

SECURE Research Career Framework

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Table of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Name
ABIS	Academy of Business in Society
ADoc	ADoc Talent Management
ALLEA	European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities
BZN	Bay Zoltan
CoARA	Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment
EC	European Commission
EFRC	European Framework for Research Careers
ERA	European Research Area
ERAC	European Research Area and Innovation Committee
ESCO	European Skills, Competences, and Occupations
Eurodoc	European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers
H-Index	Hirsch Index
HR	Human Resources
ICoRSA	International Consortium of Research Staff Associations
JIF	Journal Impact Factor
MCAA	Marie Curie Alumni Association
PLOCAN	Oceanic Platform of the Canary Islands
RCF	Research Career Framework
RESAVER	Retirement Savings Vehicle for European Research Institutions
ResearchComp	European Competence Framework for Researchers
RFO	Research-funding Organisation
RM Comp	European Competence Framework for Research Managers
RPO	Research-performing Organisation
SECURE	Sustainable Careers for Researcher Empowerment
TGB	Technopolis Group Belgium
TGS	Technopolis Group Sweden
TTLM	Tenure Track-like Model
UCY	University of Cyprus

UEFISCDI	Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, and Innovation Funding
UNIRI	University of Rijeka
UNL	NOVA University Lisbon
VDI	VDI/VDE Innovation + Technik
WIFO	Austrian Institute of Economic Research
YERUN	Young European Research Universities Network

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Executive Summary

The **SECURE Research Career Framework (RCF)** is a **practical toolbox** for research-performing organisations (RPOs) and research-funding organisations (RFOs) to **reform research careers** and **help to reduce the precarity of researchers** at their organisations. The RCF **translates high-level recommendations of Council Recommendation C/2023/1640** on a European Framework to Attract and Retain Research, Innovation, and Entrepreneurial Talents in Europe (2023) into concrete actions for RPOs and RFOs. The RCF **targets all researchers** from early-career to senior researchers and **covers the full life-cycle of research careers** including recruitment and selection, employment and orientation, professional development and mobility, and progression or eventual transition to a new research position or career. The RCF consists of a **comprehensive suite of 80 actions across 8 thematic action areas** focusing on strategy, stability, conditions, skills, mobility, assessment, pathways, and interoperability. The **selection, prioritisation, and implementation of actions** in the RCF is **left to the RPOs and RFOs** to tailor to their own strategic interests and needs.

1. Introduction

This report is deliverable D2.3 of the SECURE project [1] and presents the **final version of the SECURE Research Career Framework (RCF)**. The report builds on the first draft of the RCF [2] which provided an initial response from the SECURE consortium to the new European Framework for Research Careers (EFRC) proposed in Council Recommendation C/2023/1640 on a European Framework to Attract and Retain Research, Innovation, and Entrepreneurial Talents in Europe [3]. The report also builds on the results of a consultation consisting of meetings with researchers and representatives of research organisations and industry as well as a public survey on the first draft of the RCF [4]. The report lastly builds on the results of trialing actions in the first draft of the RCF at research-performing organisations (RPOs) and research-funding organisations (RFOs) [5].

The SECURE project aims to **support the reform and reduce the precarity of research careers** by developing coordination and support measures to establish, test, and implement a common RCF. The RCF consists of a practical toolbox of actions for RPOs and RFOs to implement the high-level recommendations of the Council Recommendation whereby the selection, prioritisation, and implementation of the actions is left to the RPOs and RFOs to tailor to their own strategic interests and needs. The RCF targets all researchers from early-career to senior researchers and covers the full life-cycle of research careers including recruitment and selection, employment and orientation, professional development and mobility, and progression or eventual transition to a new position.

The RCF offers a **comprehensive suite of 80 actions across 8 thematic action areas** for RPOs and RFOs to reform research careers and reduce the precarity of their researchers (see Annex 1). The action areas are aligned with the EFRC and have been identified as priorities for RPOs and RFOs. The actions translate high-level recommendations of the Council Recommendation into concrete actions for RPOs and RFOs. The RCF is also aligned with European initiatives including the R1-R4 researcher profiles [6], European Charter for Researchers [7], HR Excellence in Research Award [8], EURAXESS [9], ERA Talent Platform [10], European Competence Framework for Researchers (ResearchComp) [11] and Research Managers (RM Comp) [12], European Skills, Competences, Qualifications, and Occupations (ESCO) classification [13], and RESAVER Pension Fund [14].

This report first offers an introduction to the **RCF** (Section 2) before presenting each of the **action areas** and related **actions** of the RCF on **Strategy** (Section 3), **Stability** (Section 4), **Conditions** (Section 5), **Skills** (Section 6), **Mobility** (Section 7), **Assessment** (Section 8), **Pathways** (Section 9), and **Interoperability** (Section 10). The report closes with a **conclusion** on the RCF (Section 11).

2. SECURE Research Career Framework

The SECURE RCF is based on the EFRC proposed in the **Council Recommendation** which aims to reform research careers and contribute to a more attractive, open, and sustainable research labour market by attracting and retaining research, innovation, and entrepreneurial talents in Europe. The recommendation is based on Council Conclusions on Deepening the European Research Area [15] and was first developed by the European Commission as a technical note to the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) [16] and then as a Commission Proposal for a Council Recommendation [17]. The recommendation first lists 42 key initiatives and observations which frame the current policy context on research careers in Europe. The recommendation then sets out the EFRC which comprises 44 recommendations grouped into 8 thematic categories or ‘pillars’ for research careers as in Figure 1. The recommendation lastly includes 2 annexes with examples of research occupations (Annex 1) and the revised Charter for Researchers (Annex 2).

Figure 1 - European Framework for Research Careers

<p>Pillar 1</p> <p>Researchers, Research Managers, and Research Technicians in the European Research Area</p> <p>#1-6</p>	<p>Pillar 2</p> <p>Recognition, Interoperability, and Comparability of Researchers’ Careers</p> <p>#7-10</p>	<p>Pillar 3</p> <p>Recruitment and Working Conditions</p> <p>#11-15</p>	<p>Pillar 4</p> <p>Researchers Skilled for Intersectoral and Interdisciplinary Careers and for Entrepreneurship and Innovation</p> <p>#16-25</p>
<p>Pillar 5</p> <p>Career Assessment, Development, and Progression</p> <p>#26-30</p>	<p>Pillar 6</p> <p>Balanced Circulation of Talents and Making the Union an Attractive Destination</p> <p>#31-32</p>	<p>Pillar 7</p> <p>Support Actions for Research Careers</p> <p>#33-39</p>	<p>Pillar 8</p> <p>Monitoring of Research Careers</p> <p>#40-44</p>

The **first draft of the RCF** took an initial step towards implementing the Council Recommendation which is primarily aimed at member states of the European Union and European Commission. The first draft of the RCF is structured around the 8 pillars and 44 recommendations of the EFRC and addressed 6 key questions aimed at RPOs and RFOs for each of the recommendations of the EFRC:

- How could this recommendation be relevant and useful for RPOs and RFOs?
- Which principles of the Charter could be relevant for this recommendation?
- How could ResearchComp and ESCO be relevant for this recommendation?

- How could this recommendation reduce the precarity of research careers?
- Which actions could implement this recommendation at RPOs and RFOs?
- Which challenges could hinder this recommendation at RPOs and RFOs?

The first draft of the RCF provided an initial set of 103 actions for RPOs and RFOs to implement the EFRC and improve research careers and reduce the precarity of researchers at their organisations.

A **public consultation with the research community** was subsequently held and a series of **trials with RPOs and RFOs** was conducted to gather feedback on and test the implementation of the actions in the first draft of the RCF. The consultation involved 3 online meetings with researchers, representatives from research organisations, and representatives from industry. A total of 99 participants joined the meetings which were structured around presentations on and discussions about the actions. The consultation also involved a public survey run through the EU Survey Tool [18]. A total of 239 researchers responded to the survey and identified their priorities and gave feedback on the actions. The trials aimed to test the first draft of the RCF and actions in practice at organisations. 4 RPOs (namely NOVA University Lisbon, PLOCAN, University of Cyprus, and University of Rijeka), 1 RFO (namely UEFISCDI), and 1 recruitment agency (namely Adoc Talent Management) selected and tested specific actions and gave feedback on their implementation.

The first draft of the RCF was revised based on the feedback from the consultation and trials as well as according to 8 **guiding principles** to steer the development of the final version of the RCF:

1. Translate the Council Recommendation into concrete actions for RPOs and RFOs
2. Develop a framework of actions to improve research careers and reduce precarity
3. Cover all of the career stages of researchers from early-career to senior researchers
4. Cover the full career life-cycle from recruitment/selection to progression/transition
5. Improve the long-term stability, working conditions, and assessment of researchers
6. Support the professional development, mobility, and career pathways of researchers
7. Align with key European initiatives aiming to support and improve research careers
8. Leave the selection, prioritisation, and implementation of actions to RPOs and RFOs.

The revision of the first draft of the RCF included identifying key thematic action areas, revising or removing existing actions, creating new actions, and grouping the actions under the actions areas.

The **final version of the RCF** consists of 8 thematic action areas which are to be seen as high-level strategic priorities for RPOs and RFOs to structure their actions on research careers as in Figure 2.

Figure 2 - SECURE Research Career Framework

Action Area 1 Strategy	Action Area 2 Stability	Action Area 3 Conditions	Action Area 4 Skills
Action Area 5 Mobility	Action Area 6 Assessment	Action Area 7 Pathways	Action Area 8 Interoperability

Each of the 8 thematic **action areas** consists of 10 concrete actions for RPOs and RFOs to select from and implement at their organisations according to their own strategic interests and needs:

1. **Strategy:** High-level actions to reform and improve research careers at organisations and align the national reform of research careers
2. **Stability:** Actions to improve the stability of research careers via permanent/ open-ended and fixed-term contracts and tenure track-like models
3. **Conditions:** Actions to improve the working conditions of researchers and ensure a fair, safe, equitable, and rewarding working environment
4. **Skills:** Actions to improve the professional development of researchers to improve their skills/competences and career development
5. **Mobility:** Actions to improve interdisciplinary, intersectoral, and international mobility of researchers for better talent circulation and collaboration
6. **Assessment:** Actions to improve the assessment of researchers to recognise a wider diversity of contributions in their grant and career evaluations
7. **Pathways:** Actions to improve the diversity of research careers including more career paths, non-linear and hybrid careers, and entrepreneurship
8. **Interoperability:** Actions to improve the interoperability and comparability of research careers across career steps, organisations, sectors, and countries.¹

¹ The SECURE RCF has been developed in close consultation with researchers by engaging researcher organisations (such as Eurodoc, ICoRSA, and MCAA) and their declarations (such as [19]) and researchers via a public consultation.

3. Action Area 1 - Strategy

Action Area 1 consists of 10 actions for RPOs and RFOs to take strategic leadership in the reform of research careers in collaboration with their researchers and align national regulations, policies, and funding on research careers in their countries as well as align with key European initiatives:

1. [Collect and share best practices on reform of research careers at organisations](#)

Best practices highlight the experiences and lessons learned from various organisations and can help organisations to develop more efficient and effective regulations and policies. Organisations aiming to reform research careers could first orient themselves by collecting and openly sharing best practices on research careers from their and other organisations.

2. [Review and improve inclusion of researchers in governance and decision-making bodies](#)

Researchers are often not sufficiently engaged and involved in the decision-making bodies at their organisations whereby their voices and views may not play a role in policy making. Early-career and senior researchers could be more proactively engaged and empowered to play an active role in governing their organisations and co-creating policies for researchers.

3. [Include researchers and research support staff in activities to reform research careers](#)

Any reform of research careers aims to improve the lives of researchers and is supported by research support staff. All discussions and actions to reform research careers could directly involve researchers and research support staff (including human resources officers and research managers) to gather their input and align with their specific interests and needs.

4. [Engage with key stakeholders to align national regulations and policies on research careers](#)

National regulations and policies can form a barrier to reform research careers, can change on a short-term basis, and may need to be aligned with other regulations and policies as well as across other organisations and stakeholders. Organisations could advocate for and support alignment on a national level to ensure clear and stable regulations and policies.

5. [Engage with key stakeholders to improve long-term stability of funding for research careers](#)

Stable and predictable multi-annual funding is needed to ensure the long-term stability and attractiveness of research careers. This is relevant for both core/baseline funding and competitive/project-based funding for research. Organisations could advocate for and support reforms for more stable and predictable national funding for research careers.

6. [Engage with key stakeholders to fund and implement pilots to reform research careers](#)
Research careers are part of an interlinked web of regulations, policies, funding, activities, and stakeholders. Reforming research careers is a complex process whereby any changes require careful planning and resources and can have unforeseen results. Organisations could advocate for and implement funded pilots to test new reforms of research careers.
7. [Engage with key stakeholders on national implementation of Council Recommendation](#)
The Council Recommendation is aimed mainly at countries which need to implement the recommendation at national level and coordinate implementation across key stakeholders in their countries. Organisations could advocate for the adoption of the recommendation and support alignment of the implementation of the recommendation in their countries.
8. [Raise awareness of Charter for Researchers and HR Excellence in Research Award](#)
Researchers are often not aware of best practices on research careers, best practices on the rights and obligations of researchers and their employers or funders, or organisations recognised for best practices. Organisations could promote the Charter for Researchers and HR Excellence in Research Award and make their researchers aware of these initiatives.
9. [Endorse Charter for Researchers and apply for/renew HR Excellence in Research Award](#)
The Charter for Researchers offers principles for attractive research careers and the rights and obligations of researchers and their employers or funders. Organisations could endorse the Charter for Researchers and apply for or renew the HR Excellence in Research Award as well as engage in communities of practice on the charter at national and European level.
10. [Endorse RESAVER Pension Fund and join consortium of RESAVER member organisations](#)
RESAVER is a pan-European occupational pension fund which allows mobile researchers to remain affiliated with the same pension solution across countries and employers and allows organisations to define their own contributions and investments. Organisations could support mobile researchers by endorsing RESAVER and joining the RESAVER consortium.

Strategic and collective leadership is needed from RPOs and RFOs to support and align the national implementation of the Council Recommendation and reform research careers in a given country.

4. Action Area 2 - Stability

Action Area 2 consists of 10 actions for RPOs and RFOs to improve the stability of research careers at their organisations by improving the employment contracts for researchers and implementing new tenure track-like models (TTLMs) which in principle lead to permanent/open-ended positions:

11. [Collect and share best practices on employment contracts for researchers and TTLMs](#)

There are many different types of employment contracts and TTLMs for researchers across organisations and countries. Organisations aiming to improve the stability of research careers could first orient themselves by collecting and openly sharing best practices on employment contracts and TTLMs for researchers from their and other organisations.

12. [Review and improve percentage of permanent/open-ended contracts for researchers](#)

Permanent/open-ended employment contracts can provide researchers with a guaranteed career path and long-term career stability but the overall percentage of such contracts at organisations may be low. Organisations could review the status of permanent/open-ended contracts for their researchers and increase the percentage at their organisations.

13. [Review and improve duration of fixed-term contracts dependent on needs of researchers](#)

The duration of fixed-term employment contracts may be too short to provide researchers with adequate short-term employment stability or fully cover the tasks assigned to them. Organisations could review the duration of fixed-term contracts for their researchers and increase the duration dependent on the types of contracts and needs of their researchers.

14. [Define a threshold for percentage of fixed-term contracts and monitor compliance](#)

Fixed-term contracts can offer short-term employment stability for researchers but the overall percentage of such contracts (which should take into account inherently fixed-term positions) at organisations may be high. Organisations could define a maximum threshold for the percentage of fixed-term contracts for their researchers and monitor compliance.

15. [Define a threshold for successive number of fixed-term contracts and monitor compliance](#)

There may be no limit or a high limit on the number of fixed-term contracts which a researcher may have in successive order at organisations (before being let go or receiving a permanent/open-ended contract). Organisations could define a maximum threshold for the number of successive fixed-term contracts for their researchers and monitor compliance.

16. [Review status of TTLMs and regulations relevant for TTLMs at national and local levels](#)

There may be existing examples of TTLMs and regulations which are relevant for TTLMs at the national and local level in a country. Organisations aiming to develop new or refine existing TTLMs could orient themselves by surveying the landscape of TTLMs and checking for current regulations and policies which are relevant for TTLMs in their country.²

17. [Define conditions and procedures for all participants in new/refined TTLMs](#)

The development of new or refinement of existing TTLMs requires legal alignment with national regulations and agreement on the conditions and procedures for all participants. Organisations could define the conditions and procedures for new TTLMs in alignment with national regulations and in discussion with their researchers and research support staff.

18. [Develop an action plan to structure implementation of new/refined TTLMs](#)

The implementation of new/refined TTLMs at organisations needs to be planned and rolled out in successive recruitment and assessment cycles with the participating researchers. Organisations could develop an action plan with clear actions and timelines to structure and monitor implementation of TTLMs with feedback/revision loops built into the planning.

19. [Coordinate implementation of new/refined TTLMs and monitor implementation](#)

The roll-out of new/refined TTLMs at organisations requires multi-annual coordination and monitoring in successive recruitment and assessment cycles with participating researchers. Organisations could implement new/refined TTLMs and monitor progress whereby the implementation could be adjusted where necessary based on feedback from researchers.

20. [Engage with national research-funding bodies on need for long-term funding for TTLMs](#)

Stable and long-term national funding is critical to implement TTLMs which provide participating researchers with permanent/open-ended contracts after positive assessment. Organisations could engage with national research funders and advocate for the need to provide stable funding to stimulate and maintain employment of researchers on TTLMs.

Providing stable employment contracts and career paths (where that is legally possible) is essential to make research careers more attractive and to attract and retain researchers at RPOs and RFOs.

² See the SECURE Tenure Track-like Models (D3.3) [20] for general principles and selected best practices of TTLMs.

5. Action Area 3 - Conditions

Action Area 3 consists of 10 actions for RPOs and RFOs to improve the working conditions of their researchers including rights and obligations, recruitment and progression, remuneration and social protection benefits, flexible and balanced working hours, and a free and inclusive workspace:

21. [Collect and share best practices on improving working conditions of researchers](#)

There are many aspects of the working conditions of researchers which could be reformed at organisations to improve the daily lives of researchers. Organisations could first orient themselves by collecting and openly sharing best practices which showcase how to improve the working conditions of researchers and provide organisations with options to select.

22. [Ensure recruitment and progression are open, transparent, and merit-based](#)

Researchers who are being evaluated for new grants and jobs or career progression are entitled to understand a priori the evaluation criteria and ad hoc the evaluation outcome. Organisations could ensure that the recruitment and progression of researchers at their organisations is based on open, transparent, and merit-based principles of evaluation.

23. [Communicate clearly on rights and obligations of researchers and organisations](#)

Researchers are often not fully aware of their rights and obligations as researchers or the respective rights and obligations of their own employers and funders. Organisations could communicate more clearly on the rights and obligations of their researchers and their own rights and obligations towards researchers (especially during recruitment and progression).

24. [Review and improve remuneration for researchers to be competitive and commensurate](#)

Remuneration for researchers needs to be (inter)sectorally competitive and commensurate with their position and experience in order to attract and retain talented researchers. Organisations could review and improve the remuneration for their researchers (especially early-career researchers) where remuneration levels are not strictly nationally defined.

25. [Review and improve support for researchers to access social protection benefits](#)

Researchers may not be aware of or have access to relevant social protection benefits including benefits for unemployment, healthcare/sickness, parental leave, invalidity, and old age/survivorship. Organisations could review and improve their support for researchers (especially early-career researchers) to be aware of and access social protection benefits.

26. [Review and improve support for flexible working conditions and work-life balance](#)

There is an increasing need for researchers to have more flexibility in their working hours and working environment as well as an increasing awareness of mental health issues and overwork among researchers. Organisations could review and improve their support for flexible working conditions and ensure an adequate work-life balance for their researchers.

27. [Review and reduce bureaucratic and administrative obligations of researchers](#)

Researchers are increasingly being required to fulfil bureaucratic and administrative duties which are often seen as unnecessarily burdening and taking valuable time from performing their core activities of research and education. Organisations could review and reduce such bureaucratic and administrative obligations and support researchers with these obligations.

28. [Review and improve support for academic freedom and protection from interference](#)

Researchers need to be safeguarded to conduct research and education on their chosen subjects in a working environment which is free from ideological and foreign interference. Organisations could review and improve their support for the academic freedom of their researchers and protection for their researchers from ideological and foreign interference.

29. [Review and improve support for equality, diversity, and inclusion of researchers](#)

Research careers need to be safeguarded to ensure the fair treatment and full participation of all researchers and especially groups which have historically been underrepresented or discriminated against due to identity and disability. Organisations could review and improve their support and raise awareness for the equality, diversity, and inclusion of researchers.

30. [Identify scope of precarity and tailor support to reduce precarity of researchers](#)

The issues responsible for the precarity of research careers can differ across different profiles of researchers, organisations, sectors, and countries. Organisations could first identify the scope of precarity for and in discussion with their own researchers (especially early-career researchers) and then tailor support measures to reduce the identified issues.

Improving the working conditions of researchers (where that is legally possible) is also critical to make research careers more attractive and to attract and retain researchers at RPOs and RFOs.

6. Action Area 4 - Skills

Action Area 4 consists of 10 actions for RPOs and RFOs to improve the professional (and personal) development of researchers including support for skills and career development, the use of skills/competence frameworks, and a focus on research integrity, Open Science, and triple-I mobility:

31. [Collect and share best practices on professional development of researchers](#)

The professional development of researchers is typically a priority for organisations and there are many existing examples of the skills and career development of researchers. Organisations could first orient themselves by collecting and openly sharing best practices which showcase the diversity of support for the professional development of researchers.

32. [Review and improve support for professional development of researchers](#)

Researchers require continuous professional development with the different profiles of researchers often needing specific skills/competences and career development support. Organisations could review and improve their support for the professional development of their researchers and tailor support measures to the specific needs of their researchers.

33. [Raise awareness on skills/competence frameworks and skills/competences for researchers](#)

Researchers are often not aware of the skills/competences which they have acquired or need whereby skills/competence frameworks (such as ResearchComp and RM Comp) can help them to identify relevant skills/competences. Organisations could raise more awareness on skills/competence frameworks and skills/competences for their researchers.

34. [Raise awareness on existing talent development programmes and platforms for researchers](#)

There are many existing online talent development programmes and platforms which can readily help researchers with their skills and career development (including EURAXESS and the ERA Talent Platform). Organisations could utilise and raise awareness on existing internal and external talent development programmes and platforms for their researchers.

35. [Integrate skills/competence frameworks and skills/competences into researcher profiles](#)

Researcher profiles (such as the R1-R4 researcher profiles) typically identify the relevant skills/competences which researchers need at different career stages. Organisations could more systematically integrate skills/competence frameworks (such as ResearchComp and RM Comp) and skills/competences for researchers into their own researcher profiles.

36. [Integrate skills/competence frameworks into professional development of researchers](#)

Existing skills/competence frameworks for researchers (such as ResearchComp and RM Comp) are useful for identifying relevant research and transferable skills/competences for researchers. Organisations could more systematically integrate relevant skills/competence frameworks for researchers into their professional development programmes.

37. [Raise awareness on and add research integrity to professional development of researchers](#)

Research integrity is fundamental for realising responsible research and education whereby researchers (especially early-career researchers) need to be educated in research integrity. Organisations could raise awareness on and add research integrity and codes of conduct on research integrity (such as by ALLEA [21]) in their professional development programmes.

38. [Raise awareness on and add Open Science to professional development of researchers](#)

Open Science is vital for the open collaboration of researchers and the open sharing of research results whereby researchers (especially early-career researchers) need to be educated in Open Science. Organisations could raise awareness on and add principles and practices related to Open Science in their professional development programmes.

39. [Raise awareness on and add triple-I mobility to professional development of researchers](#)

Researchers need to be mobile to collaborate and develop their careers across different disciplines, organisations, sectors, and countries whereby they need to be educated in interdisciplinary, intersectoral, and international mobility. Organisations could raise awareness on and include triple-I mobility in their professional development programmes.

40. [Provide professional career development counselling with experts/mentors for researchers](#)

Researchers can benefit greatly from individual and professional counselling sessions with internal and external experts/mentors on their future career development. Organisations could provide professional career development counselling with experts/mentors for researchers (especially early-career researchers who are near the end of their contracts).

The professional development of researchers is essential to help them develop the relevant skills/competences they may need to progress in their careers and transition to new positions.

7. Action Area 5 - Mobility

Action Area 5 consists of 10 actions for RPOs and RFOs to improve the triple-I mobility (including interdisciplinary, intersectoral, and international mobility) of researchers and balanced circulation of researchers (including returning researchers and dual positions) to and from their organisations:

41. [Collect and share best practices on supporting triple-I mobility of researchers](#)

There are many existing (inter)national and local schemes and measures to encourage and support the interdisciplinary, intersectoral, and international mobility of researchers across Europe. Organisations could first orient themselves by collecting and openly sharing best practices highlighting the benefits of and support for the triple-I mobility of researchers.

42. [Identify \(inter\)national and local barriers to triple-I mobility of researchers](#)

There are many barriers which may restrict the mobility of researchers including legal (such as regulations), financial (such as lack of funding), contractual (such as strict conditions), practical (such as lack of time), and social (such as pressure from a supervisor) barriers. Organisations could identify barriers to triple-I mobility to improve their support measures.

43. [Review and improve support for triple-I mobility of researchers](#)

Researchers are often not aware of the benefits of and opportunities for triple-I mobility and need to be encouraged and supported to be mobile. Organisations could review their national and local support for triple-I mobility and improve their measures to encourage and support their researchers to be mobile across disciplines, sectors, and countries.

44. [Develop platforms and tools to support triple-I mobility of researchers](#)

Digital platforms and tools (including websites with enhanced functionalities and apps) can help researchers more easily search for and engage in opportunities for triple-I mobility. Organisations could develop digital platforms and tools to share opportunities and support the collaboration and mobility of researchers across disciplines, sectors, and countries.

45. [Organise events to stimulate triple-I mobility opportunities for researchers](#)

Online and physical events can help bring researchers and relevant stakeholders from different disciplines, organisations, sectors, and countries together to stimulate potential research collaboration and employment opportunities for researchers. Organisations could organise events aimed at creating opportunities for the triple-I mobility of researchers.

46. [Raise awareness on and support transfer of social protection entitlements](#)

Researchers may not be aware of social protection entitlements (such as pensions) which they have acquired (via mandatory or voluntary schemes) and how to transfer them across employers, schemes, and countries (using tools such as RESAVER). Organisations could raise awareness on and support their researchers in transferring social protection entitlements.

47. [Promote value of PhD and related skills/competences to non-academic sectors](#)

Non-academic sectors are typically not aware of the value of a PhD degree and the related skills/competences acquired by doctoral graduates which can lead to missed employment opportunities and a lack of recognition of doctoral employees. Organisations could promote the value of the PhD degree and related skills/competences to the non-academic sectors.

48. [Review and improve support to attract and reintegrate returning researchers](#)

Organisations can benefit from the return of talented researchers from abroad by offering attractive positions and conditions and financially, legally, and administratively supporting their return and reintegration. Organisations could target the research diaspora abroad and review and improve support measures to attract and reintegrate returning researchers.

49. [Review and improve support for dual positions of researchers across boundaries](#)

Dual positions in different organisations, sectors, and countries can help to realise the triple-I mobility of researchers, stimulate the knowledge transfer of research results, and provide researchers with more flexibility and diversity in their careers. Organisations could review and improve their support for creating and facilitating dual positions of researchers.

50. [Engage with key stakeholders on supporting balanced circulation of researchers](#)

Realising a more balanced circulation of researchers and addressing relevant barriers requires the coordination, alignment, and support of key stakeholders across different organisations, sectors, and countries. Organisations could engage with (inter)national and local stakeholders to better align and support a more balanced circulation of researchers.

The mobility of researchers is integral for the balanced circulation of researchers who can benefit from new connections and opportunities across disciplines, organisations, sectors, and countries.

8. Action Area 6 - Assessment

Action Area 6 consists of 10 actions for RPOs and RFOs to improve the assessment of researchers in their grant and career evaluations so that a more qualitative and responsible quantitative approach is taken which recognises the wide diversity of the activities conducted by researchers.

51. [Collect and share best practices on reforming researcher assessment](#)

There are many existing best practices of reforms to improve the assessment of researchers from individual organisations, university alliances, and national and European initiatives and projects. Organisations could collect and share such best practices to learn from and build further on the examples to develop their own reforms for researcher assessment.

52. [Identify national and local barriers preventing reform of researcher assessment](#)

There may be barriers at the national level (such as employment regulations) and local level (such as the complex interplay between assessment and the research process as well as the resistance of researchers to change) which can hinder reforms to researcher assessment. Organisations could attempt to identify any barriers to reforming researcher assessment.

53. [Integrate a qualitative and responsible quantitative approach into researcher assessment](#)

Researchers are assessed mainly on peer-reviewed publications in journals with a high impact factor whereby quantitative bibliometric indicators (such as publications, citations, Journal Impact Factor (JIF), and H-index) are typically used and abused. Organisations could take a more qualitative and responsible quantitative approach when assessing researchers.

54. [Recognise diversity of roles, activities, and outputs of researchers in researcher assessment](#)

Researchers are predominantly assessed on the basis of their publications yet they need to perform many other research, education, and related activities in their work. Organisations could support the shift away from the hyperfocus on publications to a greater recognition of the wide diversity of the roles, activities, outputs, and impacts of their researchers.

55. [Recognise research integrity principles and practices in researcher assessment](#)

Researchers need to be incentivised and rewarded to encourage them to apply research integrity and align with relevant codes of conduct in their research and education activities. Organisations could integrate research integrity into researcher assessment by recognising research integrity principles and practices by researchers when they are being evaluated.

56. [Recognise Open Science principles and practices in researcher assessment](#)

Researchers need to be incentivised and rewarded to encourage them to apply Open Science and engage in knowledge valorisation in their research and education activities. Organisations could integrate Open Science into researcher assessment by recognising Open Science principles and practices by researchers when they are being evaluated.

57. [Recognise triple-I mobility principles and practices in researcher assessment](#)

Researchers need to be incentivised and rewarded to encourage them to engage in interdisciplinary, intersectoral, and international mobility in their research careers. Organisations could integrate triple-I mobility into researcher assessment by recognising all relevant triple-I mobility activities by researchers when they are being evaluated.

58. [Educate researcher evaluators about reformed criteria for researcher assessment](#)

Researcher evaluators play a leading and decisive role in researcher assessment and need to be made fully aware of (the value and reasons for) any reformed criteria for assessment so that researchers are assessed fairly according to new criteria. Organisations could inform and educate their researcher evaluators about reformed criteria for researcher assessment.

59. [Monitor reforms in researcher assessment for any negative and unwanted effects](#)

Reforms to researcher assessment can impact upon the daily lives of researchers and their research and education activities which could lead to unforeseen negative and unwanted effects for organisations and their researchers. Organisations could monitor and adjust their reforms in researcher assessment for any unforeseen negative and unwanted effects.

60. [Sign Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment and join CoARA as a member](#)

The Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment [22] from the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) [23] proposes a common strategy and action plan to reform research assessment. Organisations could sign the agreement and join CoARA to learn from and align strategies with other organisations as well as engage their researchers in CoARA.

The assessment of researchers plays a defining role in the acquisition of research grants and career progression as well as in determining the main priorities and daily activities of researchers.

9. Action Area 7 - Pathways

Action Area 7 consists of 10 actions for RPOs and RFOs to support the recognition and diversity of research career pathways including non-linear and hybrid careers, careers for research managers and research technicians, and careers arising from entrepreneurship and knowledge valorisation.

61. [Collect and share best practices on recognition and support of diverse research careers](#)

There are many career paths open to researchers inside and outside of academia as well as support measures at organisations to help researchers diversify their careers. Organisations could collect and share best practices on the recognition and support of diverse research careers to develop their own measures and better support the careers of their researchers.

62. [Raise awareness on diversity of research careers including non-linear and hybrid careers](#)

Researchers are typically not aware of the diversity of research careers and the career options available to them inside and outside of their organisations as well as the possibility of non-linear and hybrid career paths. Organisations could raise awareness on the diversity of research careers and career paths inside and outside of academia among researchers.

63. [Review and improve recognition and support of diverse research careers](#)

Researchers are usually not recognised and may even be penalised in evaluations for having followed diverse and non-traditional career paths or lack adequate support at their organisations to engage in and transition to more diverse career paths. Organisations could review and improve their recognition of and support measures for diverse research careers.

64. [Review and improve diversity of internal career path options for researchers](#)

There may be limited internal career path options for researchers at their organisations or researchers may not be aware of other internal career path options beyond the position of a researcher. Organisations could review and improve their internal career path options for researchers and support researchers who may want to transition to other internal careers.

65. [Define clear and distinct profiles for research managers and research technicians](#)

The professions of research manager and research technician may not be clearly defined or recognised at organisations and offer researchers alternative career path options beyond the position of a researcher. Organisations could define clear and distinct profiles for research managers and research technicians including their roles and responsibilities.

66. [Review and improve professionalisation of research managers and research technicians](#)

The professions of research manager and research technician may not be fully developed at organisations whereby research managers and research technicians may not be adequately recognised, supported, and rewarded in their careers. Organisations could review and improve the professionalisation of their research managers and research technicians.

67. [Review and improve support for entrepreneurship and knowledge valorisation](#)

Entrepreneurship activities (such as developing spin-offs and start-ups) and knowledge valorisation activities (such as ensuring the societal uptake of research results) can help researchers to transition to more diverse careers. Organisations could review and improve their support to researchers to engage in entrepreneurship and knowledge valorisation.

68. [Create support offices and hubs for entrepreneurship and knowledge valorisation](#)

Support offices and hubs can offer tailored support to researchers for entrepreneurship and knowledge valorisation activities and bring researchers in contact with relevant external stakeholders for future collaboration and employment opportunities. Organisations could create such support offices and hubs for entrepreneurship and knowledge valorisation.

69. [Educate researcher recruiters about value of diverse research career paths](#)

Recruiters for research grants and careers need to understand the value of diverse research careers and applicants with diverse and non-traditional career paths so that they do not negatively bias or penalise such candidates in evaluations. Organisations could educate internal and external researcher recruiters about the value of diverse research career paths.

70. [Track career paths of alumni researchers and create a network of alumni researchers](#)

Long-term career tracking of researchers is needed to understand the career paths of researchers and the diversity of research careers whereby bringing alumni researchers in contact with each other can create new networking and career opportunities. Organisations could track the long-term career paths and create a network of their alumni researchers.

Understanding the possible career paths of researchers is a vital first step to recognising the diversity of research careers and supporting researchers to progress and transition in their careers.

10. Action Area 8 - Interoperability

Action Area 8 consists of 10 actions for RPOs and RFOs to improve the interoperability of research careers across career steps, disciplines, organisations, sectors, and countries through common definitions and the adoption or mapping of the R1-R4 researcher profiles and ESCO classification.

71. [Adopt European definition of 'researcher' in organisational regulations and policies](#)

The definition of what a researcher is and does as well as their roles and responsibilities can differ across organisations, sectors, and countries. Organisations could adopt a common European definition of 'researcher' (such as proposed in the Council Recommendation) in their regulations and policies to support common understanding and interoperability.

72. [Collect and share best practices on use of R1-R4 profiles and ESCO classification](#)

There are existing examples of the use of the R1-R4 researcher profiles to categorise the different stages of researchers and ESCO classification to categorise the skills/competences, qualifications, and occupations of researchers. Organisations could collect and build on best practices to develop their own guidelines to use the R1-R4 profiles and ESCO classification.

73. [Adopt R1-R4 profiles or map existing researcher profiles onto R1-R4 profiles](#)

The R1-R4 researcher profiles need to be incorporated into existing policies and practices on researcher profiles at organisations and either be adopted as they are or mapped onto existing profiles. Organisations could adopt the R1-R4 profiles or map existing researcher profiles onto the R1-R4 profiles to support common understanding and interoperability.

74. [Raise awareness of and develop clear guidelines on R1-R4 profiles for researchers](#)

Researchers are largely not aware of the R1-R4 researcher profiles or the descriptions used in the profiles or the reasons for using the profiles. Organisations could raise awareness on the R1-R4 profiles and develop clear guidelines and communications on the profiles and their use inside and outside their organisation so that this is clear for their researchers.

75. [Refer to R1-R4 profiles in grant/job advertisements and relevant communications](#)

The R1-R4 researcher profiles support the interoperability of communications about and for (different stages of) researchers across organisations, sectors, and countries and especially about available grants/jobs for researchers. Organisations could refer to the R1-R4 profiles in their grant/job advertisements and relevant communications targeted at researchers.

76. [Raise awareness of and support adoption of R1-R4 profiles in non-academic sectors](#)

The R1-R4 researcher profiles are unknown in the non-academic sectors which offer a wide range of research careers and could benefit from using the R1-R4 profiles to better recruit researchers in their research career advertisements. Organisations could raise awareness of the R1-R4 profiles and better support their adoption among non-academic stakeholders.

77. [Integrate ESCO classification into research grant/job advertisements and portals](#)

The ESCO classification offers standardised terms and descriptors (and a specific label for research) for skills/competences and occupations across languages and sectors which can be used to categorise grants/jobs for researchers. Organisations could integrate the ESCO classification into their research grant/job advertisements and relevant grant/job portals.

78. [Engage with key stakeholders on national adoption or mapping of ESCO classification](#)

European Parliament and Council Regulation 2016/589 [24] requires that European countries either adopt or map their national classifications of skills/competences and occupations to and from the ESCO classification. Organisations could engage with key stakeholders to support the national adoption or mapping of the ESCO classification.

79. [Provide recommendations for future revisions of classifications in ESCO classification](#)

The ESCO classification will be updated based on eventual changes to the landscape of skills/competences, qualifications, and occupations for researchers. Organisations could identify relevant obsolete, changing, and emerging skills/competences, qualifications, and occupations to provide recommendations for future revisions of the ESCO classification.

80. [Engage with key stakeholders on interoperability and comparability of research careers](#)

Creating interoperability and comparability of research careers across organisations, sectors, and countries requires the engagement and alignment of relevant stakeholders on diverse regulations, policies, and practices for research careers. Organisations could engage with key stakeholders to ensure the interoperability and comparability of research careers.

The interoperability and comparability of research careers is necessary for supporting the mobility and transition of researchers across career steps, disciplines, organisations, sectors, and countries.

11. Conclusion

The SECURE RCF is a **practical toolbox for RPOs and RFOs** to reform research careers and help to reduce the precarity of researchers at their organisations. The RCF focuses on 8 thematic action areas to improve research careers focusing on strategy, stability, conditions, skills, mobility, assessment, pathways, and interoperability. The RCF consists of 80 actions which translate the high-level recommendations of the Council Recommendation into concrete actions for RPOs and RFOs. The RCF is furthermore aligned with key European initiatives supporting research careers.

The SECURE RCF can help to **increase the scale of research in Europe** which needs higher numbers of researchers to be competitive at a global level. The actions in the RCF are intended to improve research careers and not only attract and retain more researchers in the academic sector but also support the mobility and transition of more researchers across sectors and countries in Europe. Making research careers more attractive by implementing the RCF at RPOs and RFOs can increase the number of researchers and make Europe more globally competitive in research and innovation.

The SECURE RCF can help to **address the fragmentation of research in Europe** where researchers are typically isolated in their organisational, sectoral, disciplinary, and country silos. The actions in the RCF focused especially on skills, mobility, pathways, and interoperability are intended to stimulate more collaboration and mobility of researchers across different organisations, sectors, disciplines, and countries. This can lead not only to more cross-cutting research in Europe but also help to address complex societal challenges which require a more holistic and integrated approach.

The SECURE RCF can help to **increase the excellence of research in Europe** where researchers often leave research careers or even Europe for more attractive and competitive conditions and careers. The actions in the RCF focused especially on providing more stability and better working conditions for researchers are intended to attract and retain the most talented researchers in Europe by making research careers and Europe more attractive and competitive. Increasing the number of talented researchers can lead to more research and innovation excellence in Europe.

The SECURE RCF **identifies individual actions** which can be selected, prioritised, and implemented at RPOs and RFOs but also **acknowledges the systemic interrelation and dependency of actions**. A recognition of the relationship between actions and the need for a combination of actions across all thematic action areas is critical to reform research careers and reduce researcher precarity. This systemic approach applies for both the implementation of the RCF and Council Recommendation.

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Annex 1 - SECURE Research Career Framework

Action Area 1 - Strategy	
1	Collect and share best practices on reform of research careers at organisations
2	Review and improve inclusion of researchers in governance and decision-making bodies
3	Include researchers and research support staff in activities to reform research careers
4	Engage with key stakeholders to align national regulations and policies on research careers
5	Engage with key stakeholders to improve long-term stability of funding for research careers
6	Engage with key stakeholders to fund and implement pilots to reform research careers
7	Engage with key stakeholders on national implementation of Council Recommendation
8	Raise awareness of Charter for Researchers and HR Excellence in Research Award
9	Endorse Charter for Researchers and apply for/renew HR Excellence in Research Award
10	Endorse RESAVER Pension Fund and join consortium of RESAVER member organisations

Action Area 2 - Stability	
11	Collect and share best practices on employment contracts for researchers and TTLMs
12	Review and improve percentage of permanent/open-ended contracts for researchers
13	Review and improve duration of fixed-term contracts dependent on needs of researchers
14	Define a threshold for percentage of fixed-term contracts and monitor compliance
15	Define a threshold for successive number of fixed-term contracts and monitor compliance
16	Review status of TTLMs and regulations relevant for TTLMs at national and local levels
17	Define conditions and procedures for all participants in new/refined TTLMs
18	Develop an action plan to structure implementation of new/refined TTLMs
19	Coordinate implementation of new/refined TTLMs and monitor implementation
20	Engage with national research-funding bodies on need for long-term funding for TTLMs

Action Area 3 - Conditions	
21	Collect and share best practices on improving working conditions of researchers
22	Ensure recruitment and progression are open, transparent, and merit-based
23	Communicate clearly on rights and obligations of researchers and organisations
24	Review and improve remuneration for researchers to be competitive and commensurate
25	Review and improve support for researchers to access social protection benefits
26	Review and improve support for flexible working conditions and work-life balance
27	Review and reduce bureaucratic and administrative obligations of researchers
28	Review and improve support for academic freedom and protection from interference
29	Review and improve support for equality, diversity, and inclusion of researchers
30	Identify scope of precarity and tailor support to reduce precarity of researchers

Action Area 4 - Skills	
31	Collect and share best practices on professional development of researchers
32	Review and improve support for professional development of researchers
33	Raise awareness on skills/competence frameworks and skills/competences for researchers
34	Raise awareness on existing talent development programmes and platforms for researchers
35	Integrate skills/competence frameworks and skills/competences into researcher profiles
36	Integrate skills/competence frameworks into professional development of researchers
37	Raise awareness on and add research integrity to professional development of researchers
38	Raise awareness on and add Open Science to professional development of researchers
39	Raise awareness on and add triple-I mobility to professional development of researchers
40	Provide professional career development counselling with experts/mentors for researchers

Action Area 5 - Mobility

41	Collect and share best practices on supporting triple-I mobility of researchers
42	Identify (inter)national and local barriers to triple-I mobility of researchers
43	Review and improve support for triple-I mobility of researchers
44	Develop platforms and tools to support triple-I mobility of researchers
45	Organise events to stimulate triple-I mobility opportunities for researchers
46	Raise awareness on and support transfer of social protection entitlements
47	Promote value of PhD and related skills/competences to non-academic sectors
48	Review and improve support to attract and reintegrate returning researchers
49	Review and improve support for dual positions of researchers across boundaries
50	Engage with key stakeholders on supporting balanced circulation of researchers

Action Area 6 - Assessment

51	Collect and share best practices on reforming researcher assessment
52	Identify national and local barriers preventing reform of researcher assessment
53	Integrate a qualitative and responsible quantitative approach into researcher assessment
54	Recognise diversity of roles, activities, and outputs of researchers in researcher assessment
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59	Monitor reforms in researcher assessment for any negative and unwanted effects
60	Sign Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment and join CoARA as a member

Action Area 7 - Pathways	
61	Collect and share best practices on recognition and support of diverse research careers
62	Raise awareness on diversity of research careers including non-linear and hybrid careers
63	Review and improve recognition and support of diverse research careers
64	Review and improve diversity of internal career path options for researchers
65	Define clear and distinct profiles for research managers and research technicians
66	Review and improve professionalisation of research managers and research technicians
67	Review and improve support for entrepreneurship and knowledge valorisation
68	Create support offices and hubs for entrepreneurship and knowledge valorisation
69	Educate researcher recruiters about value of diverse research career paths
70	Track career paths of alumni researchers and create a network of alumni researchers

Action Area 8 - Interoperability	
71	Adopt European definition of 'researcher' in organisational regulations and policies
72	Collect and share best practices on use of R1-R4 profiles and ESCO classification
73	Adopt R1-R4 profiles or map existing researcher profiles onto R1-R4 profiles
74	Raise awareness of and develop clear guidelines on R1-R4 profiles for researchers
75	Refer to R1-R4 profiles in grant/job advertisements and relevant communications
76	Raise awareness of and support adoption of R1-R4 profiles in non-academic sectors
77	Integrate ESCO classification into research grant/job advertisements and portals
78	Engage with key stakeholders on national adoption or mapping of ESCO classification
79	Provide recommendations for future revisions of classifications in ESCO classification
80	Engage with key stakeholders on interoperability and comparability of research careers

SECURE Research Career Framework

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