting within 12 months**.

## General Recommendations

If any of the above statements have prompted a "no" in the evaluation, please provide suggestions of modifications in the form below.

If the general assessment is:

- "pending minor modifications" the recommendations are split into:
  - 🕒 Immediate mandatory modifications (to be implemented in order to obtain the award, resubmission within 2 months)
  - 🕒 Other modifications (to be carried out during the implementation phase).
- "pending major revisions" the recommendations are split into:
  - 🕒 Mandatory modifications (in order to obtain the award, resubmission within 12 months)
  - 🕒 Other modifications.

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**Immediate mandatory modifications \***

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All documents must be translated into English and published on the website with clear and visible links on the home page.

Many actions are foreseen in the Gap Analysis appear as not sufficiently translated in the Action Plan. It is recommended to improve the Gap Analysis by addressing more actions through initiatives undertaken/new proposals. It should be reorganized (keeping/dividing actions and adding sub-actions and more details, making it easier to follow and monitor progress).

The strengths and weaknesses part of the plan should be revised since they include some speculative issues (especially "strengths") and other issues which could not be verified within the OTM-R Analysis (due to the lack of translation in English).

The OTM-R checklist also needs some work: issues marked with 'yes-substantially' or 'yes-completely' are not verified by the comments on the indicator column.

Monitoring in an efficient way the implementation of the action plan is instrumental for the overall process, and therefore the issues concerning indicators must be addressed. Most of the indicators submitted in the Action Plan are actually milestones, deliverables or just confirmation of execution of a certain task, making measurements (of progress/performance) very difficult. It is recommended to establish targets, revise the indicators in question (basically for all actions), and add more substantial indicators to better assess the successful completion of proposed actions.

Adding more details to the Action Plan is recommended, especially regarding the steps leading to achieving the general objective of the actions (e.g. 1, 3, 4, 6, 8). This does not necessarily have to be published, but it would be important for the institution to plan in more detail to ensure better implementation.

In general, for most of the actions, further planning of involving the researchers and administrative staff in using the tools to be created will help the institution seamlessly implement its action plan.

#### **Other modifications \***

The GAP Analysis is fairly well documented and presented; however, the summary of the involvement of researcher groups looks similar for all groups (contributions to the GAP analysis are identical for all stakeholders). This should be revisited and revised: customised depending on each category i.e. between R1-R4-type researchers and administration staff, since their input would be clearly different in coverage and expertise. Suggestions for more researchers from different levels (R1-R4) in working groups would be valuable to indicate the number of men/ females. Another aspect is the point of view of internationals and what aspects and rules of Charter & Code are the most important for them.

Some of the issues from the GAP analysis are flagged as 'fully implemented'; however, they need more work, i.e. "7. Good practice in research" which needs "suitable strategies and procedures for backup of research related data", "translation of documents in English" - which are not addressed under "Initiatives undertook/new proposals".

It is advised to pay more attention to the detailed description of strengths and weaknesses in four areas of the Charter & Code during the next implementation phase. And not rely on only the survey results to assess the level of implementation of Charter & Code (only 192 responses).

Concerning the working conditions in some departments, adding this area to the action plan (alarming working conditions - ventilation, electrical wiring, etc.) and transparent procurement of personal protective equipment would be beneficial.

If the organisation deserves to be commented on their ambition, their actions, evidence of good practice and/or their implementation process, please provide a commentary supporting this. (max. 2000 words)

STU is committed to improving its HR at European and international levels. They seem to have a good structure and system of administration and planning and good prospects for efficient recruitment, integrity, and working conditions. It should focus more substantially on the principles of the Charter and their proper implementation at policy and action levels.

Keeping in mind the suggestions above, it is clear that STU's application should be revised; however, it has good parts which must be more detailed or improved within its structural elements (indicators, results etc.).

Good practices:

- looking for best practices in departments and then unifying the university's processes
- an obligation to check state of the art prior to the commencement of the research,
- different lobbying actions