European Charter for Researchers

HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

Internal Review for Award Renewal Assessment

Attachment to Decree n. 0022719 of March 15, 2024

Name of Organization under review

CREA Council for Agricultural Research and Economics

Contact

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1. INFORMATION ON THE ORGANIZATION

STAFF AND STUDENTS as of December 31, 2023 (Data source: Human Resources Office)	FTE
Total number of researchers = employees, holders of fellowships and scholarships, full-time or part-time PhD students involved in research activities	938,4
Of which international (i.e. of non-Italian nationality)	20
Of which funded by external sources (i.e. for whom CREA is the host Organization)	0,0
Of which female	504,0
Of which are R3 or R4 level researchers = researchers with a high level of autonomy, typically with the status of "Principal Investigator" or Professor (Note: Level I and II researchers, according to the National Collective Labour Agreement - CCNL for Public Research Bodies - EPR)	379,0
Of which are R2 level researchers = in most Organizations this corresponds to the level of Post-Doc (Note: Level III researchers, according to the National Collective Labour Agreement - CCNL for Public Research Bodies - EPR)	467,4
Of which are R1 level researchers = in most Organizations this corresponds to the level of PhD (Note: Fellows with a specialist degree (or equivalent) or holders of a research fellowship)	92,0
Total number of students (if applicable)	0,0
Total number of staff (including management, administrative, teaching and research staff)	2127,6

RESEARCH FUNDS Fiscal year 2022	€
Total budget of the Organization	183.671.914,48
Direct government funding destined to research	130.134.403,00
Competitive government funding destined to research (obtained in competition with other Organizations - including EU funding)	15.705.243,00
Funding from private sources (non-governmental) destined to research	1.567.629,00

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

(very brief description of your Organization, max. 100 words)

CREA, established with Legislative Decree. 454-1999 and L. 190-20 14, is the largest Italian agricultural research body. It has legal personality under public law and is supervised by MASAF - Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry. It carries out research, develops technological solutions, defines diversified production and management models and promotes innovation in line with the characteristics of the territories, supporting the development and competitiveness of the agri-food system.

CREA research defines tools for obtaining healthy, nutritious and quality production at affordable prices, limiting impacts on the environment, climate and consumer health and enhancing the ecosystem services of agriculture and forests. It promotes and supports conservation of genetic resources and biodiversity of agricultural, forestry and fish ecosystems.

CREA is included among the public research bodies (EPR) pursuant to Legislative Decree. 218/2016.

2. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES (NARRATIVE)

Ethical and professional aspects

The **Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (Action 1)**, approved on 12 March 2020, was sent by e-mail to all CREA employees in November of the same year. This initiative stems from the decision taken by the Scientific Council to postpone the initial intention to disseminate the Code among CREA staff through a public event, due to the measures adopted in public institutions to contain COVID-19, which made it difficult to organize the event as initially planned. Since in 2020 CREA hired a lot of personnel through conversion of fixed-term contracts into permanent positions following calls for internal competition, it was deemed appropriate to give this information to CREA employees through a formal e-mail.

Furthermore, starting from the date when the Code was disseminated among the staff, all employment contracts signed by employees hired by CREA included the following statement in the article regarding "Duties of the employee": "The interested party declares to have read on the CREA institutional website, in the section "Transparent Administration/General Acts" and to accept the contents of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct of CREA, approved with Commissioner's Decree No. 37 of March 12, 2020".

The attention of CREA towards ethical aspects, particularly related to research activities, was further confirmed with the inclusion in the new Statute of CREA, approved in January 2024 and which will be discussed in the general parts of this document, of a specific article providing for the establishment of an Ethics Committee, as an "*independent body with the purpose of promoting and stimulating ethical reflection in research and experimentation, guaranteeing the protection of rights, dignity, integrity, and well-being of all individuals involved in related activities, providing evaluations and expressing opinions on ethical aspects in research activities*".

Compliance with ethical principles in research is among the obligations of beneficiaries of projects funded by the Horizon Europe Program and the violation of ethical rules can lead to the exclusion of the proposal or, if the project is already being funded, to the termination of the contract with the Commission and the revocation of funding. Therefore, in 2023, CREA has taken some specific initiatives concerning the treatment of ethical aspects in research and development projects.

In January 2023, the CREA Data Protection Officer (DPO), who will be described in detail in Action 3, initiated working on processing operations of personal data within *Horizon Europe* fundings, as well as on ethical aspects of research, for which specific deliverables and assessments are periodically required during the entire duration of research projects.

Particular attention has been given to the training of research staff. In 2023, four important training events were organized: the first, entitled "Guarantee for the Protection of Personal Datain Horizon Europe" and the second, regarding ethical aspects of research, were organized by the Agency for the Promotion of European Research (APRE). These events were followed by two other events organized internally by CREA: "The impact in Horizon Europe" and "CREA Horizon coordination: sharing for growth".

The **New Action 20 Organization of an event for CREA staff for the presentation of the Ethics Committee**, to be carried out by June 2025, aims to further sensitize personnel on the role of the Ethics Committee and enhance its functions.

Furthermore, CREA, through **New Action 25**, to be completed by December 2024, has set itself the objective of obtaining the **Certification of gender equality**, aimed at the

implementation, by the Institution, of policies for gender equality and for the improvement, development and strengthening of role of females in the work environment.

Gender equality is one of the transversal priorities of the Missions envisaged by the Italian National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) and is achieved on a voluntary basis by subjecting CREA to an evaluation by an accredited certifying body.

As part of **Action 2, Internal Regulation on administrative and budgetary Responsibility related to Project funding**, in 2020 a questionnaire was administered to all staff working at the Research Centers, with the aim to monitor the implementation of the Regulation approved in 2019. Scope of the questionnaire was the identification of procedural difficulties connected with the administrative-financial and technical management of research projects, also with reference to the technological platforms in use at CREA. Subsequent to the analysis of the results, CREA adopted various initiatives aimed at improving the management of research projects.

In 2021 and 2022, 12 handbooks indicating the operational phases and the documentation necessary for the presentation of project proposals in response to the main national and international funding opportunities were prepared and shared among CREA staff. The initiative aimed to assist researchers and technical staff in project preparation through the standardization and mapping of the operational phases for their presentation.

In 2022 and 2023, work was also carried out on the IT platforms used by CREA for monitoring research activities (Monitor and Time report database), with the aim of simplifying budget management of projects, in particular in the reporting phase, and to ensure correct management of the related financial resources.

In 2023, meetings were organized between CREA staff responsible for managing research projects and similar staff operating in other national research structures (public research bodies, universities, foundations, etc.), in order to collect examples of good practices for CREA's research and administrative staff.

Action 3 involved the elaboration of **Guidelines for data protection**, which was done by the Office of Information Systems.

In 2022 and 2023, CREA also carried out activities related to cybersecurity, partly connected to the broader topic of data protection, such as the assessment of the security of CREA's corporate IT services using tools provided by AgID (Agency for Digital Italy) and ACN (National Cybersecurity Agency), as well as the adoption of minimum measures for IT security as required by AgID.

To further guarantee the security of CREA's strategic and critical data, these have been classified as provided for by the tools made available by ACN. The strategic and critical corporate services have also been migrated to cloud technology and Disaster Recovery services have been adopted. Finally, the MFA (Multi-factor authentication) system and virtual hosting systems for publishing research project websites have been implemented.

In addition, a new Data Protection Officer (DPO) for CREA was appointed in September 2021, as required by Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR - General Data Protection Regulation) and related national regulations.

In order to provide employees with guidelines on data protection, the DPO has set up a "privacy toolbox" repository which collects national and European regulations on data protection, measures set up by the Privacy Authority, as well as documents developed by CREA itself (templates, circulars, etc.), as well as material related to staff training.

In June 2023, the DPO organized a specific training session to illustrate the toolbox to the Organization's staff and provide general guidance. In addition to what has been done so far, the **New Action 21 Definition of a new organizational model regarding the**

protection of personal data, to be implemented by 2025, provides for the identification of first and second level contacts and their respective tasks and functions.

Action 4 Transparent criteria for the periodic evaluation of researchers provided that these criteria would be identified starting from the issuance by ANVUR (National Agency for the Evaluation of the University and Research System) of specific guidelines that would have allowed the implementation of the Action. To date, ANVUR has not published these guidelines nor has it made known the reasons for their non-adoption. It is therefore proposed to eliminate this Action.

However, the new Statute provides for CREA to voluntarily undergo the Quality Assessment of Research (VQR) periodically promoted by ANVUR universities and national research institutions. The VQR evaluates the activities of institutions and their internal structures, but not those of individual researchers. In March 2024, CREA sent ANVUR a preliminary expression of interest to participate in the VQR 2020-2024. The final decision regarding participation will have to be taken by the new governance not yet designated.

At the same time, CREA will periodically monitor the results of the technical-scientific activities of the Research Centers using criteria and indicators also consistent with those adopted by ANVUR.

In order to improve the visibility of researchers, the **New Action 22 Creation, within the CREA website, of dedicated spaces for individual researchers** is proposed, to be completed by 2026 and to be carried out in collaboration with the Technical and Scientific Direction and CREA's researchers' community, to promote their professional valorization at national and international level.

In order to disseminate to researchers, the purposes and Actions implemented by CREA in the various areas of the European Charter for Researchers, it is envisaged to carry out, by December 2025, the **New Action 24 Organization of an event aimed at all research personnel to update on the activities related to the European Charter for Researchers**.

Recruitment and selection

About **Action 5 Publication of recruitment notices in English language on the Euraxess and on the CREA website**, already completed, CREA publishes on the EURAXESS website all competition notices, both for fixed-term and permanent positions, thus guaranteeing access to the recruitment procedures for all EU citizens. National competition notices for permanent positions in public entities require candidates to have adequate knowledge of the Italian language. Therefore, CREA publishes general information about the selection process on the EURAXESS website and on the CREA website, English language section, and the official notices in Italian. As for the percentage of applications received from candidates with non-Italian nationality, it continues to be close to zero. This may have several reasons: a) the salaries of Italian researchers are generally lower than those of researchers from other European countries; b) the requirement of an adequate knowledge of the Italian language; c) the difficulty for potential candidates with non-Italian nationality to acquire, through the CREA website, detailed information on research topics and activities carried out by researchers within the different Research Centers, which would help them identify a suitable professional positioning. Acquisition of this information could be a driving force for increasing attractiveness among non-Italian candidates.

Not being able to intervene on points a) and b), as they are determined by higher regulations, with the New Action 22, mentioned in the narrative of the section on Ethical

and Professional Aspects, it is believed that it is possible to address the critical issue reported under point c).

At the same time, the Unit responsible for Action 5 will continue to monitor the trend of participation in competitions for researchers by candidates with non-Italian nationality.

The CREA Register of Experts, subject of **Action 6 Increase the presence of international experts and the private sector in the CREA Register from which to draw for the formation of competition committees**, is used exclusively for the composition of Commissions appointed for the selection of permanent researchers. The latest update in February 2024 lists 295 experts, of which 3 are non-Italian nationals. At the moment the application for inclusion in the Register can be submitted electronically via the DEMETRA® platform (https://concorsi.crea.gov.it/webapp/alboesperti), which requires possession of the SPID (Public System of digital identity). This prevents non-Italian nationals from using Demetra®. However, these interested persons can submit the application by filling out a form and sending it via email to the responsible CREA Unit

(https://www.crea.gov.it/en/board-of-experts?inheritRedirect=true).

The Action can therefore be considered as completed, but the responsible Unit will however continue monitoring the presence of non-Italian experts in the Register.

Action 7 Definition of guidelines for members of selection committees, which has already been completed, has been implemented by supporting the selection committees with the publication of specific guidelines that became necessary following the computerization of CREA's recruitment procedures through "DEMETRA®", an in-house platform created in 2021 that includes the use of a grid attached to the job advertisement, which outlines the evaluation criteria for candidates depending on the type of personnel being recruited. These topics are discussed in detail in point 4 of the Open Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment OTM-R Checklist "Do we make sufficient use of IT tools to support recruitment?" In addition, in December 2021, the Recruitment Office issued a circular note, outlining the procedures for the establishment of committees that also include external members to CREA.

As planned in **Action 8 Definition of a multi-year plan for the recruitment of permanent researchers**, which has already been completed, CREA has prepared the 2021, 2022 and 2023 annual updates to the three-year staff requirement plan. Based on these documents, between May 2020 and December 2023, CREA has implemented a wide-ranging plan to recruit new personnel, for a total of 96 new hires, of which 33 are research staff. It should be noted that among the newly hired administrative staff, 15 are persons with disabilities. During the same period, 560 CREA employees took advantage of career progressions. Of these, 367 are research staff: 343 researchers and 24 technicians. It should be noted that as of 12.31.2020, over 80% of CREA researchers belonging to stages R2, R3 and R4 were at stage R2 while currently the percentage has dropped to 55.2%; the remaining 44.8% includes researchers at stages R3 and R4.

Furthermore, in 2021, 2022 and 2023, mobility between profiles at the same level has been promoted, meaning researchers had the opportunity to switch from one profile to another, in order to best utilize their skills during career advancement selections.

In November 2023, the three-year staff requirement plan for 2024 - 2026 was published. This Plan intends to complete the hires already planned in the 2023 update, recruit new personnel and develop the careers of existing staff. In particular, in 2024, 24 research staff, 37 technicians, and 35 administrative staff will be hired. In addition, further selections for career advancements for researchers are planned.

As for **Action 11 Web page on job opportunities**, already completed, the promotion of international job opportunities for researchers at foreign institutions and organizations continues through the publication of links to the main websites of international organizations and foreign institutions (https://www.crea.gov.it/opportunità-di-lavoro-internazionali).The list is constantly updated and monitored.

Working conditions

During the COVID-19 emergency, CREA staff were able to fully benefit from what was implemented with **Action 9 Strengthening internal networking tools and support for young researchers**, allowing researchers to work remotely and operate without interruption. A 2021 survey among CREA employees revealed that the Office 365 package, provided to all staff since 2019, was widely and effectively used during the pandemic.

Regarding **Action 16 Allowing access to databases and editorial resources from outside for researchers**, this was completed by the Office for Institutional Affairs and International Relations, which in 2020 renewed subscriptions with international publishers that provide scientific editorial resources useful for professional updating in the Organization's areas of expertise.

These new contracts allow access to databases and editorial resources regardless of the geographical locations of users, through authentication with CREA's public IP address, or with alternative accounts. To this end, the Office for IT Systems has activated a VPN (Virtual Private Network) which, through Office credentials, allows connecting from a PC workstation (laptop or desktop) to the Organization's IP address and accessing CREA's reserved area from any location, including the publishers' platforms.

The Guidelines foreseen in **Action 10 Guidelines on mobility and sabbatical years** are still valid and have not undergone any modifications. The Office for Recruitment, Training and Labor has published calls for international internships, which will be discussed under Action 15.

Action 12 Initiatives to improve the efficacy of conflict resolution, was further implemented as the CUG - Unified Committee for Guarantee of CREA has undertaken a number of important initiatives, including the appointment of a "Trusted Advisor" to whom employees turn if they experience acts of discrimination, sexual or moral harassment, and bullying in the workplace.

Regarding **Action 17 Monitoring the implementation of flexible working hours**, full flexibility of working hours has been activated due to the COVID pandemic, in compliance with national regulations on remote working and national employment contracts. To this end, two documents were drawn up to regulate and authorize remote work: the individual agreement contained in the Organizational Plan on Remote Working - POLA and a circular note regulating the application of remote working.

As requested by **Action 18 Improved user-friendliness of the CREA website**, the layout of the homepage of the CREA website has been made more user-friendly. An internal working group has also been set up, composed of researchers from all CREA Research Centers, which constantly monitors needs and implements necessary changes on the website.

Based on the annual monitoring carried out by the Independent Evaluation Body of CREA (OIV), the "Transparent Administration" section has been further improved.

Among the upcoming improvements is the placement of the "hr" logo on the main banner of the homepage of the CREA website, giving it higher and more immediate visibility.

However, Action 18 cannot be considered complete as further developments are needed to improve the functionality of the search engine and further facilitate access to online documents. Due to the complexity of the Action, its completion is estimated for 2026.

Training and development

The Regulation on awarding of scholarships, research grants, doctoral scholarships and study stays abroad for training purposes, subject of Action 13, adopted in 2018, was further revised in 2021 based on the suggestions of some researchers, to make it more inclusive. In fact, to align the internal regulations of CREA with those of universities and other public research and experimentation institutions, the new Regulation of 2021 establishes that there should no longer be an age limit for recipients of research grants. Additionally, in order to support research activities through adequate technical training, the new Regulation also provides for the awarding of scholarships to young people with a high school diploma up to the age of 30.

As regards **Action 14 Revision of the Training Plan**, already completed in 2020, it should be noted that the last Plan was approved in January 2024 and concerns the three-year period 2024-2026.

Regarding the **Adaptation of the Training Plan to new implementation methods (Action 19)**, it should be noted that with respect to the first indicator "Guidelines on training", CREA, with the Decree of the Extraordinary Commissioner no. 62 of May 18, 2020, adopted the "Regulation for the training and updating of personnel of the CREA Council for Agricultural Research and Economics", which can be assimilated to the Guidelines on training.

In 2017, the gap analysis had highlighted, *inter alia*, critical issues regarding supervisors, which have only been partially addressed in this Regulation.

In fact, while the figures of the scientific supervisor (for research fellows) and the tutor (for scholarship holders and PhD students) are mentioned, there is no reference to specific mentoring activities for newly hired researchers following a public competition or the process of conversion of fixed-term contracts into permanent position following calls for internal competition process. To date, the absence of these supervisors is still a critical issue that will also need to be addressed. The Directive on "Planning of training and development of functional skills for the digital, ecological and administrative transition" promoted by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan" issued in 2023 by the Minister of Public Administration, in fact, provides that administrations must identify in their PTF initial training courses for newly hired staff with the aim of providing the information and technical-practical knowledge necessary to operate correctly in the administration they belong to.

A further critical issue was related to the role of tutors or supervisors at CREA for PhD students and interns. The examination of some framework agreements and implementation agreements stipulated by CREA reveals the identification and appointment of tutors/supervisors for whom, particularly for interns, the tasks are also regulated. However, these provisions are absent in the aforementioned Regulation which does not contain specific indications regarding the activities that the roles of tutor and supervisor must carry out. The Regulation, instead, should provide that, even in the Agreements concerning doctorates, at least the CREA tutor/supervisor's commitment to guiding the students/PhD students in carrying out the research activities envisaged in the training project and/or for the preparation of the thesis.

Another element that emerged from the gap analysis relates to the possibility for fellows and assignees to participate in training courses. The Regulation on training and updating

of personnel at the Council for Agricultural Research and Analysis of Agricultural Economy, in Article 1 - *General principles*, states that CREA recognizes the right to permanent training for all employees of the Organization, guaranteeing equal opportunities in its use. Furthermore, in Article 10 - *Participation of external subjects*, it is affirmed that within the framework of internal training, in cases where the topics covered are in line with the themes provided for in contracts and/or related to work activities, the Organization may extend participation in training activities to temporary workers, fellows and assignees, i.e. subjects other than those indicated in Article 2 - *Recipients*, i.e. CREA employees hired on indefinite and fixed-term contracts, permanent and part-time.

Therefore, training is intended for everyone, both permanent and fixed-term employees, regardless of the type of contract they have with the Organization, including fellows and assignees.

It should also be noted that in its communications with Research Centers for the planning of training courses, the Administration declares the possibility of extending the scope of training events to fellows and assignees, if the subjects covered by the courses are compatible with the subject of their contract.

Regarding the second indicator "Training Plan", it should be noted that the planning of training interventions and the programming of modules related to technical-scientific subjects takes place in coordination with the Research Centers through the assessment of needs and subject to the financial resources available. Furthermore, upon motivated proposal, the participation in additional courses in addition to those programmed annually may be authorized. In relation to the participation of individual researchers in specialized external courses according to research needs, it should be noted that the PTF always contains a report on training activities carried out in the previous year, also in relation to the course participants. It is further noted that a considerable number of researchers participate in training courses organized by external subjects.

In order to improve the effectiveness of the supervision, tutoring and training roles of senior researchers, specific modules dedicated to the development of transversal skills (soft skills), leadership roles, work in teams and communication skills will need to be included in future Training Plans.

In consideration of the above-mentioned aspects, but also of the new regulatory context at national level, which refers, *inter alia*, to the PNRR, a **New Action 23 New Regulation for training and updating adequate to national legislation** is proposed.

Regarding the **Guidelines on Mobility and Training within Research Projects (Action 15)**, Article 11 of the "Regulation on the Responsibility of Researchers in Project Participation and Management of Funding" of 2019, regulated mobility and training within research projects. Due to the long period of uncertainty during the COVID-19 pandemic, the positive experience of the 2019 international internships did not have any further follow-up, but the need to enhance training of research staff - with priority for young researchers - remained an asset in the strategic priorities set by the governance of the Organization. The programmatic document "Integrated Plan of Activities and Organization 2023 - 2025", approved in January 2023, foresees the organization of short-term international internships for CREA researchers, also with the aim of strengthening the network of relationships between CREA researchers and European and international universities and research centers. Therefore, a portion of the annual budget allocated for personnel training (€100,000.00) has been reserved for the implementation of international internships and in November 2023, CREA published an internal call for researchers, reserving 50% of the available resources for researchers under the age of 40. The internships, lasting from 21 to 60 days, can be carried out at research institutions and universities in European and non-European countries. The publication of the call was

preceded by the dissemination of a questionnaire to all CREA researchers aimed at understanding their experience on impact of previous internships, identifying critical issues and possible steps for improvement.

54 applications for participation in the internships have been submitted and are currently being evaluated.

Have any of the priorities for the short and medium term changed?

The priorities in the medium to long term are the following:

a) drafting of the "10-year Strategic Vision Document", with the participation of Research Centers;

b) voluntary participation at the Quality Assessment of Research (VQR) 2020-2024, periodically promoted by ANVUR and targeting at universities and national research institutions.

Have there been any changes in your Organization that have had an impact on the human resources strategy?

The following describes the **changes in the governance of CREA** since the presentation of the internal review report for the midterm evaluation (30 April 2020).

On 1 November 2020, the Director General of CREA took office, replacing the previous acting director.

On 28 December 2020, the President of CREA was appointed, replacing the Extraordinary Commissioner who had taken office in 2019. Following the appointment of the President, the Board of Directors was established (15 February 2021), composed of 4 members, one of whom elected from among and by the researchers of CREA. The Scientific Council, composed of 12 members, 4 of whom elected from among and by the researchers of CREA, was renewed in January 2022.

The governance that took office in 2020 has implemented some important initiatives, including the introduction of a new Statute and the implementation of a more attentive policy in favor of research personnel.

Regarding the Statute, which came into force on 16 February 2022, it presents significant changes compared to the version approved in 2017 and described in the HR 2020 report. This Statute:

a) reintroduces the role of a Technical Scientific Director, which had been eliminated with the 2017 Statute. The position was filled through a public selection process. The Technical Scientific Director, who took office on 15 September 2023, acts as a liaison between the President, the Board of Directors, the Scientific Council, and the Research Centers of the institution, with the aim to promote knowledge exchange and synergies among them;

b) introduced the Ethics Committee, a collegial body designed to address the specific needs of CREA researchers, in relation to the pursuit of high ethical standards in research and experimentation activities. At the moment, the Ethics Committee has not yet been appointed.

In July 2023, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry, which oversees CREA, once again appointed a Commissioner for the Organization in order to reorganize its administrative structure and revitalize its activities, making necessary changes to the Statute and internal regulations.

The new Extraordinary Commissioner, who assumes the responsibilities of the President,

the Board of Directors and the Scientific Council, has prepared a new Statute that was approved by the supervising Ministry on January 9, 2024. This Statute, compared to the one approved in 2022, has made the following changes:

a) introduction of the "10-year Strategic Vision Document" among the programmatic documents of the Organization;

b) replacement of the Scientific Committees of the Research Centers with "Assemblies of Researchers" who assist the Director of the respective Center in pursuing its scientific objectives;

c) enhanced emphasis on the separation of roles between Direction and Management;

d) conferring additional responsibilities to the Technical Scientific Director (reintroduced in 2022) in terms of scientific direction, coordination and monitoring. In addition, he will work with the President to develop annual training plans for technical-scientific personnel;

e) provision on voluntary participation of CREA in the national evaluation of Universities and Research Organizations.

Regarding **the training and career development of research personnel**, the governance active from February 2021 to July 2023 implemented important initiatives:

a) approval of a significant allocation of financial resources dedicated to career progression of permanent research personnel, thus allowing for the implementation of three different selection procedures between 2020 and 2022, for a total of 367 progressions;

b) allocation of a specific budget to the CREA Research Centers to activate PhD programs in collaboration with Italian universities in the period 2022-2023;

c) launch, in 2021-2022-2023, of three different calls for Mobility between profiles at the same level, allowing researchers to switch between professional profiles in order to enhance the recognition of career activities;

d) in November 2023, an internal call for international internships for researchers was published, with preference given to candidates under the age of 40. To date, evaluation of the applications received is in course, considering that the allocated budget is equal to €100,000.00, as detailed in the narrative section for Action 15.

Are there any strategic decisions currently being made that could affect the action plan?

The establishment of the new governance could lead to strategic decisions that may affect the action plan, but currently we are unable to report on this matter.

3. ACTIONS *(This table lists the Actions proposed as "New Actions" in the 2017 and 2020 reviews that were implemented or completed between 2017 and 2023)*

	Proposed Actions	Time foreseen	Responsible Unit	Indicators / Target	Status	Notes
1	**Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct**	December 2019	Scientific Council	Code approved by the Board of Directors and published on CREA website One online training event open to all researchers	New 2017 In progress 2020 Completed 2024	Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the training event has not been organized, as explained in the narrative section
2	**Internal Regulation on administrative and budgetary Responsibility related to Project funding**	April 2019	Office for Project Management	Regulation approved by the Board of Directors and published on CREA website One online training event open to all researchers	New 2017 Completed 2020	Activities undertaken after completion of the Action are described in the narrative section

3	**Guidelines for data protection**	December 2019	Office for General and Legal Affairs Office for Transparency and Anti-corruption Office for Technology Transfer Working Group on IT Safety and cyberdefense	Guidelines published on CREA website One online training event open to all researchers	New 2017 In progress 2020 Completed 2024	The Action has been completed by the Office for IT Systems and the Data Protection Officer who took over the management of these tasks
4	**Transparent criteria for the periodic evaluation of researchers**	December 2019 (subject to the issuing of guidelines by ANVUR)	Office for Programming and management Control Scientific Council	Document containing principles and procedures approved by the Board of Directors	New 2017 Extended 2020 Completed 2024	The Action has actually been eliminated. The reasons for the elimination are explained in the narrative section

5	**Publication of recruitment notices in English language on the Euraxess and on the CREA website**	From 2018	Office for Recruitment, training and labour	Notices in English language published on CREA website and Euraxess Indicator (since 2019): percentage of applications for positions as researcher received from abroad	New 2017 Completed 2020	
6	**Increase the presence of international experts and the private sector in the CREA Register from which to draw for the formation of competition committees**	September 2017	Office for Recruitment, training and labour	Application for admission to the Register and notice for the selection of experts translated into English and published on the CREA website Indicator (since 2019): percentage of foreign and private sector experts in the Register	New 2017 In progress 2020 Completed 2024	Implementation of the Action is described in the narrative section

7	**Definition of guidelines for members of selection committees**	October 2019	Office for Recruitment, training and labour	Approval of Guidelines by the Scientific Council Guidelines in Italian and English language published on CREA website	New 2017 Completed 2020	
8	**Definition of a multi-year plan for the recruitment of permanent researchers**	December 2018	Office for Recruitment, training and labour Office for Human Resource Management	Staff requirement plan approved by the Board of Directors	New 2017 Completed 2020	
9	**Strengthening internal networking tools and support for young researchers**	December 2019	Scientific Council	Approval by the Board of Directors	New 2017 Completed 2020	
10	**Guidelines on mobility and sabbatical years**	December 2018	Office for Human Resource Management, in consultation with Scientific Council	Approval by the Board of Directors	New 2017 Completed 2020	
11	**Web page on job opportunities**	December 2017	Office for Institutional Affairs and International Relations	Dedicated page on CREA website	New 2017 Completed 2020	

12	**Initiatives to improve the efficacy of conflict resolution**	June 2018	Office for Human Resource Management	Realization (in streaming) of a training event in video-streaming on conflict resolution in the research environment	New 2017 Completed 2020
13	**Revision of Regulation on awarding of scholarships, research grants, doctoral scholarships and international internships for training purposes**	June 2018	Office for Recruitment, training and labour	Regulation approved by the Board of Directors and published on CREA website	New 2017 Completed 2020
14	**Revision of the Training Plan**	December 2018	Office for Recruitment, training and labour	Training Plan approved by the Board of Directors	New 2017 Completed 2020
15	**Guidelines on Mobility and Training within Research Projects**	December 2018	Office for Recruitment, training and labour Office for Project Management	Directives approved by the Board of Directors	New 2017 Completed 2020

16	**Allowing access to databases and editorial resources from outside for researchers**	June 2021	Office for Institutional Affairs and International Relations	Creation of an informatic tool	New 2020 Completed 2024	Implementation of the Action is described in the narrative section
17	**Monitoring the implementation of flexible working hours**	December 2021	Office for Human Resource Management	Report on results obtained	New 2020 Completed 2024	Implementation of the Action is described in the narrative section
18	**Improved user-friendliness of the CREA website**	December 2026	Office for Information Systems	Report on results obtained	New 2020 Extended 2024	Implementation of the Action is described in the narrative section

| 19 | **Adaptation of the Training Plan to new implementation methods** | June 2021 | Office for Recruitment, training and labour | Guidelines on Training Training plan | New 2020 Completed 2024 | Implementation of the Action is described in the narrative section |

NEW ACTIONS *(This table lists the New Actions that are intended to be undertaken in the next three years. The numbering continues from the previous table, as foreseen in the model provided by the European Commission)*

	Proposed Actions	Time foreseen	Responsible Unit	Indicators / Target	Status	Principles set by the European Charter of Researchers to be satisfied by the implementation of the New Actions
20	Organization of an event for CREA staff for the presentation of the Ethics Committee	June 2025	Technical-Scientific Direction	Event realized	New	• Ethical principles • Professional responsibility • Professional attitude • Good practice in research
21	Definition of a new organizational model regarding the protection of personal data	December 2025	Office for IT Systems Responsible for Data Protection (RDP)	New organizational model approved	New	• Contractual and legal obligations
22	Creation, within the CREA website, of dedicated spaces for individual researchers	December 2026	Office for IT Systems	Creation of dedicated spaces on the CREA website	Nuova	• Good practice in research • Dissemination, exploitation of results • Recognition of the profession • Working conditions

23	New Regulation for training and updating adequate to national legislation	December 2025	Office for Recruitment, training and labour	New Regulation approved	New	• Career development
24	Organization of an event aimed at all research personnel to update on the activities related to the European Charter for Researchers	December 2025	Technical - Scientific Direction	Event realized	New	• Research freedom • Ethical principles • Professional responsibility
25	Certification of gender equality	December 2024	Administrative Direction	Certification obtained	New	• Ethical principles • Professional attitude • Public engagement • Non-discrimination • Gender balance

Comment on the implementation of the principles on open, transparent and merit-based recruitment.

In compliance with the OTM-R strategy, CREA has been implementing the computerization of competition procedures since 2022 in order to facilitate the upload of qualification documents by candidates and their subsequent validation and evaluation by of the examining commissions, as described in detail in point 4.

In order to facilitate access to CREA job offers also from abroad, during 2020-2023, in continuity with the already completed provisions of Action 5, CREA has further increased the publicity of procedures for participation both for permanent and fixed-term positions for CREA researchers and all EU citizens via the EURAXESS website.

In 2020, the "Guidelines for members of the selection committees" (Action 7) were issued, also translated into English.

With reference to the expansion of the CREA Register of experts (Action 6), as of February 2024, 3 experts of non-Italian nationality have been included. Currently, the application for inclusion in the Register of experts by EU citizens can be submitted by filling out a form and sending it via email to the Unit responsible for CREA.
https://www.crea.gov.it/en/board-of-experts?inheritRedirect=true.

Finally, within the "Three-Year Personnel Requirements Plan" (Action 8), which periodically defines the number of R2, R3 and R4 level researchers to be included in the Institution's research centres, CREA has implemented a broad recruitment plan between May 2020 and December 2023 for new staff, also encouraging mobility between profiles within the same level, in order to enhance their specific professional skills.

OTM-R checklist – point 4. Do we make (sufficient) use of e-recruitment tools?

In response to the needs arising from the pandemic, CREA has enhanced its digitalization by implementing two parallel platforms:

"DEMETRA®", a platform developed in-house, initially in collaboration with another Italian research center, the INGV National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology, with the DEMETRA® trademark registered by CREA in April 2023 (https://concorsi.crea.gov.it/webapp/concorsi).This platform, created in 2021 for the digital management of internal recruitment procedures, is now used for all selections managed by CREA's Central Administration and, since January 2023, also by the single Research Centers, which use DEMETRA® for the recruitment of temporary staff, research grants, and scholarships. Job candidates and members of selection committees, both internal and external to CREA, access the DEMETRA® platform using personal access credentials. Here, candidates enter their application for the competition, their curriculum vitae, all supporting documents related to their activities, as well as all research products, as specified in the attachments to the job advertisement, with a maximum capacity of 200 MB per candidate. Data security has been ensured through certification from an external partner. In addition to recruitment selections, DEMETRA® is also used for managing selections related to career progression, the Register of internal teachers, and the Register of experts.

The other CREA platform, "MONITOR" (https://monitor.crea.gov.it/index.php?action=Login&module=Users), already existed before

DEMETRA® and has recently been further implemented to allow communication between the two platforms. In MONITOR, CREA researchers have reserved areas where they can upload their research products, such as publications, projects, agreements, events, and other professional activities, useful for evaluation for competition purposes. Since March 2022, CREA researchers who want to submit an application for career advancement or for inclusion in the internal teachers' register, can transfer the content of their personal MONITOR reserved area to DEMETRA® in real time. Only those research-related documents/information are transferred whose veridicity has previously been validated by CREA upon inclusion in MONITOR.

In 2022, on the occasion of the selection process for career advancements of CREA researchers, the evaluation grid used by DEMETRA® was further detailed, indicating the criteria by which researchers are evaluated. The grid, attached to the calls for applications, guarantees the recognition of the activities carried out by researchers, taking into account their career level (R2, R3, R4). In the grid, the scores for each activity are reported in detail related to activities by sector and item. The establishment of DEMETRA® as compulsory platform ensures that all documentation attesting the research products declared in the curriculum vitae is evaluated transparently by the selection committee, since the corresponding scores are already indicated in the call for applications. It is also worth mentioning that the grid is subject to periodic revision according to the specific professional profiles to be recruited, including relative updating of its digital version in DEMETRA®.

Furthermore, the DEMETRA® platform is also used for registration in the list of experts and in the internal teachers' register.

OTM-R checklist point 5. Do we have a quality control system for OTM-R in place?

In accordance with national regulations for the management of public job advertisements, all CREA job postings, already published in the Official Gazette of Italy, are also published on the organization's website at the following links (https://www.crea.gov.it/bandi-a-tempo-indeterminato and https://www.crea.gov.it/bandi-a-tempo-determinato), sections "Transparency/Job Postings", thus ensuring an open and transparent selection process. Furthermore, the previously mentioned computerization of the recruitment and verification system of qualifications of candidates through the DEMETRA® platform ensures the traceability of evaluation procedures carried out by selection committees.

OTM-R checklist point 7. Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to attract researchers from abroad?

The New Action 22, mentioned in the narrative section, which foresees the creation of pages dedicated to each researcher on the CREA website, aims to improve the international visibility of the Organization's researchers. It is hoped that this will increase international scientific collaborations, the first step towards achieving a better attractiveness of CREA towards foreign researchers.

OTM-R checklist point 21. Do we provide adequate feedback to interviewees?

Since 2022, the final evaluation grids of the selected candidates are being published at the end of each selection process, in a designated area accessible only to candidates who participated in the selection. Non-selected candidates can request their personal evaluation grid via email within 30 days of the publication of the selection results, in order to compare them with that of the selected candidate(s). Non-selected candidates also have the option to request a review of their evaluation if they can demonstrate occurrence of calculation errors or unclear evaluations.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

General overview of the implementation process

The implementation process of the Action Plan has always been consistent with the institutional and organizational evolution of the CREA Council for Agricultural Research and Economics. This refers to the significant changes that occurred in 2015 with the establishment of CREA and its structuring into 12 Research Centers through the merger of existing research institutions, as well as ongoing changes to the governance of the Organization.

The chosen strategic approaches, organizational direction and implementation procedures have also been evaluated in the perspective of the European Charter for Researchers and the international standards of a public research institution.

Regarding ethical and professional aspects, an Ethical Code has been developed, along with a Regulation on the rights and duties of researchers managing projects and scientific activities, numerous channels for transparency and dissemination of technologies and innovations produced by the institution, with particular attention to the regulation of patents and proprietary rights.

Recruitment and career advancement processes have been substantially rethought, setting out explanatory Guidelines that define the procedures and the computerized methods of implementation. The criteria currently used for new hires and career progression are periodically assessed and refined.

There is a lot of attention being paid to opening up the CREA to foreign researchers and, despite structural and regulatory difficulties, the first signs of change are beginning to show.

Working and social security conditions at CREA were found to be generally positive, as revealed by the survey carried out among researchers. The areas of greatest difficulty concerned job stability and career development, which in recent years have seen substantial improvement through the conversion of fixed-term contracts into permanent position following calls for internal competition for numerous researchers and the implementation of repeated processes for career progression. Due to Covid and the acceleration the pandemic has given to remote work processes, working conditions have also become more flexible.

With regard to training, the management of professional figures in training has been completed and improved through a specific regulation, and the planned Training Plan was be adapted to the needs of researchers and the latest regulations.

At the start of the process of adhering to the European Charter for Researchers, a survey was carried out among CREA staff, allowing assess the most urgent needs and actions to be taken. Subsequently, the Action Plan was adapted by a Permanent Table representing different professional research, management, administration and governance profiles. In an institution that has almost 950 full-time equivalent (FTE) researchers and a total of 2000 FTE of personnel distributed across dozens of locations throughout the country, it is difficult to consult the entire staff too often. At an upcoming deadline, as the 10-year mark of adhering to the European Charter for Researchers approaches, it may be useful to conduct an evaluation.

How did you prepare the internal review?

The preparation for the internal review followed the same procedure as previous ones, starting from the renewal of the composition of the Permanent Table responsible for verifying the implementation of the Action Plan, drafting the triennial reports, and proposing new Actions. To ensure continuity with the work done so far, five out of the ten members of the current Table were part of the original Table formed at the endorsement of CREA in 2016.

The current composition of the Table, like the previous ones, has a strong female representation, with eight women and two men, and includes technical-scientific, administrative and managerial staff of CREA.

In drafting the internal review report, the Table addressed and resolved issues related to the completion of some Actions and, where not possible, agreed with the responsible parties to postpone the deadline for completion. The documents proving the implementation of the Actions were checked and translated into English and published on the CREA website page dedicated to the European Charter for Researchers. Finally, new Actions were proposed to be developed in the next three years.

The report was reviewed by the Extraordinary Commissioner and the Scientific and Technical Director (who, as mentioned in the section "Has your Organization undergone changes that have had an impact on the human resources strategy?", were appointed in the second half of 2023).

The instability of the Organization's governance in recent years did not allow for a direct discussion with all CREA research staff during the drafting process of the internal review, but it is hoped that this will be possible in the future.

How did you involve the research community, your main stakeholders, in the implementation process?

The implementation of certain actions outlined in the Internal Review Report (2020), as well as the formulation of new actions in the present Report, were monitored or proposed by consulting the research personnel through different methods.

In 2020, a questionnaire was administered to the research staff working at the Research Centers to assess any procedural difficulties related to the administrative, financial and technical management of research projects, also with reference to the technological platforms used at CREA. The questionnaire aimed at monitoring the implementation of the Regulation on the responsibility of researchers in project participation and management of funding, which was planned in the previous report (Action n. 2), and at verifying the need for any modifications. In the years following the distribution of the questionnaire, CREA has implemented various actions targeting at improving performance in research project management.

In reference to the implementation of Action 18, aimed at improving the layout of the homepage of the Organization's website, an internal Working Group has been set up of representatives of all CREA Research Centers, which constantly monitors weaknesses and implements necessary changes to the website.

In addition, the Regulations for the Awarding of Fellowships, Research Grants, PhD Fellowships and Study Abroad for Training Purposes, the subject of Action 13, adopted in 2018, was revised in 2021 with the collaboration of some researchers.

Under Action 15, Directives on Mobility and Training within Research Projects, following a previous positive experience, the organization of short-term international mobility internships for CREA researchers has been planned to take place between 2024 and 2025, with the aim also of strengthening the network of relationships between CREA staff and European and international universities and research centers. Before the issuance of the call, in November 2023, a questionnaire was adminitered to all researchers with the aim of finding out the effects of the internships previously carried out, critical issues, and to implementing improvement actions.

Finally, it should be noted that the Permanent Table for the Implementation of Human Resources Excellence in Research (HRS4R) of CREA, appointed for the preparation of this internal report, is made up of more than 50 percent of researchers and technologists belonging to the different profiles and levels and to both genders. This component of the Table represented CREA's research staff in the preparation of the new Actions.

Do you have an implementation committee and/or steering group that regularly monitors progress?

CREA has established an implementation committee for the Action Plan by creating a Permanent Table, as discussed in the section "How did you prepare the internal review?". For monitoring progress, in previous years CREA had identified two members of the Scientific Council who were responsible for providing independent evaluations on the implementation of the Actions outlined in the Action Plan and suggesting modifications when necessary.

Due to the changes in the management of CREA (discussed in the section "Has your Organization undergone any changes that have impacted your human resources strategy?"), these individuals were unable to consistently fulfill their assigned task, which has fallen to the Permanent Table.

It is hoped that the reintroduction of the Technical Scientific Director and the re-establishment of the Scientific Council can also reinstate these roles dedicated to monitoring progress in the advancement of the implementation of the Actions outlined in the Action Plan.

Is there alignment between organizational policies and the HRS4R? For example, is the HRS4R recognized in the Organization's research strategy, which encompasses human resources policies?

The new Statute of CREA, recently approved, confirms in article 1 that CREA aligns its activities with the principles expressed in the European Charter for Researchers; it also applies the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (2005/251/EC) and the indications contained in the European Framework for Research Careers. Article 3 further states that CREA promotes the implementation of the European Charter for Researchers, the Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers, and European actions to define a reference framework for careers in the European Research Area.

These statements from the statutory document, which outlines the fundamental principles on which the implementing regulations will be based, demonstrate the alignment of CREA's organizational policies with the HRS4R.

How does your Organization ensure that proposed actions are also implemented?

The formulation of New Actions Proposed was carried out in coordination with the Managers of the relevant Offices responsible for their implementation, who were directly involved in their definition. Moreover, the Actions themselves are considered objectives in planning documents (Performance Plan, Positive Action Plan, Gender Equality Plan).

How are you monitoring progress?

As mentioned above, implementation of the Actions outlined in the Action Plan has been monitored periodically by the two designated members of the Scientific Council, and continuously by the Permanent Table for the implementation of Human Resources Excellence in Research (HRS4R), by the responsible bodies for each action, and through consultation with CREA researchers involved in various ways and on different topics.

Following the monitoring of the indicators identified in the 2020 Report, the following is reported.

Between May 2020 and February 2024, compliance of CREA's policies with the principles outlined in the Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers was verified based on indicator 1 "Percentage of job vacancies published on EURAXESS" and indicator 3 "Completion of the online data entry process by applicants for job vacancies".

Regarding indicator 1, permanent term job advertisements for researchers were published on EURAXESS, with the necessary information translated into English to facilitate the participation of foreign candidates. Similarly, a significant number of job vacancies for researchers for fixed-term positions, activated by different Research Centers, were also published on EURAXESS using the same method.

With regards to indicator 3, the digitization process for the online insertion of data for participants in job competitions has been completed, as already described in the OTM-R narrative section.

Indicator 2: Differently from what was foreseen, the questionnaire on "Monitoring the implementation of the CREA OTM-R strategy within the European Charter for Researchers" has not been submitted to the CREA researchers, as some procedures, such as the conversion of fixed-term contracts into permanent position following calls for internal competition, have not yet been completed, with the published rankings still being valid. Therefore, it was decided to wait until the end of this three-year period before formulating the questionnaire, considering the computer innovation introduced only in 2022.

How do you plan to prepare for the external review?

The review will take place at the headquarters of the CREA Central Administration. The members of the Permanent Table will participate in the review, along with at least one representative for each of the areas of "Working Conditions", "Ethics", "Training" and "Recruitment". Presentations will be prepared to describe the activities carried out in the three-year period, both in the general part and in the specific activities carried out by each subgroup.

The review will be conducted in English. In order to facilitate a correct understanding among participants, there will always be a native English-speaking member of the Permanent Table present during the discussions.

CREA will also make available the most relevant documentation produced in the last three years, taking into consideration the various changes in governance. It will also be possible to view the CREA website in both Italian and English, as well as the structure of the MONITOR and DEMETRA® platforms, to demonstrate what has been stated in the narrative.

The representatives of the CREA Offices involved in implementing the Actions may also participate if needed for any requests for clarification or further information.

Additional observations/comments on the proposed implementation process

None.

Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment Check-list: OTM-R					
OTM-R system	**Open**	**Trasparent**	**Merit-based**	**Answer:** **(++Yes completely / +- Yes substantially / -+ Yes partially / -- no)**	**Suggested indicators (or form of measurement)**
1. Have we published a version of our OTM-R policy online (in national language and in English)?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	The document "*CREA Strategy for Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment*", which outlines CREA policies regarding the methods and criteria for the recruitment and career progression of researchers, in line with current national legislation, is published on the CREA website in Italian and English.
2. Do we have an internal guide setting out clear OTM-R procedures and practices for all types of positions?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	The current procedures and practices are in line with the national legislation in force on public job advertisements (for permanent positions: Presidential Decree 12 February 1991, n. 171, annex 1; Legislative Decree 30/03/2001, n. 165 , articles 35-38-57; Legislative Decree 27/10/2009, n.150; for fixed-term positions: Council Directive 1999/70/EC, Circular 18/12/2014 n. 24) and are further described in the internal document "*Guidelines for the recruitment and career progression of researchers and technologists according to the OTM-R strategy*", published on the CREA website in Italian and English.

3. Is everyone involved in the process sufficiently trained in the area of OTM-R?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	The staff dedicated to the recruitment processes is competent in all relevant legislation, rules and procedures and has followed specific training courses on transparency and prevention of corruption. The staff in question is structured into 4 staff units in the USC1 " Recruitment, training and labour" Office of the Central Administration, which deal with permanent recruitment. Fixed-term recruitment, including research grants, scholarships, etc., is handled by the offices located in the 12 CREA research centres.
4. Do we make (sufficient) use of e-recruitment tools?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	CREA has set up two platforms: DEMETRA®, IT platform dedicated to the recruitment of researchers. https://concorsi.crea.gov.it/webapp/concorsi MONITOR, IT platform dedicated to cataloging and validating the activities carried out and the products of researchers. https://monitor.crea.gov.it/index.php?action=Login&module=Users The two platforms allow the direct transfer of information from MONITOR to DEMETRA® within the competitive procedures for the recruitment of researchers.

5. Do we have a quality control system for OTM-R in place?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	Compliance with laws, rules and procedures is ensured: • by the relative national legislation on the recruitment of personnel in public bodies; • by the "*Guidelines for the recruitment and career progression of researchers and technologists according to the OTM-R strategy*" published in 2020; • by the "*Operational instructions for competition commissions*" published in 2021; • by the specific professionalism of the Unique Responsible of the Procedure (RUP), who supervises the correct execution of the selection procedure.
6. Does our current OTM-R policy encourage external candidates to apply?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	All selection procedures are open to candidates external to CREA (except in cases where a reserve of places is required by law).
7. Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to attract researchers from abroad?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	All positions are open to EU citizens (as clearly specified in the job advertisements) and to citizens of other countries if compatible with Article 38 of Legislative Decree. 165/2001. The job advertisements are published on the CREA website and, by announcement in English, on EURAXESS. The number of foreign candidates participating in the calls will be used as an indicator of the effectiveness of the measures introduced. Implementation of New Action 22 could further attract foreign researchers towards CREA

8. Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to attract underrepresented groups?	**x**	**x**	**x**	*Yes, completely*	The trends observed in the proportion of male to female candidates show a marked gender balance. Gender balance in competition commissions is mandatory as long as it does not compromise the necessary skills.
9. Is our current OTM-R policy in line with policies to provide attractive working conditions for researchers?	**x**	**x**	**x**	*Yes, completely*	The research structures, collaborations and results achieved at a national and international level attest the excellence of CREA's research. Implementation of New Action 22 could attract foreign researchers more towards CREA. The low attractiveness certainly also depends on the average salaries of Italian researchers which are generally lower than those in other European countries. Since these are regulated by national regulations, CREA is not in the position to intervene on this aspect.
10. Do we have means to monitor whether the most suitable researchers apply?	**x**	**x**	**x**	*Yes, completely*	The relative positioning of the winners within the scientific community can be estimated through alternative indicators. The quality of the winners of the competitions is ensured, in principle, by the wide range of elements considered during the selection procedure (scientific production and visibility, training, dissemination, mobility).

Advertising and application phase					
11. Do we have clear guidelines or templates (e.g., EURAXESS) for advertising positions?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	The models used for job advertisements are defined by the relevant national legislation (Legislative Decree no. 165/2001, articles 35 and 38, paragraph 1) and, in EURAXESS, the announcements are structured according to the standard model.
12. Do we include in the job advertisement references/links to all the elements foreseen in the relevant section of the toolkit?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	Job advertisements published by CREA make reference to all the main elements of the OTM-R toolkit.
13. Do we make full use of EURAXESS to ensure our Research vacancies reach a wider audience?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	Job advertisements are published on the CREA website and, with announcement in English, on EURAXESS.
14. Do we make use of other job advertising tools?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	Job advertisements are published on the CREA website and in the Official Gazette of the Italian Republic (Special Series 4).
15. Do we keep the administrative burden to a minimum for the candidate?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	The legislation in force does not impose significant administrative burdens on candidates. The use of self-certification is fully permitted and subject to subsequent checks.

Selection and evaluation phase					
16. Do we have clear rules governing the appointment of selection committees?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	In the selection committees, the minimum number of members (3), independence (at least 2/3 external to CREA), absence of conflicts of interest and gender balance are ensured. The international dimension and the presence of non-academic representatives should be further improved.
17. Do we have clear rules concerning the composition of selection committees?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	The members of the selection committees are chosen from within a Register of experts. To increase the presence of international and private sector experts in the Register, the "*Application for admission to the Register*" and the "*Notice for the selection of experts*" have been published on the CREA website in Italian and English.
18. Are the committees sufficiently gender balanced?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	Gender balance is ensured in compliance with Legislative Decree no. 165/2001, art. 57
19. Do we have clear guidelines for selection committees, which help to judge 'merit' in a way that leads to the best candidate being selected?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	Clear indications on the evaluation criteria are reported in all job advertisements. Furthermore, CREA has drawn up the "*Guidelines for the recruitment and career progression of researchers and technologists according to the OTM-R strategy*", which outline the general criteria for the selection and evaluation of researchers through transparent procedures, providing useful guidance for building their career.

Appointment phase					
20. Do we inform all applicants at the end of the selection Process?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	The lists of winners are published on the CREA website. As described under point 7 of the "*Guidelines for the recruitment and career progression of researchers and technologists according to the OTM-R strategy*", at the end of the competition the selection committee must draw up a report on the results related to each candidate. The report must indicate the scores obtained in relation to the qualifications presented, the written tests and oral tests (when carried out).
21. Do we provide adequate feedback to interviewees?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	A reserved area has been established with access limited to competition candidates, which contains the final evaluations of the winner(s). Each non-winning candidate may request their evaluation from the competent office within 30 days of the publication of the final ranking, as well as its revision, in the event of proven calculation errors or contradictory evaluations.
22. Do we have an appropriate Complaints mechanism in place?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	After access to the documents through a formal request (Legislative Decree no. 33/2013 art. 5, amended by Legislative Decree no. 97/2016 - FOIA), any candidate who believes that the selection process was not regular has the right to activate an appeal pursuant to the Code of Civil Procedure (art. 669 bis).

Overall assessment					
23. Do we have a system in place to assess whether OTM-R delivers on its objectives?	x	x	x	*Yes, completely*	Compliance with laws, rules, procedures and transparency is ensured by the USC1 Recruitment, training and labour Office of the CREA Central Administration and by the Directors of the Research Centres. The use of evaluation grids during the recruitment procedures allows to verify and validate all research products presented by each candidate.