

D3.1- Organisational Gap Analysis Report

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Abstract

This deliverable (D3.1), developed within Work Package 3 of the INSIGHT project, presents the results of an organisational gap analysis assessing the alignment of selected talent ecosystem actors with the New Charter and related policy recommendations on research careers. Based on data collected through tailored questionnaires across diverse organisational and national contexts, the analysis examines current practices in recruitment, career development, working conditions and mobility, with a focus on early-stage researchers.

Findings confirm the Charter's potential as a strategic framework to enhance research careers and institutional practices, particularly in terms of attractiveness, visibility and governance. However, they also highlight key limitations, including low awareness, uneven institutional uptake and gaps in areas such as working conditions, mobility, sustainability and career development.

The results indicate that formal commitment has not yet translated into broad internal recognition. To address this, institutions need to strengthen communication, awareness and participation, while investing in career development, mentoring and improved working conditions. These insights provide a foundation for future INSIGHT activities aimed at bridging the gap between policy and practice.



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* Deliverable types:

R: document, report (excluding periodic and final reports).

DEM: demonstrator, pilot, prototype, plan designs.

DEC: websites, patent filings, press and media actions, videos, etc.

OTHER: software, technical diagrams, etc.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
ECR	European Charter for Researchers
ERA	European Research Area
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HR	Human Resources
HRS4R	Human Resources Strategy for Researchers
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
OTM-R – “	Open, Transparent, Merit-based Recruitment
RQ	Research Question
VET	Vocational education and training
WP	Work Package

1. Executive Summary

D3.1 is the Deliverable of task 3.1- Organisational gap analysis in Work Package 3 (WP3) - Organisational Change for the Implementation of the Charter for Researchers in the project INSIGHT and focuses primarily on an Organisational gap analysis. Task 3.1 foresees the undertaking of the organisational gap analysis for selected actors of the talent ecosystem at consortium level, to assess the organisational changes necessary to incorporate the New Charter and the Policy recommendations for research careers. This task will involve developing tailored questionnaires with the objective of collecting data on existing policies, practices, and structures related to researcher recruitment, career development, working conditions, and mobility opportunities. The analysis will identify areas where there are discrepancies between current practices and the Charter's standards, particularly concerning support for early-stage researchers. To achieve this, the partners will reach out to at least 30 organisations to ensure an accurate assessment of different national contexts, institutional structures, and practices related to researcher careers.

The preparation of this report has followed the internal quality management and governance procedures specified in the Project Management and quality assurance (D1.1). D3.1 was produced under the responsibility of the WP3 leader (Fraunhofer FIT) and underwent internal peer review by 28DIGITAL (formerly EITD) and RELAB, as defined in the project's Peer Reviewing and Quality Assurance Matrix. The final version was validated by the project's Quality Assurance function before submission. This process ensures that the present deliverable meets the agreed methodological and quality standards and provides a robust basis for the subsequent Charter-aligned action planning and capacity-building activities foreseen in INSIGHT.

Within the overall INSIGHT governance framework described in the Project Management and quality assurance (D1.1), Task 3.1 constitutes a core upstream activity that feeds several subsequent work packages. The evidence generated in D3.1 informs the charter-aligned organisational action plans in D3.2, supports the refinement of the talent ecosystem roadmap in WP2, and provides key inputs for the design of training pathways (WP4) and the pilot talent ecosystem (WP5).

2. Tasks in WP3: Activities and Deliverables

Task 3.1 – Organisational Gap Analysis, within Work Package 3 (WP3) – Organisational Change for the Implementation of the Charter for Researchers in the INSIGHT project, focuses on conducting an organisational gap analysis. Specifically, Task 3.1 involves carrying out this analysis for selected actors within the talent ecosystem at consortium level, with the aim of assessing the organisational changes required to incorporate the New Charter and the policy recommendations for research careers. The goals of Task 3.1 are outlined below:

1. T.3.1.1 – Literature Analysis

Goal: Establishing a solid theoretical and empirical foundation for subsequent work packages.

2. T.3.1.2 – Developing the Questionnaire

Goal: To design target-group appropriate questionnaires that capture all charta-aligned dimensions necessary for reliable data collection.

3. T.3.1.3 – Conducting the Questionnaire

Goal: To conduct the questionnaire and collect a minimum of 30 complete responses from all project partners and external organisations, ensuring a sufficient data basis for meaningful analysis.

4. T.3.1.4 – Analysing the Questionnaire and Compiling Results

Goal: To conduct a systematic analysis of the collected questionnaire data and compile the results in a structured manner that allows for sound conclusions and recommendations.

5. T.3.1.5 – Writing of Deliverable

Goal: To draft the final deliverable.

3. T.3.1.1 – Literature Analysis

This chapter is structured into two main subsections. The subsection *1.1 European Charter for Researchers* reviews the key principles, policy context and implementation benefits and challenges related to the Charter. The subsection *1.2 Questionnaire Development* outlines how the survey instrument was designed based on insights from the literature.

3.1. European Charter for Researchers

Improving the working conditions and career prospects of researchers has been an important objective of European research policy. An initiative in this context is the European Charter for Researchers, introduced by the European Commission in 2005 together with the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. These documents define a set of principles regarding the roles, responsibilities and rights of researchers as well as the obligations of research institutions and funders. Their overall aim is to create more attractive, transparent and sustainable research careers across the European Research Area (ERA).

The European Charter for Researchers (ECR) provides a framework for improving several aspects of research careers, including ethical standards, recruitment procedures, working conditions and professional development. In its updated form, the Charter consists of 20 principles that are grouped into four main pillars: (1) ethics, integrity and open science, (2) assessment, recruitment and progression of researchers, (3) working conditions and research environment, and (4) career development and talent support (see Table 1).

Table 1: Key principles of the European Charter for Researchers (European Commission, 2023)

Pillar	Principles
Ethics, Integrity, Gender and Open Science	1. Ethics and Research Integrity 2. Freedom of Scientific Research 3. Open Science 4. Gender Equality 5. Embracing Diversity 6. The Researcher (respect for the researcher as a professional) 7. Free Circulation of Researchers 8. Sustainability of Research
Researchers' Assessment, Recruitment and Progression	9. Researchers' Assessment 10. Recruitment 11. Selection 12. Career Progression
Working Conditions and Practices	13. Working Conditions, Funding and Salaries 14. Stability of Employment 15. Contractual and Legal Obligations 16. Dissemination and Exploitation of Results
Research Careers and Talent Development	17. Valuing Diverse Research Careers 18. Career Development and Advice 19. Continuous Professional Development 20. Supervision and Mentoring

Several studies and policy analyses emphasize that implementing the Charter can generate important benefits for research institutions. Aligning institutional human resource policies with the principles of the Charter can improve transparency and fairness in recruitment procedures, strengthen career development structures and contribute to more supportive research environments. These measures are intended to create better framework conditions for researchers and support the development of an attractive and competitive European labour market for research talent (European Commission, 2025; EURAXESS, 2025).

Despite these benefits, the literature also points to several challenges. One common issue is the gap between formal commitment and actual implementation. Although many institutions formally endorse the Charter, translating its principles into everyday institutional practices may require significant organizational changes, coordination between departments and additional resources. Moreover, there is evidence that, despite general support at policy level, effective implementation of Charter principles at institutional level still varies and depends strongly on internal capacities and commitment (Council Recommendation, 2023).

Overall, the literature suggests that the ECR provides an important framework for improving research careers and institutional practices in Europe. At the same time, its practical impact depends largely on how institutions interpret the principles, integrate them into their strategies and implement them within their organizational structures. Understanding how institutions perceive and implement the Charter is therefore an important step toward evaluating its effectiveness and identifying potential areas for improvement.

3.2. Methodological Principles for Developing the Questionnaire

The following sections describe principles within the framework of questionnaire development and conducting. The explanations refer to the methodology based on the German-language literature Moosbrugger and Kelava (2020) and Bortz and Döring (2016). The development of the questionnaire followed established methodological principles from the field of survey research to ensure clarity, reliability and validity of the data collected. Good questionnaire design requires careful attention to item wording, structure, and instructions to support respondent understanding and reduce potential bias. Guidelines from established survey methodology highlight the importance of clear language, avoidance of ambiguous or leading items, and logical organization of questions to maximize data.

Formulating of Instructions

The instruction of the questionnaire is presented at the beginning and intends to introduce the participant to the survey. As a rule, the instructions contain the following information:

- Purpose of the survey
- Duration of the survey
- There is no right or wrong of the responses
- Data protection notice
- Anonymity
- Voluntary participation

Item wording

To ensure that the quality criteria can be met, a few basic rules should be observed with regard to linguistic comprehensibility, the clarity of the item content and the avoidance of certain types of items. These rules are listed below:

1. Linguistic comprehensibility

- Formulate positive items and avoid negative formulations: “*Do you prefer...*” instead of “*Wouldn't you prefer...*”
- Formulate sentences/questions that are easy to understand
- Avoid technical terms and abbreviations

2. Clarity of the item content

- Formulate sentences/questions clearly
- Avoid universal expressions such as “always”, “never” or “all”
- Define difficult terms/issues
- Refer a question/sentence to only one topic (so that the answer can only refer to this one topic)
- Adapt prior knowledge and language level to target group
- Specify frequency (e.g. “*I need training twice a year*” instead of “*I need training regularly*”)
- Specify the time to which reference is made

3. Avoidance of certain types of items

- Avoid short-lived content that can change, e.g. due to political or scientific developments
- Avoid implicit evaluations/judgements
- Avoid suggestive formulations that put the answer in the participants' mouths (e.g. “*Wouldn't you say that it is better that...*”)

In the next task 3.1.2, the development of the questionnaire will actively incorporate the design principles described above to ensure clarity, relevance and data quality. In addition, the technical implementation of the survey will be structured so that respondents are only presented with questions that are applicable to their level of knowledge and experience. To achieve this, a skip logic will be used, which allows the survey to guide participants down different pathways based on their responses to preceding questions. For example, respondents who indicate a high degree of familiarity with the ECR will be directed to other questions than those who report limited awareness. By using this approach, the questionnaire will avoid asking irrelevant items to unsuitable respondents.

4. T 3.1.2 – Developing the Questionnaire

The questionnaire to be developed focuses on how research institutions perceive and implement the European Charter for Researchers and on identifying potential gaps in its implementation. Prior to the development of the questionnaire, important topics of the gap analysis were identified to formulate the research questions. These topics will be introduced below.

4.1. Research Questions

Although the Charter has been widely endorsed across Europe, its practical implementation varies between institutions and national contexts. Many institutions formally support the Charter and use initiatives such as the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R), but the degree to which its principles are integrated into institutional policies, human resource practices, and organizational cultures differs. While policy documents often assume a high level of awareness, empirical evidence suggests that knowledge about the Charter may vary considerably across organizations, departments, and staff groups.

Further, although the Charter is often promoted as a strategic instrument to improve research careers and institutional governance, institutions may perceive both advantages and disadvantages associated with its implementation. Potential benefits such as improved international visibility, enhanced recruitment practices or better working conditions may coexist with perceived challenges such as administrative burdens, limited resources or tensions with existing institutional strategies (COST Association, 2026).

In addition to the awareness of the Charter and the perception of advantages and disadvantages of itself, the project team also considered which principles are implemented in practice and how. Since the Charter consists of a broad set of principles covering areas such as research ethics, recruitment procedures, career development and working conditions, it is interesting to examine to what extent these principles are already implemented in practice at institutional level. Some principles may already be well established within institutional policies, while others may require additional efforts, structural changes or cultural transformations. Here, also the question arises which actions should be taken to establish each principle.

Finally, successful implementation of policy frameworks such as the Charter seems to depend strongly on organizational conditions within institutions such as the leadership support, clear governance structures, availability of resources and effective communication processes. While those aspects can act as important drivers of implementation, lack of awareness, insufficient institutional capacities or resistance among stakeholders could function as barriers.

Against this background, the questionnaire to be developed is going to answer the following research questions (RQ):

- RQ1: How well do the institutions know the Charter?**
- RQ2: What advantages and disadvantages do the institutions see in implementing the Charter (political-strategic level)?**
- RQ3: Which principles of the Charter are already implemented?**
- RQ4: What measures need to be taken to ensure that the Charter can be implemented?**
- RQ5: What are seen as key drivers and barriers for the successful implementation of the Charter (organizational level)?**

4.2. Designing of the survey instrument

The development of the questionnaire followed a systematic process in which the research questions were translated into measurable indicators and survey items. The overall objective was to design a survey instrument that captures both the strategic perspective of institutions and the practical implementation of Charter principles. The questionnaire was structured into several thematic sections, each addressing a Research Question. This structure allows respondents to provide information about different levels of awareness and implementation. The final version of the questionnaire can be found in the Annex (

T.3.1 Questionnaire for Gap *Analysis*).

The first section (Part A) of the questionnaire collects general information about the participant and their institution. This includes the type of institution, its size and country. These variables are important contextual factors, as previous studies have shown that the implementation of the Charter can vary between universities, research institutes, funding organizations and policy institutions. Additionally, the questionnaire asks whether the institution has formally committed to the Charter. This information allows the analysis to distinguish between institutions that have formally endorsed the Charter and those that have not.

The second section (Part B) focuses on institutional awareness and use of the Charter. Respondents are asked to assess their level of knowledge regarding the Charter and to indicate in which areas the Charter is used within the organization, for example in strategic planning, human resource management, recruitment procedures or employment conditions. These questions aim to capture the degree to which the Charter is integrated into institutional processes and policies.

The third section (Part C) addresses the perceived advantages and disadvantages of the Charter implementation from a strategic perspective. Based on insights from the literature, several potential

benefits were translated into survey statements, including improved institutional reputation, increased international visibility, support for strategic excellence and improved recruitment of researchers. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with these statements using a scale ranging from 1-5. A similar set of statements was developed to capture potential challenges or disadvantages, such as additional administrative effort, resource requirements or possible misalignment with institutional strategies.

The fourth section of the questionnaire (Part D) focuses on the Implementation of Individual Principles of the Charter. Participants should rate each of the principles to what extent their institution has already implemented on a scale from 1-5. By collecting these assessments, the survey aims to identify institutions that have already made significant progress as well as institutions where further development may be necessary.

The fifth section (Part E) asks concretely for necessary Measures for Implementation. Participants are here asked to rate the importance of potential measures on a scale ranging from 1-5 such as establishing institutional steering groups, conducting gap analyses, improving recruitment procedures, strengthening training programs or implementing monitoring systems.

In the sixth section (Part F) the questions are about organizational drivers and barriers of implementation. Participants were asked to evaluate factors on a scale 1-5 what may influence the success of Charter implementation within their institution, including leadership engagement, availability of financial and personnel resources, collaboration across organizational units and the existence of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Identifying such drivers and barriers is essential for understanding how institutional governance structures affect the implementation process.

Finally, the last section asked for how important a set of prescribed researcher skills are in order for them to pursue a successful career within or outside academia. Before closing the questionnaire, general feedback regarding the Charter is asked for.

Overall, the questionnaire combines closed-ended questions, Likert-scale items and open-text responses in order to capture both quantitative assessments and qualitative insights. This mixed approach enables a comprehensive analysis of institutional perspectives on the Charter and provides a robust empirical basis for answering the research questions.

5. T3.1.3 – Conducting the Questionnaire

5.1. Target group

The target group for the questionnaire consists of organizations that have their own research departments, such as universities, colleges, research institutions, and academically affiliated institutes or research centers. These institutions share the key characteristic that they conduct scientific research as their core task and thus not only generate research results but also implement institutional structures, processes, and quality standards. The institutions are recruited regardless of whether they have already implemented formal regulations or charters. This allows us to cover a broad spectrum of organizational forms and systematically identify potential discrepancies between the target and actual status in terms of compliance with the charter principles. The questionnaire thus ensures that findings are not limited to “best practice” organizations, but also reveal structural gaps, deficiencies, or areas for action in less formalized institutions. Based on the identified gaps, deficiencies, and areas for action, an action plan will be developed in Task T3.2. A sample of at least 30 organizations is required.

Consistent with INSIGHT’s commitment to gender equality and inclusion as outlined in the Project Management and quality assurance (D1.1), the definition of the target group and the recruitment approach aimed to include a broad diversity of institutional types, staff roles and national contexts, rather than focusing exclusively on “best practice” organisations. This ensures that the organisational gap analysis captures structural challenges and needs across different parts of the research system and can inform inclusive, Charter-aligned organisational change in subsequent project tasks.

5.2. Survey Distribution and Data Collection

After collecting and incorporating feedback of the Consortium to the developed questionnaire, a final version of the questionnaire has been launched in December 2025. The data collection started in January 2026 for the following eight weeks. The questionnaire was implemented in LimeSurvey. An invitation mail for the acquired target group was prepared. The following invitation mail was sent by Fraunhofer FIT:

Dear Colleagues,

As part of the EU project INSIGHT, Fraunhofer FIT is investigating the extent to which research institutions are familiar with the Charter for Researchers and implement it, what advantages, challenges, drivers, and barriers they see in doing so, and what measures are necessary to close existing gaps between the current implementation status and successful implementation of the Charter.*

We would be very grateful if you could take a few moments to participate in the survey. Your experiences and assessments will help us to produce a well-founded analysis and develop practical recommendations for action.

For international comparison purposes, the survey is in English. It takes about 15-20 minutes to complete. Participation is, of course, voluntary and anonymous. The results will be used exclusively for scientific purposes.

Click here to access the survey: <https://websites.fraunhofer.de/perszert-dss/index.php/476197?lang=en>

We ask you to forward this message to other organisations in your country to as well to gain as many perspectives as possible.

Thank you in advance for your time and support!

Kind regards,

The INSIGHT Project Team

**INSIGHT is a project funded by the European Union under Horizon Europe that aims to strengthen research careers in Europe in the long term and make them more attractive. The project supports (young) scientists, universities, industry partners, and political actors in creating talent ecosystems in which researchers can develop skills beyond traditional academic boundaries, are professionally mobile, and can successfully switch between science, business, and the public sector. The focus is on training and mentoring programs, career-promoting offers and tools, and the implementation of the Charter for Researchers to establish practical and future-oriented career paths for young researchers across Europe.*

To meet the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) of 30 respondents, each partner was asked to identify at least five (better 7-8) contacts they can approach and request to complete the questionnaire.

In line with the management and monitoring procedures set out in D1.1, the roll-out of the questionnaire and the achievement of the Key Performance Indicator of at least 30 participating organisations were regularly tracked in WP3 meetings. This continuous monitoring allowed for early detection of participation risks (as described in the Risk Log of D1.1.) and for corrective actions such as targeted reminders and the mobilisation of additional contacts through partners networks. As a result, the target was clearly exceeded, thereby reducing the likelihood and impact of the risk of insufficient participation in the organisational gap analysis.

5.3. Skip logics

To account for the fact that respondents differ in both their institutional context and their level of awareness of the ECR, the questionnaire was programmed with several skip logics. Based on the reported institutional commitment to the Charter and the self-assessed knowledge level, respondents were directed only to those sections that were relevant to their knowledge and situation (e.g., omitting detailed questions on advantages, implementation, or required measures where no commitment or knowledge was reported). The following three skip logics were embedded:

Skip logic 1: in Part A

Question: *Has your institution formally joined or committed to the European Charter for Researchers?*

- If **No** or **I don't know** is selected -> then **Part C** (advantages and disadvantages of the Charter) and **Part D** (implementation of each principle) are omitted
- If **Yes** or **partially** is selected -> questionnaire is fully shown

Skip logic 2: in Part A

Question: *Has your institution formally joined or committed to the European Charter for Researchers?*

- If **Yes** is selected -> then **Part E** (measures required for implementation of the Charter) is omitted
- If **Partially** is selected -> questionnaire is fully shown

Skip logic 3: in Part B

Question: *How would you rate your level of knowledge about the European Charter for Researchers on a scale from 1-Not at all to 5-Completely?*

- If **1-Not at all** was selected -> then **Part C** (advantages and disadvantages of the Charter) and **Part D** (implementation of each principle) are omitted
- Answers rising from **2-To a small extent** -> questionnaire is fully shown

This design reduces respondent burden, avoids asking non-applicable questions and helps to ensure that subsequent analyses focus on informed assessments of the Charter and its implementation.

6. T 3.1.4 – Analyzing the Questionnaire and Compiling Results

6.1. Data cleansing

All data handling and cleaning procedures followed the overarching principles for data management, confidentiality and quality assurance defined in the Project Management and quality assurance (D1.1) and the INSIGHT Data Management Plan (D1.2). Only anonymised and aggregated data were used for analysis and all transformations (e.g. recoding of Likert scales into numerical values) were documented to ensure transparency and reproducibility. These procedures are consistent with the project's internal quality standards for research activities and reporting.

As a first step, a systematic data cleaning has been done. The questionnaire was opened 339 times in total. In 159 data sets respondents discontinued after the first question block. Those cases with more than 90% missing values across survey items were removed from the data set since they do not provide reliable information for any of the key variables. Five additional records were removed due to non-identifiable country information (e.g. given answers such as “x”). Further two records were excluded because they originated from Bosnia and Moldova, which are not member states of the European Union. The final analytical sample therefore consisted of $N = 173$ cases. In this data set, the variable “country” was standardized by harmonizing different spellings and language variants (e.g. “España”, “Espana” and “Spain” were all recoded to “Spain”), ensuring consistency in subsequent country-level analyses. Further, all Likert-scale responses were recoded from verbal categories (e.g. “1 - not important”, “5 - very important”) into corresponding numerical values 1-5 to facilitate statistical analysis. Finally, data analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel and the statistic program “JASP”.

6.2. Sample description (Part A)

The analytical sample consists of $N = 173$ valid responses from 17 European countries. More than half of all respondents are based in Romania (53.8%), followed by Germany (12.7%) and Spain (12.1%). Further contributions come from Bulgaria and Greece (each 4.0%) as well as Austria (2.9%). Smaller shares of the sample are located in Italy and Poland (each 1.7%), the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and Sweden (each 1.2%), and Belgium, Croatia, Finland, Hungary, Luxembourg and Portugal (each 0.6%). The detailed country frequencies are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Frequencies for Country

Country	Frequency	In Percent
Romania	93	53.8
Germany	22	12.7
Spain	21	12.1
Bulgaria	7	4.0
Greece	7	4.0
Austria	5	2.9

Italy	3	1.7
Poland	3	1.7
Czech Republic	2	1.2
Netherlands	2	1.2
Sweden	2	1.2
Belgium	1	0.6
Croatia	1	0.6
Finland	1	0.6
Hungary	1	0.6
Luxembourg	1	0.6
Portugal	1	0.6

In terms of institutional type, over half of the respondents are based at universities or higher education institutions (50.9%) and a further 39.9% work in public or private research institutions. Smaller shares come from companies with research departments (4.0%), funding organisations (1.2%) and policy/government institutions (1.2%). The remaining 2.9% fall into an “Other” category, which includes for example a vocational education and training (VET) institute, a hospital with a research department and cluster association organisations, and a private company (see Table 3).

Table 3: Frequencies for Type of Institution

Type of Institution	Frequency	In Percent
University / Higher Education Institution	88	50.9
Research Institution (public or private)	69	39.9
Company with research department	7	4.0
Other	5	2.9
Funding Organization	2	1.2
Policy / Government Institution	2	1.2

More than one third of respondents are affiliated with very large institutions employing at least 1000 research staff (35.3%). A further 19.7% work at medium-sized institutions with 50–199 research staff, 17.3% at institutions with 200–499 research staff, and 15.6% at small institutions with fewer than 50 research staff. The remaining 12.1% are based at institutions with 500–999 research staff. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Frequencies for Size of Institution

Size of the Institution (number of research staff)	Frequency	Percent
< 50	27	15.6
50–199	34	19.7
200–499	30	17.3
500–999	21	12.1
≥ 1000	61	35.3

The largest share of respondents belongs to research staff or scientists (35.3%), followed by doctoral researchers/PhD candidates (13.9%) and research support or administrative staff (12.7%). Around a quarter of the sample holds leadership or other non-standard roles, with 12.1% in research/scientific leadership and 12.1% in positions classified as “other” including, for example, project managers, lecturers and professors, quality and information security managers, members of HRS4R teams or HR Award administrators. Smaller groups are represented by human resources and people management (5.2%), postdoctoral researchers (4.6%), executive leadership (2.9%), and communications/public relations or outreach (1.2%). Results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Frequencies for Current role/position

Current role/position	Frequency	Percent
Research Staff / Scientist	61	35.3
Doctoral Researcher / PhD Candidate	24	13.9
Research Support / Administrative Staff (e.g., Project Manager, Research Coordinator)	22	12.7
Other	21	12.1
Research / Scientific Leadership	21	12.1
Human Resources / People & Talent Management	9	5.2
Postdoctoral Researcher	8	4.6
Executive Leadership	5	2.9
Communications / Public Relations / Outreach	2	1.2

The majority of respondents are unsure whether their institution has formally joined or committed to the European Charter for Researchers (44.5%), while 37.0% report that their institution has done so.

A smaller share state that their institution has not committed to the Charter (12.7%), and 5.8% indicate that their institution has only partially committed. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Frequencies for Institutional commitment to ECR

Has your institution formally joined or committed to the European Charter for Researchers?	Frequency	Percent
Don't know	77	44.5
Yes	64	37.0
No	22	12.7
Partially	10	5.8

Taken together, the analytical sample of $N = 173$ respondents from 17 European countries consists predominantly of universities and public research institutions, with comparatively smaller contributions from companies, funding bodies, policy organizations and cluster associations. Most respondents work in large or very large research-performing organisations with ≥ 1000 employees and occupy research, doctoral or research support roles, complemented by a substantial share of scientific and executive leadership and HR positions. Around two in five participants report that their institution has formally joined or committed to the ECR, while a similarly large group is unsure about it. The sample thus reflects a self-selected group of research-performing organisations with a strong academic and public-sector focus and a pronounced overrepresentation of Romanian institutions, which should be kept in mind when interpreting the subsequent analyses.

6.3. Descriptive analysis of Part B: Awareness and use of the charter

6.3.1. Knowledge about the ECR

Since the analytic data set of $N = 173$ has a huge number of incomplete data because of frequent interruptions while filling out the questionnaire, the following analyses report an N for valid responses. Based on the valid responses ($N = 154$), respondents generally report rather low levels of knowledge about the European Charter for Researchers (see also Table 7 and Figure 1).

Table 7: Frequencies for Knowledge about the ECR

Knowledge about the ECR	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 = not at all	62	35.8	40.3	40.3
2 = to a small extent	17	9.8	11.0	51.3
3 = partly	30	17.3	19.5	70.8
4 = to a large extent	27	15.6	17.5	88.3
5 = completely	18	10.4	11.7	100.0
Missing	19	11.0		

Knowledge about the ECR	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Total	173	100.0		

40.3% state that they do not know the Charter at all and a further 11.0% know it only “to a small extent”, indicating that just over half of the respondents have very limited awareness. In contrast, 19.5% report that they know the Charter “partly”, and 29.2% indicate knowledge “to a large extent” or “completely”, pointing to a smaller but substantial group with higher familiarity. For 11.0% of the total sample ($N = 173$), information on this question is missing.

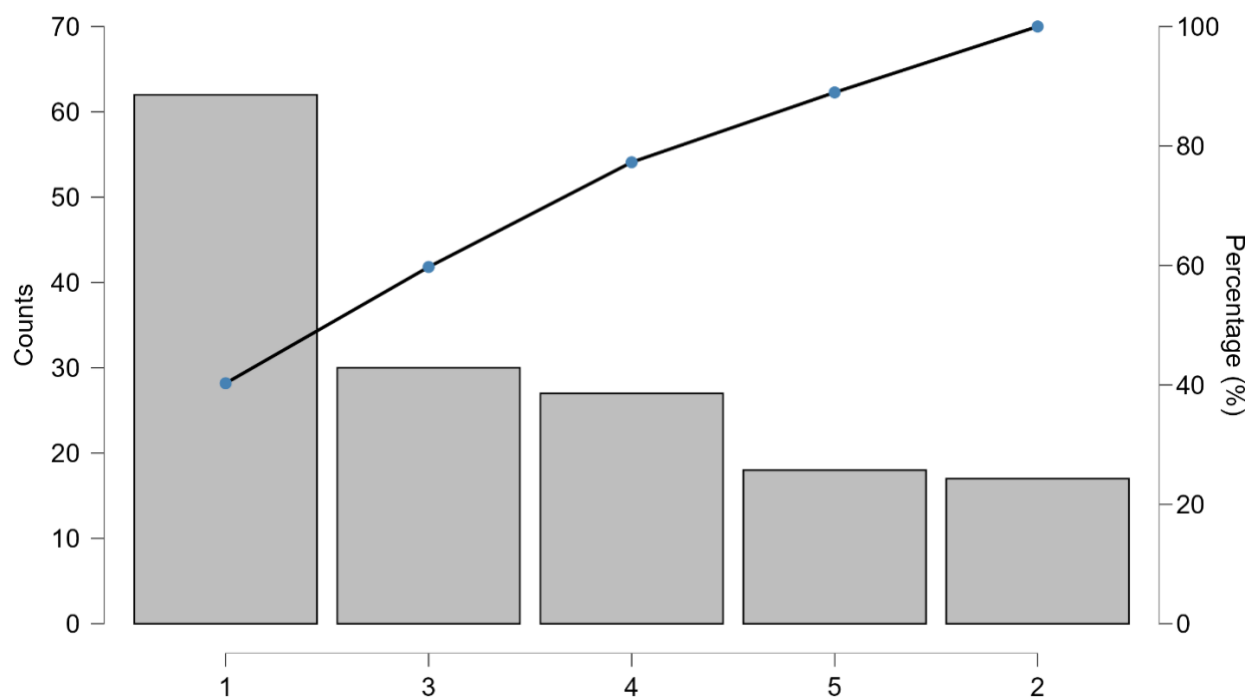


Figure 1: Pareto Plot for the Knowledge of the ECR

6.3.2. Institutional Use of the ECR

In the next step, it was analysed how institutions report using the European Charter for Researchers across different organisational areas (see Table 8). Around one third of respondents of a total of $N = 173$ indicate that the Charter is used as a reference document in strategy or policy (31.2%), while smaller shares report its use in HR/staff development (20.8%) and in the recruitment of researchers (22.0%). Only 14.5% state that the Charter is considered in contracts or working conditions. At the same time, 9.8% explicitly report that the Charter is “not at all” used, and 39.3% select “don’t know”, suggesting that for a considerable share of respondents, the institutional use of the Charter is not clear.

Table 8: Frequencies for the Institutional use of the ECR

Use as...	Answer	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
[As a reference document in strategy/policy]	N/A	18	10.4	10.4	10.4
	No	101	58.4	58.4	68.8
	Yes	54	31.2	31.2	100.0
	Total	173	100.0		
[In HR / staff development measures]	N/A	18	10.4	10.4	10.4
	No	119	68.8	68.8	79.2
	Yes	36	20.8	20.8	100.0
	Total	173	100.0		
[In the recruitment of researchers]	N/A	18	10.4	10.4	10.4
	No	117	67.6	67.6	78.0
	Yes	38	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	173	100.0		
[In contracts or working conditions]	N/A	18	10.4	10.4	10.4
	No	130	75.1	75.1	85.5
	Yes	25	14.5	14.5	100.0
	Total	173	100.0		
[Not at all]	N/A	18	10.4	10.4	10.4
	No	138	79.8	79.8	90.2
	Yes	17	9.8	9.8	100.0
	Total	173	100.0		
[Don't know]	N/A	18	10.4	10.4	10.4
	No	87	50.3	50.3	60.7
	Yes	68	39.3	39.3	100.0
	Total	173	100.0		

6.3.3. Reasons of Non-use of the ECR

Also, it was analysed what reasons institutions report for not using the ECR (see Table 9). Among the valid responses of a total of $N = 173$, the most frequently reported barrier is “No knowledge/information” (34.1%), followed by “Not yet implemented, but planned” (16.2%). Other reasons, such as lack of resources for implementation, missing legal/regulatory changes, lack of interest or institutional priority, and the precedence of other regulations, are mentioned only by a small minority of institutions (between 5.8% and 8.1%).

Table 9: Frequencies for Reasons of Non-use of the ECR

Reason of non-use	Answer	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
[No knowledge/ information]	N/A	18	10.4	10.4	10.4

	No	96	55.5	55.5	65.9
	Yes	59	34.1	34.1	100.0
	Total	173	100.0		
[No resources for implementation]	N/A	18	10.4	10.4	10.4
	No	141	81.5	81.5	91.9
	Yes	14	8.1	8.1	100.0
	Total	173	100.0		
[No interest / not an institutional priority]	N/A	18	10.4	10.4	10.4
	No	142	82.1	82.1	92.5
	Yes	13	7.5	7.5	100.0
	Total	173	100.0		
[Other regulations take precedence]	N/A	18	10.4	10.4	10.4
	No	145	83.8	83.8	94.2
	Yes	10	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	173	100.0		
[Changes in law/regulations are missing]	N/A	18	10.4	10.4	10.4
	No	144	83.2	83.2	93.6
	Yes	11	6.4	6.4	100.0
	Total	173	100.0		
[Not yet implemented, but planned]	N/A	18	10.4	10.4	10.4
	No	127	73.4	73.4	83.8
	Yes	28	16.2	16.2	100.0
	Total	173	100.0		

6.3.4. Chapter Summary

The survey includes $N = 173$ responses in total from 17 European countries, with a strong concentration in Romania and a predominant representation of universities and public research institutions. Most respondents work in large or very large research-performing organisations and are primarily research staff, doctoral candidates, or research support personnel, complemented by leadership and HR roles. Around two in five participants report that their institution has formally committed to the Charter, while a similarly large group is unsure. Overall knowledge of the Charter is relatively low: just over half of respondents with valid data report knowing it “not at all” or only “to a small extent”, whereas around one third indicate higher levels of awareness. Institutional use of the Charter is also limited. Around one third report that it is used as a reference document in strategy or policy, and around one fifth indicate its use in HR, staff development or recruitment, with even fewer mentioning its role in contracts or working conditions; a considerable share states that the Charter is not used at all or do not know whether it is used. Lack of knowledge or information emerges as the main barrier to use, followed by institutions that have not yet implemented the Charter but plan to do so, while other structural or legal barriers are reported less frequently. These findings should be interpreted in light of the self-selected nature of the sample, the overrepresentation of Romanian institutions, and substantial item non-response in some questions.

6.4. Descriptive analysis of Part C: Advantages and disadvantages from a political-strategic perspective

As described above in section 0, the questionnaire implemented three skip logics. Respondents who indicated that their institution had not joined the Charter or who did not know about it were excluded from the following Survey Parts C and D. Likewise, respondents who rated their level of knowledge about the Charter as “1/ Not at all” were also not displayed the questions in Parts C and D. In total, 7 respondents stated that their institution had not joined the Charter and at the same time rated their knowledge as “1/Not at all”. A further 47 respondents reported that they did not know whether their institution had joined, consistently selecting “1/ Not at all” as their level of knowledge. Among those who reported that their institution had (partially) joined the Charter, 8 respondents nevertheless indicated “1/Not at all” as their knowledge level. In addition, 19 respondents dropped out of the survey at this point, and another 42 discontinued on the subsequent page (Part C on advantages and disadvantages of the Charter). As a result, only 50 valid cases were available for Part C, which are described in the following section.

6.4.1. Perceived Advantages of the ECR

During the questionnaire, five advantages of the ECR were predefined and presented to the respondents, who were asked to rate their agreement on a scale of 1 to 5. Table 10 summarises the response distributions. Among the respondents who answered these questions (N = 50), the Charter is clearly seen as a strategic advantage for their institution. Many respondents think that the Charter *strengthens the institutional profile as an attractive employer*. Altogether, 82% agree with this statement (38% chose 4 and 44% chose 5), while only 4% strongly disagree and 14% are neutral.

The most positive ratings appear for the statement that the Charter *increases visibility at the European/international level*. Here, 86% agree (32% chose 4 and 54% chose 5), only 4% strongly disagree, and 10% are neutral.

Table 10: Perceived strategic advantages of implementing the ECR (ratings on a 1-5 scale, N = 50)

Advantage statement (shortened)	Mean (1–5) ¹	1 in scale (in %)	2 in scale (in %)	3 in scale (in %)	4 in scale (in %)	5 in scale (in %)
The Charter...						
...strengthens institutional profile as an attractive employer	4.18	4	0	14	38	44
...increases visibility at the European/international level	4.32	4	0	10	32	54

¹ Note: 1 in scale = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

...supports a strategic focus on excellence and innovation	4.04	4	0	18	44	34
...facilitates recruitment and retention of international researchers	4.02	4	0	18	46	32
...promotes internal transparency and good governance of research and personnel	4.06	4	2	18	36	40

The Charter is also seen as helpful for internal development. For the statement that it *supports a strategic focus on excellence and innovation*, 78% agree (44% with 4 and 34% with 5), 18% are neutral, and 4% strongly disagree. The same share, 78%, agree that the Charter *facilitates recruitment and retention of international researchers* (46% with 4 and 32% with 5), again with 18% neutral responses.

Finally, 76% agree that the Charter *promotes internal transparency and good governance of research and personnel* (36% chose 4 and 40% chose 5). In this case, 18% are neutral, and only a small minority (6% in total, 4% with 1 and 2% with 2) do not agree. Overall, these results show that this subgroup sees the Charter mainly as a clear strategic benefit for employer attractiveness, international visibility, excellence, recruitment and internal governance.

6.4.2. Perceived Disadvantages of the ECR

In the next step in the questionnaire, we also asked for the perceived disadvantages of the ECR and presented five disadvantage statements to the respondents. The results are presented in Table 11.

Table 11: Perceived strategic disadvantages/challenges of implementing the ECR (ratings on a 1-5 scale², N = 50)

Disadvantage statement (shortened) The Charter...	Mean (1–5)	1 in scale (in %)	2 in scale (in %)	3 in scale (in %)	4 in scale (in %)	5 in scale (in %)
...requires additional resources (time, staff, money)	3.92	0	2	24	54	20
...perceived as a bureaucratic requirement that adds little value	3.06	12	16	32	34	6
...strategic goals and Charter requirements are not fully compatible	2.54	20	32	30	10	8

² Note: 1 in scale = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

...conflicting objectives between short-term operations and long-term Charter implementation	2.66	10	42	28	12	8
...external incentives or binding requirements are lacking, making implementation hard to measure	3.18	8	20	30	30	12

The results suggest that respondents mainly see the Charter as demanding extra effort. Among the respondents who answered these questions ($N = 50$), most see the main disadvantage of the Charter in the extra effort it creates. Almost three quarters (54% with 4 and 20% with 5) agree that implementing the Charter requires additional resources such as time, staff and money, and almost nobody disagrees.

The idea that the Charter is just a bureaucratic requirement with little value is viewed more critically but not very strongly: about one third are neutral (32%), another third tend to agree (34% with 4 and 6% with 5), while around 28% disagree (12% with 1 and 16% with 2). Clear strategic conflicts are seen much less often. For the statements that the institution's strategic goals do not fit well with the Charter or that there are conflicts between short-term operations and long-term implementation, most respondents choose the lower or middle values on the scale. In both cases, only about 18–20% select 4 or 5, while a much larger group disagrees or is neutral. For the statement that external incentives or binding requirements are lacking and that this makes implementation hard to measure, answers are more evenly spread: 42% agree (30% with 4 and 12% with 5), 30% are neutral, and 28% disagree.

6.4.3. Chapter Summary

This Chapter analyses how a selected subgroup of respondents ($N = 50$) assess the advantages and disadvantages of the ECR from a political-strategic perspective. Overall, the respondents see the Charter clearly as a strategic benefit: most agree that it strengthens their institutions profile as an attractive employer, increases European and international visibility, supports a focus on excellence and innovation, helps to recruit and retain international researchers, and promotes internal transparency and good governance. At the same time, respondents also report important challenges. The main perceived disadvantage is the extra effort required in terms of time, staff and money. Some respondents additionally feel that external incentives or binding requirements are lacking, which makes implementation harder to measure. In contrast, only a minority see the Charter as mainly a bureaucratic burden or as fundamentally incompatible with their institution's strategic goals or short-term operational needs.

6.5. Descriptive analysis of Part D: Implementation of individual principles of the charter

In Part D of the questionnaire, the full list of the 20 principles of the ECR was presented to the respondents. For each principle, respondents were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 (=not at all) to 5 (=fully) to what extent the principle is already implemented in their institution. This rating scale is the basis for all descriptive statistics and interpretations reported above. It must be considered that 54 % of all valid ratings come from Romania (25 of 46), about 17 % from Spain (8 of 46) and about 4 % each from Italy (2 of 46) and Greece (2 of 46). Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxembourg and Poland each contribute around 2 % (1 of 46) of the valid ratings, while several countries present in the overall sample (e.g. Germany, Austria, Finland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden) have 0 % valid ratings on these implementation questions.

At the end of this Part D of the Questionnaire, participants were optionally asked to comment in their own words on the progress made in implementing the 20 principles of ECR.

6.5.1. Implementation of the 20 principles of the ECR

Table 12 shows, for each of the 20 principles of the ECR, how strongly respondents perceive them as implemented in their institution. The percentages refer only to valid answers ($n = 46$ per principle). Values 1–2 are interpreted as low implementation, 3 as medium, and 4–5 as high implementation.

Table 12: Implementation of the 20 principles of the ECR (ratings on a 1–5 scale³, $N = 46$)

No.	Principle (short label)	% 1–2 in scale (low)	% 3 in scale (medium)	% 4–5 in scale (high)
1	Ethics & Research Integrity	2.2	0.0	97.8
2	Freedom of Scientific Research	6.5	10.9	82.6
3	Open Science	6.5	15.2	78.3
4	Gender Equality	0.0	15.2	84.8
5	Embracing Diversity	6.5	15.2	78.3
6	The Researcher (role and responsibility)	6.5	2.2	91.3
7	Free Circulation of Researchers (mobility)	13.0	15.2	71.7
8	Sustainability of Research	13.0	13.0	73.9
9	Researchers' Assessment	10.9	13.0	76.1
10	Recruitment	10.9	13.0	76.1
11	Selection	8.7	8.7	82.6
12	Career Progression	13.0	6.5	80.4
13	Working Conditions, Funding and Salaries	8.7	17.4	73.9
14	Stability of Employment	10.9	13.0	76.1
15	Contractual and Legal Obligations	4.3	6.5	89.1

³ Note. 1 in Scale = not at all implemented and 5 in scale is fully implemented.

16	Dissemination and Exploitation of Results	4.3	2.2	93.5
17	Valuing Diverse Research Careers	8.7	15.2	76.1
18	Career Development and Advice	10.9	19.6	69.6
19	Continuous Professional Development	13.0	6.5	80.4
20	Supervision and Mentoring	8.7	4.3	87.0

Across all principles, the majority of responding institutions report relatively high levels of implementation. However, there are clear differences between very strongly and comparatively less strongly implemented areas.

Ethics and research integrity are almost universally seen as established. With 97.8 % high ratings, this principle is perceived as nearly fully implemented. This suggests that formal ethical frameworks, integrity policies and related structures are well embedded and widely recognised.

Freedom of scientific research is also rated highly, with 82.6 % high ratings. At the same time, 6.5 % of respondents see low implementation, and 10.9 % give a medium rating. This indicates that while researchers largely feel free to pursue their topics, a minority still perceives constraints, for example due to funding structures, strategic priorities or governance rules.

Open Science is evaluated as well implemented, but not yet at the very top. With 78.3 % high ratings and 15.2 % medium, a broad majority sees good progress, while a small group still experiences limited openness, possibly due to differences between disciplines, data protection issues or lack of infrastructure.

Gender equality is rated very positively, with 84.8 % high ratings and no low ratings at all. Still, 15.2 % place their institution at a medium level, suggesting that although gender equality policies are widely established, there remains room for further advancement in practice.

Embracing diversity shows a similar pattern to Open Science. A total of 78.3 % report high implementation, 15.2 % see a medium level, and 6.5 % perceive low implementation. This points to a generally positive but somewhat uneven situation, where diverse backgrounds and perspectives are valued, but not yet consistently harnessed across all contexts.

The principle “The Researcher” as a professional with responsibility for career and results is rated very highly (91.3 % high). Most institutions apparently recognise researchers as professionals with a clear role and responsibility framework. At the same time, one critical free-text comment describes researchers as “auxiliary personnel” with many obligations but few rights. This suggests that, despite strong formal recognition, there may still be discrepancies between policy and lived experience in some places.

The free circulation of researchers, referring to mobility across institutions, countries and sectors, is one of the relatively weaker areas. While 71.7 % perceive a high level of implementation, 13.0 %

report low implementation and 15.2 % a medium level. This implies that structural or legal barriers, administrative complexity, or insufficient institutional support may still hinder mobility for part of the research community.

The sustainability of research is also not among the strongest dimensions. Here, 73.9 % report high implementation, but 13.0 % see low and 13.0 % medium implementation. Responsible and resource-efficient planning appears to be in place in many institutions, but not uniformly. Potential issues may include long-term funding, environmental sustainability, or staffing and workload planning.

Researchers' assessment is perceived as reasonably well implemented, with 76.1 % high ratings and 13.0 % medium. However, 10.9 % still see low implementation. Fair, transparent and meaningful evaluation is therefore present in many institutions, but some respondents still question aspects such as criteria, transparency, or the balance between quantitative and qualitative indicators.

Recruitment is evaluated in a similar way. Again, 76.1 % see high, 13.0 % medium, and 10.9 % low implementation. Clear and fair criteria in recruitment appear to be widely used but not fully convincing for all respondents, suggesting that some procedures may still be perceived as insufficiently transparent or unevenly applied.

Selection procedures are rated somewhat better than recruitment overall, with 82.6 % high and only 8.7 % low implementation. This implies that once candidates are in the selection process, the procedures are seen as relatively transparent and understandable, even if the upstream recruitment phase is not always perceived as equally strong.

Career progression is generally seen as well implemented, with 80.4 % high ratings. However, 13.0 % consider implementation low and 6.5 % medium. This indicates that advancement opportunities exist, but access to them may be limited or uneven, especially for early-career researchers or those on non-traditional paths.

Working conditions, funding and salaries show a more mixed picture. A total of 73.9 % report high implementation, but 17.4 % choose medium and 8.7 % low. Many respondents therefore see their working conditions as acceptable or good, yet a considerable minority highlights gaps related to funding security, workload, or remuneration.

The stability of employment is similarly evaluated. While 76.1 % perceive high implementation and 13.0 % medium, 10.9 % indicate low stability. This reflects the tension between the existence of stable positions in some segments and widespread use of fixed-term contracts or project-based employment in others.

Contractual and legal obligations are one of the strongest areas, with 89.1 % high ratings and only 4.3 % low. This suggests that rights and responsibilities of researchers are generally well defined and communicated, creating a relatively high level of legal and contractual clarity.

Dissemination and exploitation of research results is among the top-rated principles, with 93.5 % high implementation. Publishing, using, and making results accessible to society appear to be firmly established practices, and only a very small minority reports low or even just medium implementation.

Valuing diverse research careers is rated as moderately strong, with 76.1 % high, 15.2 % medium, and 8.7 % low implementation. While many institutions recognise and support different research career paths beyond the classic professor model, some respondents still feel that this recognition is incomplete, for instance for careers in industry, administration, or research management.

Career development and advice is the relatively weakest principle in the comparison. Only 69.6 % report high implementation, 19.6 % give a medium rating, and 10.9 % see low implementation. Although most respondents still rate their institution positively, almost one third does not perceive career support as fully developed. This points to a particular need for systematic career counselling, mentoring structures, and career development programmes.

Continuous professional development of researchers is again evaluated quite positively, with 80.4 % high implementation. However, 13.0 % of respondents see low and 6.5 % medium implementation. This may reflect that training opportunities exist but are not equally accessible or obligatory for all groups, or that time and resources for training are limited.

Supervision and mentoring stand out as one of the strongest personnel-related principles. A total of 87.0 % report high implementation, with only 8.7 % low and 4.3 % medium. This indicates that good supervision and guidance from experienced colleagues are widely available. Individual negative experiences nevertheless still occur and may reflect differences between departments or supervisors.

Overall, across all principles, the responding institutions report substantially higher levels of implementation than not. The main relative weaknesses lie in career development and advice, mobility, working conditions and salaries, sustainability, and the recognition and support of diverse career paths.

6.5.2. Open-text response

In total 9 respondents provided optional free-text comments on how the principles have been implemented and why some might not be fully in place. Table 13 shows the original comments of the respondents.

Table 13: Open-text responses to the implementation of the Principles of ECR

“It has been implementing since 2014, when we participated in the project of FP7 TRIGGER TRansforming Institutions by Gendering contents and Gaining Equality in Research. The implementation of the principles of HRS4R is long term run, supported by the group of administrative and research stuff with the support of at least part of the university management.”

“Our institution has developed and implemented a comprehensive set of action plans and protocols to effectively address the 20 principles within an integrated, institution-wide strategy. These plans are embedded across different levels of governance and management, ensuring a coherent and coordinated approach to human resources policies and practices. Recently, we have submitted the renewal application for the HR Excellence in Research Award for evaluation (without site visit), reaffirming our strong commitment to the principles of the European Charter for Researchers. This process has provided an important opportunity for self-assessment and reflection on our current practices. In this context, we have made a significant effort to review, update, and modernise our existing action plans, particularly those developed in earlier phases, in order to ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness. At the same time, we have designed and adopted new plans, policies, and procedures that respond to the evolving needs of the centre, especially in relation to institutional growth, organisational development, and the diversification of research activities. Together, these actions demonstrate our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement, transparency, and excellence in human resources management, and to fostering an attractive, inclusive, and supportive working environment for researchers and staff.”

“The Charter implementation helps HEI to achieve "a new target" (i.e., HRS4R award). The researchers are not equivalent to professors; they are in the auxiliary personnel (in the same category as secretaries, accountants, etc.), but with research obligations (performance indicators: articles, projects, conference presentations, etc.). We do not have rights, just obligations! “

“The Principles have been implemented through the use of the HR Excellent in Research Programme. The Charter served as the basis for the Gap analysis carried out in 2016 (including a specific self-assessment for Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment organisation's strategy). A Steering Committee to oversee the process and a Working Group responsible for implementation was appointed, engaging all management departments responsible for Charter-related issues and consulting and involving a representative community of researchers (R1 to R4). Following the last renewal phase (2023), the Governing Council approved a new HR Improved Action Plan 2023-2026. The main reasons for not fully implementing the Principles are organisational issues (internal rules), lack of resources and national laws.”

“The only action plan item that has not been completed is “Design and implement a pilot training program for young PhD thesis directors” (criteria 36 and 40). Alternative measures have been proposed.”

“The principles were integrated into the institute’s processes (regulations, procedures, guides, code, strategy, etc.).”

“We are implementing a HR strategy for researchers addressing the principles of the (old) Charter and Code. We have not yet transitioned to the new Charter.”

“We have HR Excellence in Research Award and we fully apply the principles of the Charter.”

“Working groups including HR, employees and union representatives are in place for implementing principles within internal procedures and monitor their application.”

According to the responses several institutions describe a long-standing and structured engagement with the Charter, including the development of comprehensive action plans, gap analyses, and governance structures such as steering committees and working groups. Some explicitly refer to the HR Excellence in Research Award and describe a systematic, institution-wide HR strategy that is regularly updated and aligned with the Charter, sometimes dating back to EU-funded projects as early as 2014. In these cases, the Charter serves as a framework for continuous improvement, self-assessment, and reform of HR policies and procedures.

A number of comments mention reasons why not all principles are completely implemented. Key obstacles include internal organisational rules, limited resources, and national legislation that constrains institutional flexibility. One institution notes that it is still working with the “old” Charter and Code and has not yet transitioned to the new Charter, while another points to a specific action item that has not yet been completed and for which alternative measures are being considered. One comment is markedly critical and emphasises that researchers are classified as auxiliary staff, compared to secretaries or accountants, but at the same time they are subject to strong performance demands. This comment highlights a perceived imbalance between rights and obligations and underscores a gap between high-level principles and some researchers’ actual status and experience.

Overall, the free-text responses reinforce the impression from the quantitative data that many institutions are deeply engaged with the Charter and have formal systems in place, while at the same time structural barriers and perceived inequities remain in practice.

6.5.3. Chapter Summary

The 46 valid responses to each principle are very unevenly distributed across countries. Roughly 54 % of all valid ratings come from Romania (25 of 46), about 17 % from Spain (8 of 46) and about 4 % each from Italy (2 of 46) and Greece (2 of 46). Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxembourg and Poland each contribute around 2 % (1 of 46) of the valid ratings, while several countries present in the overall sample (e.g. Germany, Austria, Finland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden) have 0 % valid ratings on these implementation questions.

Within this strongly Romania-dominated sample, all 20 principles are generally perceived as well implemented. Very high implementation is reported in particular for ethics and research integrity,

dissemination and exploitation of results, clear contractual and legal frameworks, and supervision and mentoring. Lower and medium ratings concentrate in the areas of career development and advice, mobility, sustainability, working conditions and the recognition of diverse career paths. These more critical assessments come mainly from Romanian respondents, with additional contributions from Spain and Bulgaria. The results therefore cannot be generalised to Europe as a whole, but primarily describe the situation in Romanian institutions (just over half of all valid responses), complemented by smaller shares from Spain, Bulgaria and a few other countries; within this group, the Charter principles are largely in place, with clear improvement needs around career support, working conditions and mobility.

6.6. Descriptive analysis of Part E: Measures for implementation

In Part E of the questionnaire, respondents were asked what measures needed to be taken within their own organization to enable the ECR to be implemented. To this, respondents were presented with a number of predefined measures, which are analysed in the following chapter.

6.6.1. Importance of measures for Implementation of ECR

Respondents were presented 12 predefined measures, which they were asked to rate on a scale of 1=not important to 5 = very important. The results are shown in Table 14.

Table 14: Perceived importance of measures to improve implementation of ECR (Ratings on a 1-5 scale⁴, N =72)

No.	Measure (short label)	% 1–2 (low)*	% 3 (medium)*	% 4–5 (high)*
1	Establish an institutional steering/management group	25.7	20.3	54.0
2	Conduct gap analysis and develop binding action plan with timeline	20.5	13.7	65.7
3	Embed Charter principles in strategy, leadership decisions, and organisational structure	24.7	19.2	56.2
4	Implement transparent, open, merit-based recruitment and selection (e.g. OTM-R)	19.2	11.0	69.8
5	Improve working and employment conditions for researchers	12.3	4.1	83.6
6	Establish mentoring, coaching, or career advisory programmes for all career stages	10.9	17.8	71.3
7	Develop and implement policies and training on ethics, integrity, open science, and diversity	18.0	12.5	69.4
8	Create a “Researcher Service” / Welcome Centre (e.g. onboarding, dual-career support)	25.0	23.6	51.4
9	Implement monitoring and evaluation system with indicators for Charter implementation	19.4	20.8	59.7
10	Conduct regular information and awareness-raising measures (workshops, newsletters, campaigns)	18.0	18.1	63.9

⁴ Note. *1–2 = low importance, 3 = medium importance, 4–5 = high importance.

11	Ensure sufficient personnel, financial, and infrastructural resources for Charter implementation	15.2	11.1	73.6
12	Cooperate with external partners/networks to promote mobility, career development, and international networking	9.8	26.4	63.8

Overall, respondents attribute relatively high importance to a broad range of measures for improving the implementation of the Charter in their institutions. The strongest signal is a clear focus on concrete working conditions and career support. Improving working and employment conditions for researchers stands out as the top priority: 83.6 % of valid respondents rate this measure as highly important (ratings 4–5), and 60.3 % even consider it “very important” (5). Ensuring sufficient personnel, financial and infrastructural resources for Charter implementation is also rated very highly, with 73.6 % assigning high importance. This highlights a strong perception that meaningful Charter implementation depends on stable, well-resourced employment conditions rather than only on formal policies.

Career-related support measures are also seen as central. Establishing mentoring, coaching or career advisory programmes for researchers at all stages receives high importance ratings from 71.3 % of respondents, pointing to a clear demand for more systematic support for individual career development. Measures aimed at improving recruitment and career structures are likewise strongly supported. Implementing transparent, open and merit-based recruitment and selection procedures (e.g. OTM-R) is rated as highly important by 69.8 %, while cooperation with external partners and networks to promote mobility, career development and international networking is rated highly by 63.8 %. Taken together, this suggests that respondents see the Charter not just as a formal framework, but as a lever to strengthen fair access to positions, mobility opportunities and long-term career perspectives.

Several measures relate more directly to governance, culture and internal management systems. Conducting a gap analysis of the current situation and developing a binding action plan is rated as highly important by 65.7 % of respondents, and embedding the Charter principles in institutional strategy, leadership decisions and organisational structures by 56.2 %. Implementing a monitoring and evaluation system with indicators for Charter implementation reaches 59.7 % high ratings. These results show that a majority of respondents value structured, data-informed implementation processes that are anchored in strategic documents and leadership practice, although the level of consensus is somewhat lower than for concrete improvements in working conditions and career support.

Awareness, training and support services also play an important role in the eyes of respondents. Developing and implementing policies and training on research ethics, research integrity, open science and diversity is rated as highly important by 69.4 %, and regular information and awareness-raising activities for researchers, leadership and administration (such as workshops, newsletters and internal campaigns) by 63.9 %. These findings reflect a view that Charter

implementation should be underpinned by continuous capacity-building and communication, not just by formal commitments.

In contrast, purely structural or organisational support measures are assessed somewhat more ambivalently. Establishing an institutional steering or management group for Charter implementation, with representatives from research, HR and administration, is rated as highly important by 54.0 %, but about a quarter (25.7 %) perceive it as of low importance, and one fifth (20.3 %) as medium. Likewise, creating a dedicated “Researcher Service” or Welcome Centre attracts 51.4 % high importance ratings, but has a relatively high share of low (25.0 %) and medium (23.6 %) ratings. This suggests that while many respondents appreciate coordination structures and dedicated services, others either already have comparable mechanisms in place, or see other measures (such as working conditions and career support) as more urgent.

6.6.2. Chapter Summary

In summary, the respondents who answered these questions see improving working and employment conditions for researchers (83.6 % high importance) and securing adequate personnel, financial and infrastructural resources (73.6 %) as the most critical measures for strengthening Charter implementation. They also place high importance on mentoring, coaching and career advisory services (71.3 %), on transparent and merit-based recruitment and selection (69.8 %), and on training and policies in ethics, integrity, open science and diversity (69.4 %). Measures that structure and steer implementation—such as gap analysis and action plans, monitoring systems, and embedding the Charter in institutional strategy—are likewise valued, though somewhat less strongly than direct improvements in working conditions and career support. Structural arrangements like steering groups and Welcome Centres receive more mixed responses, with around half of respondents rating them as highly important and a sizeable minority considering them less critical.

To conclude, effective Charter implementation should be driven above all by concrete improvements in employment conditions, career development support and fair recruitment, backed up by sufficient resources, targeted training and clear strategic implementation processes. Organisational structures and dedicated services are seen as useful but secondary tools.

6.7. Descriptive analysis Part F: Barriers and drivers of implementation

In Part F of the questionnaire respondents were presented with a set of predefined key drivers and barriers for the implementation of the ECR in their institution. For each statement, they were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”. The following chapters summarise how strongly respondents perceive each driver and barrier to be present in their institutional context. Please note that Part F of the questionnaire was displayed to all respondents, regardless of their previous answers and was therefore not affected by the skip logics applied in earlier sections.

6.7.1. Key drivers of implementation of ECR

Table 15 summarises respondents' agreement with 6 predefined drivers of Charter implementation in their institution, using a 5-point scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree").

Table 15: Perceived drivers of ECR implementation (Ratings on a 1-5 scale⁵, N=115)

No.	Drivers (short label)	% 1–2 (low)*	% 3 (medium)*	% 4–5 (high)*
1	Engagement of leadership as a driving force	9.5	13.0	77.4
2	Clear responsibilities and well-defined implementation strategy	7.8	13.9	78.3
3	Availability of sufficient financial resources	8.7	14.8	76.5
4	Availability of personnel capacities	8.7	13.0	78.2
5	Close collaboration across all levels (research, HR, administration)	6.9	17.4	75.7
6	Existence of monitoring, evaluation and feedback mechanisms	8.7	16.5	74.8

Across the predefined drivers, respondents show strong agreement that several enabling factors for Charter implementation are present in their institutions. Three drivers stand out with more than 78 % high agreement (ratings 4–5): clear responsibilities and a well-defined strategy (78.3 %), the availability of personnel capacities (78.2 %), and engagement of leadership as a driving force (77.4 %). These results suggest that, in the view of many respondents, Charter implementation is supported by clear governance structures and by management that is visibly committed to the process, backed by sufficient staff capacity.

Other drivers receive similarly high, though slightly lower, endorsement. Between about 75 % and 77 % of respondents agree strongly that there is close collaboration across research, HR and administration (75.7 % high agreement), that sufficient financial resources are available (76.5 %), and that monitoring, evaluation and feedback mechanisms exist (74.8 %). Only a small minority (around 7–9 %) explicitly disagrees with these positive statements, while a modest share chooses a neutral middle position (around 13–17 %). Taken together, the driver items portray a context in which implementation is perceived as supported by leadership, structural clarity, cross-functional collaboration and basic resource availability.

6.7.2. Barriers of implementation of ECR

Concerning barriers 7 predefined potential barriers of Charter implementation in institutions were displayed respondents for agreement using a 5-point scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The results are shown in Table 16.

Table 16: Perceived barriers of implementation of ECR (Ratings on a 1-5 scale⁶, N = 115)

⁵ Note. *1–2 = low agreement, 3 = medium agreement, 4–5 = high agreement.

⁶ Note. *1–2 = low agreement, 3 = medium agreement, 4–5 = high agreement.

No.	Barriers (short label)	% 1–2 (low)*	% 3 (medium)*	% 4–5 (high)*
1	Low added value relative to effort	20.8	35.7	43.5
2	High complexity of Charter principles	25.2	40.0	34.8
3	Limited financial or personnel resources for implementation	9.5	26.1	64.3
4	Lack of communication or awareness-raising among researchers/administration	16.5	27.8	55.7
5	Resistance or lack of motivation among staff	19.2	32.2	48.7
6	Resistance or lack of motivation among leadership	22.6	33.0	44.3
7	Lack of integration into institutional processes (e.g. recruitment, HRD)	20.0	23.5	56.5

The barrier items in Table 16 show a differentiated picture. The most strongly perceived barrier is limited financial or personnel resources: 64.3 % of respondents agree (ratings 4–5) that such limitations hinder Charter implementation, while only 9.5 % disagree and 26.1 % position themselves neutrally. This indicates that, although some respondents perceive resources as a driver, a larger group simultaneously experiences resource constraints as a serious obstacle, pointing to varying conditions across institutions or units. Lack of communication or awareness-raising among researchers and administration is also perceived as a salient barrier, with 55.7 % high agreement and only 16.5 % low agreement. Similarly, 56.5 % agree that a lack of integration of the Charter into core institutional processes such as recruitment and staff development constitutes a barrier.

Perceived attitudinal barriers are somewhat less pronounced but still relevant. Nearly half of the respondents (48.7 %) see resistance or lack of motivation among staff as an obstacle, and 44.3 % say the same about leadership. Around one third in each case choose the neutral middle category, suggesting that experiences with resistance vary considerably between institutions or organisational levels. The items “low added value relative to effort” and “high complexity of the Charter principles” receive comparatively lower levels of high agreement (43.5 % and 34.8 %, respectively) and relatively large neutral segments (35.7 % and 40.0 %). This indicates that many respondents do not perceive the Charter primarily as an overly complex or low-value framework; rather, opinions are mixed, with substantial portions of the sample neither clearly agreeing nor disagreeing.

6.7.3. Chapter Summary

In summary, the respondents perceive a strong set of drivers for Charter implementation in their institutions, particularly clear responsibilities and strategies, engaged leadership, sufficient personnel capacities, and close collaboration between research, HR and administration. At the same time, they identify limited financial and personnel resources, insufficient communication and awareness-raising, and a lack of integration into core institutional processes as the most significant barriers. Attitudinal resistance among staff and leadership is seen as a relevant but secondary

obstacle, while the Charter's complexity and its perceived value relative to effort are judged more ambivalently.

The overall conclusion is that, in this subgroup, Charter implementation is seen as structurally and strategically supported, but hampered by uneven resource endowment and by gaps in communication and process integration. Addressing these practical constraints—especially resource limitations, internal communication, and systematic embedding of the Charter into recruitment and staff development—appears crucial for turning the existing drivers into fully effective implementation dynamics.

6.8. Descriptive Analysis of Importance of Researcher Skills

In this final section, respondents were presented with a set of predefined researcher skills and were asked to rate how important they consider each skill for pursuing a successful career within or outside academia. All items were shown to all respondents and were not affected by the skip logics used in earlier parts of the survey. Ratings were given on a 5-point scale from 1 = “not important” to 5 = “very important”. The following chapter summarises the results.

6.8.1. Importance of Researcher Skills

The results of perceived importance of researcher skills are shown in Table 17.

Table 17: Perceived importance of researcher skills for career success (Ratings on a 1-5 scale⁷, N = 113)

No.	Skill (short label)	% 1–2 (low)*	% 3 (medium)*	% 4–5 (high)*
1	High-quality, ethical and rigorous research (incl. disciplinary/interdisciplinary work, critical methods, AI use)	0.9	7.1	91.9
2	Planning, organising and managing research activities and resources (projects, funding, evaluation, responsible practice)	2.7	9.7	87.6
3	Collaboration, networking and communication in diverse, inclusive research environments	0.9	10.6	88.5
4	Dissemination, translation into impact and engagement with non-academic audiences and innovation ecosystems	3.5	9.7	86.8
5	Self-management, autonomy, resilience, initiative, adaptability and entrepreneurial mindset	2.7	10.6	86.7
6	Critical, analytical, strategic and creative thinking for problem solving and decision-making in research and innovation	0.0	8.8	91.2

⁷Note: 1–2 = low importance, 3 = medium importance, 4–5 = high importance.

7	Managing research data, digital tools, software, IP, and open science / open-source practices	2.7	14.2	83.2
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Across all seven items, respondents assign very high importance to the proposed researcher skills. For the core research competence of conducting high-quality, ethical and rigorous research, including both disciplinary and interdisciplinary work and the responsible use of digital tools and artificial intelligence, 91.9 % rate this skill as highly important (ratings 4–5), and only 0.9 % rate it as of low importance. A similarly strong pattern emerges for critical, analytical, strategic and creative thinking in research and innovation contexts, where 91.2 % of respondents consider this highly important and none of the respondents select the low importance categories.

Skills related to planning, organising and managing research activities and resources are also perceived as crucial. A total of 87.6 % of respondents rate the ability to manage projects, funding, evaluation processes and responsible research practices as highly important, with only 2.7 % viewing it as of low importance. The collaborative and relational side of research is likewise valued very highly: 88.5 % of respondents assign high importance to collaborating effectively in diverse teams, building professional networks, communicating constructively and contributing to inclusive and supportive research environments.

The interface between research and society is also recognised as central to researchers' careers. For the ability to disseminate results, translate knowledge into practical, societal, economic or policy impact, and engage with non-academic audiences and innovation ecosystems, 86.8 % of respondents indicate high importance and only 3.5 % low importance. Self-management and personal effectiveness skills are similarly emphasised: 86.7 % rate skills such as managing one's own professional development, working autonomously and responsibly, coping with pressure, and showing initiative, adaptability and an entrepreneurial mindset as highly important.

Finally, digital and data-related competencies are also judged as very important, albeit with slightly more variation. Managing research data, digital tools, software, and intellectual property, including the use of open science practices and open-source technologies, is rated as highly important by 83.2 % of respondents, with 14.2 % placing it in the medium category and 2.7 % in the low category. This suggests that, while the vast majority view data and digital literacy as essential, a somewhat larger group than for the other skills still sees these competences as moderately rather than maximally important.

Across all items, the low shares of ratings 1–2 and the consistently high shares of ratings 4–5 indicate a broad consensus in the responding subgroup that a successful research career, inside or outside academia, requires a balanced portfolio of scientific, managerial, collaborative, impact-oriented, personal and digital skills. It should also be noted that roughly one third of the total sample (34.7 %) did not answer these items, so the results reflect the views of a somewhat self-selected and engaged subset of respondents.

6.8.2. Chapter Summary

In summary, respondents agree that all the proposed researcher skills are important or very important for career success within and beyond academia. The highest importance is attributed to high-quality, ethical and rigorous research and to critical, analytical and creative thinking (around 91–92 % high importance), followed closely by project and resource management, collaboration and networking, impact-oriented dissemination and engagement, and self-management and entrepreneurial skills (around 86–89 % high importance). Managing research data, digital tools, IP and open science practices is also seen as highly important by a large majority (83.2 %), albeit with slightly more medium ratings than the other skills.

The overall conclusion is that the responding subgroup endorses a broad, modern competence profile for researchers that goes well beyond narrow disciplinary expertise. From their perspective, successful research careers depend on the integration of robust scientific and ethical standards, strong analytical and creative thinking, effective management and collaboration, societal engagement, personal resilience and adaptability, and solid digital and data skills. Institutions aiming to support researchers' careers in line with the Charter should therefore consider developing training and support measures that address this full spectrum of competences.

6.9. Further Findings

In addition to the descriptive findings reported in the previous sections, the analysis sought to identify further interesting findings. Some of the variables examined were therefore analysed in relation to one another, and the results are presented below.

6.9.1. Relationship between institutional Commitment to the Charter and Knowledge of the Charter

First, we examined how knowledge about the ECR (1–5 scale) differs depending on whether respondents report that their institution has formally joined or committed to the Charter. A Kruskal–Wallis test shows a strong overall difference between the four groups ($H(3) = 61.57$, $p < .001$). Table 18 summarises the pattern using mean ranks (higher mean rank = higher average knowledge).

Table 18: Knowledge of the Charter by institutional commitment (Kruskal–Wallis)

Institutional commitment to the Charter	N	Mean rank (knowledge)	Relative knowledge level	Pairwise differences (Dunn, Holm-corrected)
Don't know	77	47.73	Very low	Significantly lower than yes, No and partially
No	22	86.45	Medium	Higher than “Don't know”; not clearly different from “Yes”
Partially	10	82.90	Medium	Higher than “Don't know”; not clearly different from “Yes”
Yes	64	107.70	High	Highest knowledge; significantly higher than “Don't know”

In practical terms, Table 18 shows a clear gradient: respondents who do not know whether their institution has committed to the Charter have by far the lowest knowledge of it. Those who state that their institution has not joined, or has only partially joined, report a medium level of knowledge. The highest knowledge is found among respondents from institutions that have formally joined the Charter. Differences between “No”, “Partially” and “Yes” are smaller and not always statistically robust after correction, but the pattern is clear: uncertainty about institutional commitment goes hand in hand with very low individual awareness, whereas formal commitment is associated with substantially higher knowledge of the Charter.

To Sum up, formal commitment of the institution is associated with higher average knowledge about the Charter, but even in committed organisations, awareness among staff is far from universal. Conversely, there are also respondents in non-committed or partially committed institutions who report some knowledge of the Charter. Overall, this suggests that institutional commitment alone is not sufficient to ensure broad awareness among researchers and staff, and that internal communication and dissemination remain critical.

6.9.2. Relationship between Roles and Knowledge of the Charter

Table 19 summarises how knowledge about the European Charter for Researchers differs by role, based on a Kruskal–Wallis test and Dunn’s post-hoc comparisons. The Kruskal–Wallis test shows a statistically significant overall difference between roles ($H(8) = 34.35$, $p < .001$). Mean ranks indicate the relative position of each group on the 1–5 knowledge scale: lower mean ranks correspond to lower self-reported knowledge of the Charter, higher mean ranks to higher knowledge.

Table 19: Knowledge about ECR by role (Kruskal–Wallis; roles sorted from lowest to highest mean rank)

Role group	N (total sample)	Mean rank (knowledge)	Relative knowledge about the Charter	Short interpretation
Doctoral researchers / PhD candidates	24	44.87	Very low	Know the Charter least in this comparison
Postdoctoral researchers	8	63.00	Low–medium	Slightly higher than PhDs, still below support/leadership
Research staff / scientists	61	68.33	Rather low	Know more than PhDs, but less than support and leadership
Other roles (e.g. lecturers, project managers)	21	81.15	Medium	Middle range; no clear deviation from the average
Executive leadership	5	88.50	Medium–high	Knowledge comparable to research leadership
Research scientific leadership	21	96.50	High	Among those with the highest knowledge
Research support / administrative staff	22	106.30	High	Among those who know the Charter best
Communications / PR / outreach	2	108.80	Very high (small group)	Very high knowledge, but only two respondents
HR / people & talent management	9	111.40	Very high	Highest average knowledge (small group)

Overall, Table 19 shows a clear gradient: doctoral candidates sit at the bottom with by far the lowest knowledge of the Charter, followed by postdocs and research staff, who also report relatively low awareness. In the middle range are “other” roles and executive leadership. At the top end, research/scientific leadership, research support/ administrative staff, and HR/people management show the highest knowledge levels, with communications/ PR (though only two cases) similarly high. This pattern suggests that those working closer to management, HR processes or research governance are much more familiar with the Charter, while early-career researchers - especially doctoral candidates—and, to a lesser extent, research staff are considerably less informed.

6.9.3. Relationship between Roles and perceived Importance of Researcher Skills

We examined whether different professional roles differ in how important they consider various researcher skills for career success. For each skill, a Kruskal-Wallis test was used to compare the 1–5 importance ratings across roles. Table 20 summarises the results. The test statistic (H) and p-value indicate whether there are statistically significant differences between roles.

Table 20: Role differences in perceived importance of researcher skills (Kruskal–Wallis tests)

Skill (shortened)	Kruskal–Wallis H (df = 7)	p value	Role differences?	Short interpretation
High-quality, ethical and rigorous research	10.27	.174	No clear differences	All roles rate this skill as very important; no meaningful variation between groups.
Planning, organising and managing research activities and resources	11.05	.136	No clear differences	Importance is high and similar across roles.
Collaboration, networking and constructive communication in diverse teams	13.45	.062	No clear differences	Slight variation, but not strong or consistent enough to draw firm conclusions.
Dissemination, translation into impact, and engagement with non-academic audiences and innovation ecosystems	19.29	.007	Some differences (small)	Statistically significant overall; HR tends to rate this particularly high, executive leadership somewhat lower, but pairwise differences are small and often not robust after correction.
Self-management, autonomy, resilience, initiative, adaptability, entrepreneurial mindset	7.22	.407	No clear differences	All roles see this as important; no systematic role pattern.
Critical, analytical, strategic and creative thinking for problem solving and decision-making	13.96	.052	No clear differences	Slight tendency for some roles (e.g. leadership, HR) to rate it higher, but no clear, robust pattern.
Managing research data, digital tools, software, IP and open science/open-source practices	10.20	.178	No clear differences	Importance ratings are broadly similar across roles.

Overall, Table 20 shows that all roles regard the proposed researcher skills as important or very important, and there are no strong or systematic differences between role groups. Only for the skill related to dissemination, impact and engagement (third row from the bottom) is a statistically significant overall difference between roles. Here, HR and research leadership tend to rate this skill somewhat higher, while executive leadership tends to rate it somewhat lower. However, these

differences are modest, and most pairwise comparisons are no longer statistically clear once we correct for multiple testing. In practical terms, this means that across the different staff groups in the sample there is broad agreement on the importance of a skill set for researchers.

7. *Summary and Discussion of the results*

The conducted questionnaire provides a differentiated picture of how the ECR is currently perceived and implemented in the participating institutions. The analytical sample of 173 respondents from 17 EU countries is dominated by Romanian institutions and by universities and public research organisations. Most respondents work in large, research-intensive organisations and in research, doctoral or research support roles, complemented by leadership and HR positions. Around 37 % report that their institution has formally committed to the Charter, while almost the same proportion (44.5 %) do not know whether this is the case. This basic uncertainty is reflected in the overall low awareness of the Charter: among the 154 valid responses, just over half state that they do not know the Charter at all or only “to a small extent”, and only about one third report knowledge “to a large extent” or “completely”.

Against this background, it is not surprising that the reported institutional use of the Charter is limited. About one third of all respondents indicate that the Charter is used as a reference document in strategy or policy, and about one fifth report its use in HR, staff development or recruitment. Only 14.5 % state that it is considered in contracts or working conditions. At the same time, nearly 10 % explicitly say that the Charter is not used at all, and almost 40 % select “don’t know” when asked about institutional use. When asked about reasons for non-use, the most frequently cited explanation is a lack of knowledge or information (34.1 %), followed by institutions that have not yet implemented the Charter but plan to do so (16.2 %). Other barriers such as missing resources, legal obstacles or lack of institutional priority are mentioned much less often. Taken together, these findings point to a fundamental information and communication gap: more than formal opposition or structural obstacles, simple unawareness appears to be the primary impediment to wider use.

At the same time, among the smaller and more informed subgroup that passed the skip logic and answered the strategic questions ($N = 50$), the Charter is clearly seen as a benefit. Most respondents in this group agree that the Charter strengthens their profile as an attractive employer, increases European and international visibility, supports a strategic focus on excellence and innovation, facilitates the recruitment and retention of international researchers and promotes internal transparency and good governance. The main perceived disadvantage is the additional effort required in terms of time, staff and money; some also see a lack of external incentives or binding requirements as problematic. However, only a minority view the Charter as mainly bureaucratic or fundamentally incompatible with institutional strategies. This suggests that among those who are aware of and engaged with the Charter, it is largely regarded as a useful strategic framework rather than an administrative burden.

The implementation of the 20 Charter principles (Part D), assessed by 46 respondents in a sample heavily dominated by Romania, is also rated comparatively positively. A clear majority perceive high levels of implementation for all principles, with particularly strong scores for ethics and research integrity, dissemination and exploitation of results, contractual and legal obligations, and supervision and mentoring. However, some principles lag behind: the free circulation of researchers, the sustainability of research, working conditions and salaries, and especially career development and advice are rated less favourably, indicating that mobility, long-term planning, employment

conditions and career support remain areas of concern. Open-text responses confirm this picture: they describe long-standing, structured implementation processes in some institutions (often linked to the HR Excellence in Research Award), but also highlight internal rules, limited resources, national laws and, in one critical comment, an imbalance between rights and obligations for researchers as reasons why not all principles are fully realised.

The analyses of drivers and barriers (Part F) show that respondents perceive several important enabling factors for implementation in their institutions: engaged leadership, clear responsibilities and strategies, sufficient personnel capacities, collaboration across research, HR and administration, and existing monitoring and feedback mechanisms all receive high agreement. At the same time, limited financial and personnel resources, lack of communication or awareness-raising, and a lack of integration of the Charter into core processes (such as recruitment and staff development) emerge as the most significant barriers. Resistance or low motivation among staff and leadership is seen as a secondary, but not negligible, obstacle, whereas the Charter's complexity and its perceived added value are judged more ambivalently. Overall, implementation is thus seen as structurally supported, but hindered by uneven resources and by practical gaps in communication and process integration.

The results on researcher skills provide a complementary perspective. Across all roles, respondents attribute very high importance to a broad, modern skill set for researchers, including high-quality, ethical and rigorous research, critical and creative thinking, project and resource management, collaboration and networking, impact-oriented dissemination and engagement, self-management and entrepreneurial behaviour, and digital/data and open science competencies. There are no strong or systematic role differences in the importance assigned to these skills, suggesting a shared understanding across staff groups of what is needed for successful research careers within and beyond academia.

Particularly striking, however, are the analyses linking institutional commitment and roles to knowledge of the Charter. Knowledge differs markedly by institutional commitment: respondents who do not know whether their institution has joined have by far the lowest knowledge of the Charter, while those reporting formal commitment show the highest average knowledge. Respondents from institutions that have not joined or have only partially joined fall in between. Nevertheless, even within committed institutions, awareness is far from universal. Conversely, there are individuals in non-committed or partially committed organisations who report some knowledge. This pattern makes clear that formal commitment alone does not guarantee broad awareness among staff. Adding the role perspective sharpens this conclusion: knowledge of the Charter is lowest among doctoral candidates and also comparatively low among research staff, while research support, research leadership, HR and (to a lesser extent) executive leadership exhibit much higher knowledge levels. In other words, awareness of the Charter is concentrated in administrative and leadership layers, whereas early-career researchers and the wider research community remain only partially reached.

Taken together, these findings point to a central tension: on the one hand, where institutions and individuals engage with the Charter, they see clear strategic value and report substantial progress in

implementing many principles; on the other hand, the Charter is still poorly known among large parts of staff, even in institutions that have formally committed to it. The combination of limited awareness, patchy institutional use and a concentration of knowledge among HR and leadership suggests that the Charter is often treated as a compliance or management instrument rather than as a widely shared framework shaping everyday research practice. Addressing this gap between formal endorsement and lived familiarity is a key challenge for future implementation efforts.

At project level, the findings of the organisational gap analysis represent a critical input for several subsequent INSIGHT activities as foreseen in D1.1. WP3 will build on the evidence reported here to co-create Charter-aligned organisational action plans with participating institutions (D3.2). WP4 will use the identified barriers, drivers and skill needs to tailor training pathways and career support services for early-stage researchers, while WP5 will draw on the results regarding organisational conditions and required measures when designing and adapting the pilot talent ecosystem. In addition, WP6 will integrate the main findings into communication, dissemination, exploitation and policy-feedback activities, thereby ensuring that the evidence produced in D3.1 informs a wider set of stakeholders and policy debates in the European Research Area.

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were given the option to leave their email address in order to receive a summary of the survey results; 63 participants chose to do so. This option reflects a tangible interest in the organisational gap analysis and provides a direct channel for WP6 to feedback results to engaged stakeholders, in line with the communication and dissemination principles set out in the Project Management Plan (D1.1).

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the evaluation confirms the basic potential of the ECR as a strategic and operational framework for improving research careers and institutional practice, but also highlights its current limitations in terms of reach and visibility. The Charter is valued by informed stakeholders and is perceived as contributing to employer attractiveness, international visibility, excellence, recruitment and good governance; many of its principles, especially those related to ethics, dissemination, legal clarity and supervision, are reported as well implemented, at least in the strongly Romanian-centred subsample. At the same time, overall awareness of the Charter is low, institutional use is uneven, and key areas such as working conditions, mobility, sustainability and career development remain underdeveloped. The fact that a large proportion of respondents are unsure whether their institution has committed to the Charter, and that knowledge is highest in HR and leadership but lowest among doctoral candidates and research staff, underlines that formal commitment has not yet translated into broad internal recognition.

For the Charter to realize its full potential, institutions will therefore need to go beyond formal adoption and targeted HR processes and invest in systematic internal communication, awareness-raising and participation of the wider research community. Measures such as improving working and employment conditions, strengthening career development and mentoring, integrating the Charter into recruitment and staff development, and ensuring sufficient resources are seen by respondents themselves as key drivers. Future work within the project can build on these insights to develop concrete action plans and support tools that help institutions close the gap between policy and practice and make the Charter a living reference point for all researchers, not just for those in administrative and leadership roles.

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Annex**10. T.3.1 Questionnaire for Gap Analysis****Opening**

Dear Participant,

We are conducting a survey as part of a research project on the implementation of the “European Charter for Researchers” in institutions. The Charter is a European policy document with principles and requirements established by the European Commission that defines the roles, responsibilities, and entitlements of researchers, as well as of employers and funders of researchers. It aims to ensure ethical conduct, professional integrity, high-quality research practices, and attractive, open, and sustainable working conditions for researchers across Europe.

Your institution has been selected because we aim to gain a comprehensive understanding of how this Charter is known, applied, what opportunities and challenges are perceived, and which measures are necessary. The survey serves exclusively the purpose stated in this invitation. Participation in this survey is entirely voluntary, and you can interrupt participation at any time.

*The estimated time needed to complete this survey is approximately **15 - 20 minutes**.*

Thank you very much for your support!

Team of the INSIGHT project

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Privacy notice and Consent

The purpose of this survey is to conduct a gap analysis of institutions regarding their use of the European Charter for Researchers.

Participation in this Questionnaire is voluntary. Your responses will be treated confidentially and analysed only in aggregated and anonymized form. Under no circumstances will your personal data be passed on to third parties not entrusted with the evaluation.

Responsible for data processing and data evaluation is the Researcher Team of the Fraunhofer Institute for Applied Information Technology (Fraunhofer FIT) located in Schloss Birlinghoven, 53754 Sankt Augustin (Germany). The data will be processed by authorized members of the INSIGHT project who are bound by confidentiality obligations.

The processing of your data is based on your informed consent (Art. 6(1)(a) GDPR) and is carried out exclusively for scientific research purposes within the INSIGHT project.

Collected data will not be disclosed to third parties outside the project consortium. All technical and organizational measures pursuant to Articles 25 and 32 GDPR are applied to protect your data.

You have the right to access, rectify, erase, restrict processing of your data, withdraw your consent at any time without disadvantage, and lodge a complaint with a supervisory authority. Personal data will be deleted after completion of the INSIGHT project, unless statutory retention obligations apply.

The knowledge gained through this research will be used to produce both public and confidential reports. Public reports will be made available through the <https://insighthorizon.eu/> and disseminated through its communication channels.

Before starting the survey, please confirm:

☐ *I have read the privacy policy and would like to participate in the survey.*

☐ *I do not want to participate.*

Part A: Information about the Institution

1. Name of the Institution: _____
2. Type of Institution:
 - ☐ University / Higher Education Institution
 - ☐ Research Institution (public or private)
 - ☐ Funding Organization
 - ☐ Policy / Government Institution
 - ☐ Company with research department
 - ☐ Other: _____
3. Size of the Institution (e.g., number of research staff):
 - ☐ < 50
 - ☐ 50–199
 - ☐ 200–499
 - ☐ 500–999
 - ☐ ≥ 1000
4. Location (Country, and if applicable, Region): _____
5. Has your institution formally joined or committed to the European Charter for Researchers?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ Partially
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Don't know

Part B: Awareness and Use of the Charter

6. How would you rate your institution's level of knowledge about the European Charter for Researchers on a scale from

1-Not at all

2-To a small extent

3-Partly

4-To a large extent

5-Completely

7. To what extent is the Charter used or considered in your institution? (Multiple answers possible)

- ☐ As a reference document in strategy/policy
- ☐ In HR / staff development measures
- ☐ In the recruitment of researchers
- ☐ In contracts or working conditions
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Don't know

8. If your institution does not use the Charter: What are the reasons? (Multiple answers possible)

- ☐ No knowledge/information
- ☐ No resources for implementation
- ☐ No interest / not an institutional priority
- ☐ Other regulations take precedence
- ☐ Changes in law/regulations are missing
- ☐ Not yet implemented, but planned
- ☐ Other: _____

Part C: Advantages and Disadvantages from a Political-Strategic Perspective

9. What **advantages** does your institution see in implementing the Charter at a strategic level? Please rate the following statements for your institution on a scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The Charter strengthens the institutional profile as an attractive employer for researchers.					
The Charter contributes to better visibility of the research institution at the European/international level.					
The Charter supports a strategic focus on excellence and innovation.					
The Charter facilitates the recruitment and retention of international researchers.					
The Charter promotes internal transparency and good governance of research and personnel.					

10. What **disadvantages** or challenges does your institution see at the strategic level? Please rate analogously on the scale 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Implementing the Charter requires additional resources (time, staff, money).					
The Charter is perceived as a bureaucratic requirement that adds little value.					
The institution's strategic goals and the requirements of the Charter are not fully compatible.					
There are conflicting objectives between short-term research operations and long-term Charter implementation.					
External incentives or binding requirements are lacking, making implementation difficult to measure.					

Part D: Implementation of Individual Principles of the Charter

11. The Charter comprises four overarching pillars with a total of 20 principles. Please rate for each of the following principles to what **extent** your institution has **already implemented** them on a scale from 1 = Not at all to 5 = Fully.

	Principle of the Charter	If yes, If no, 1 2 3 4 5 how? why not?
1	Ethics and Research Integrity: Researchers should always work honestly, responsibly, and ethically.	
2	Freedom of Scientific Research: Researchers should be free to explore new questions without restrictions.	

	Principle of the Charter	If yes, If no, 1 2 3 4 5 how? why not?
3	Open Science: Research results should be openly shared so that others can build upon them.	
4	Gender Equality: Men and women should have equal opportunities and treatment in research.	
5	Embracing Diversity: Different backgrounds, perspectives, and skills in research are valued and used.	
6	The Researcher: Researchers are professionals whose work is valuable, and they should take responsibility for their career and results.	
7	Free Circulation of Researchers: Researchers should be able to move easily between institutions, countries, and sectors.	
8	Sustainability of Research: Research should be planned responsibly and sustainably, without wasting resources.	
9	Researchers' Assessment: Researchers should be evaluated fairly, transparently, and meaningfully.	
10	Recruitment: New researchers should be hired based on clear and fair criteria.	
11	Selection: Selection procedures should be transparent and understandable.	
12	Career Progression: Researchers should have opportunities to develop their careers and advance.	
13	Working Conditions, Funding and Salaries: Researchers should have fair working conditions, adequate funding, and appropriate pay.	
14	Stability of Employment: Contracts and employment should be reliable and predictable.	
15	Contractual and Legal Obligations: Researchers' rights and responsibilities should be clear and well-defined.	
16	Dissemination and Exploitation of Results: Research results should be published, used, and accessible to society.	

	Principle of the Charter If yes, If no, 1 2 3 4 5 how? why not?
17	Valuing Diverse Research Careers: Different research career paths should be recognized and supported.
18	Career Development and Advice: Researchers should receive guidance and support for career development.
19	Continuous Professional Development: Researchers should regularly gain new skills and knowledge.
20	Supervision and Mentoring: Researchers should receive good supervision and guidance from experienced colleagues.

Part E: Measures for Implementation

12. In your opinion, which measures should be taken to improve the implementation of the Charter in your institution (or more generally)? Please select all applicable measures (multiple answers) and rate their importance (1 = not important, 5 = very important).

No. Measure	Importance (1-5)
1 Establish an institutional steering or management group for Charter implementation (with representatives from research, HR, administration)	—
2 Conduct a gap analysis of the current situation regarding Charter principles and develop a binding action plan with a timeline	—
3 Embed the Charter principles in the institutional strategy, leadership decisions, and organizational structure	—
4 Implement transparent, open, and merit-based recruitment and selection procedures (e.g., OTM-R – “Open, Transparent, Merit-based Recruitment”)	—
5 Improve working and employment conditions for researchers (e.g., longer contracts, better support for international researchers, flexible work models)	—
6 Establish a mentoring, coaching, or career advisory program for researchers at all career stages	—
7 Develop and implement policies and training on research ethics, research integrity, open science, and diversity	—
8 Create a “Researcher Service” or Welcome Centre (e.g., onboarding for international researchers, dual-career support)	—
9 Implement a monitoring and evaluation system with indicators for Charter implementation (e.g., proportion of international researchers, contract stability, participation in training)	—
10 Conduct regular information and awareness-raising measures for researchers, leadership, and administration (e.g., workshops, newsletters, internal campaigns)	—
11 Ensure sufficient personnel, financial, and infrastructural resources for Charter implementation	—
12 Cooperate with external partners or networks to promote researcher mobility, career development, and international networking	—

Part F: Barriers and Drivers of Implementation (Organizational Level)

Which organizational conditions in your institution promote or hinder successful implementation of the Charter (organizational level)?

13. To what extent do you agree with the following **key drivers** of Charter implementation in your institution? (Scale 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Engagement of leadership (e.g., management, dean) as a driving force						
Clear responsibilities and a well-defined strategy for implementation						
Availability of sufficient financial resources						
Availability of personnel capacities						
Close collaboration across all levels (research, HR, administration)						
Existence of monitoring, evaluation, and feedback mechanisms						
Other driver: _____						

14. To what extent do you agree with the following **barriers**? (Scale 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*.)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Low added value relative to effort						
High complexity of the Charter principles						
Limited financial or personnel resources for implementation						
Lack of communication or awareness-raising among researchers and administration						
Resistance or lack of motivation among staff						
Resistance or lack of motivation among leadership						
Lack of integration into institutional processes (e.g., recruitment, staff development)						

Researcher Skills

15. In your opinion, how important are the following skills for doctoral students and postdocs in order for them to pursue a successful career within or outside academia? Please select all applicable measures (multiple answers) and rate their importance (1 = not important, 5 = very important).

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	NA
The ability to understand fundamental business, innovation, and intellectual property aspects related to research results.						
The ability to actively build professional networks and engage with actors outside academia.						
The ability to recognize and navigate different career paths in academia, industry, and the public sector.						
The ability to manage projects, work within constraints (e.g., time, budget, regulations), and deliver results.						
The ability to understand real user, societal, or organizational needs and translate them into research or innovation activities.						
The ability to collaborate effectively with experts from other disciplines and sectors, pursuing a common approach to problem solving.						
The ability to communicate research results clearly and comprehensibly to non-scientific target groups (e.g., industry, the public sector, or decision-makers).						
The ability to translate research results into practical applications, services, or products.						

Is there any general feedback you would like to give us regarding the European Charter for Researchers?

Thank you very much for your participation!