



REPORT ON IDENTIFYING THE NEEDS OF USV RESEARCHERS IN THE CONTEXT OF HRS4R IMPLEMENTATION



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1. Introduction	3
2. Purpose and Objectives	3
3. Method of Questionnaire Administration	3
4. Dissemination Method	4
5. Target Group	4
6. Confidentiality and Data Use	4
7. Questionnaire Results	5
Section 1 – General Information	5
Section 2 – Ethics and Open Science	5
Section 3 – Recruitment and Career Development	6
Section 4 – Work conditions	7
Section 5 – Research Support	8
Section 6 – Priorities and Feedback	9
8. Conclusions	13
Ethics, Integrity, Gender Equality and Open Science	13
Recruitment, Evaluation and Career Development	14
Work Conditions	14
Researchers’ Careers and Talent Development	14
General Conclusion	15

1. Introduction

In the context of implementing the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) at Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava (USV), the institution periodically conducts consultation processes within the academic community in order to monitor the degree of alignment with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

These initiatives are essential for supporting the implementation of the HRS4R Action Plan, which aims to improve the quality of the research environment, foster researchers' career development, and enhance the institution's attractiveness at the European level.

In this context, a questionnaire was designed and administered to researchers, academic staff, and doctoral students, with the purpose of assessing their perception regarding the extent to which the four pillars of the Charter and Code are respected, namely:

- ethics, integrity, gender equality, and open science;
- recruitment and career development;
- working conditions;
- researchers' careers and talent development.

The results obtained contribute to identifying the specific needs of these categories and provide the basis for the measures included in the HRS4R Action Plan.

2. Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the questionnaire was to assess the extent to which the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct are implemented at USV, as well as to identify the needs and challenges faced by the research community.

The specific objectives were:

- assessing the level of awareness and implementation of the principles of ethics, integrity, and open science;
- analysing perceptions regarding the transparency of recruitment and evaluation processes;
- identifying the level of satisfaction with working conditions and research infrastructure;
- evaluating access to career development opportunities, mentoring, and institutional support;
- identifying the main areas requiring improvement within the four HRS4R pillars;
- collecting suggestions from respondents for improving institutional policies.

3. Method of Questionnaire Administration

The questionnaire was designed and administered using the Google Forms platform and was available online during March–April 2026.

The instrument was developed as a short questionnaire, structured into sections corresponding to the four HRS4R pillars, in order to enable rapid and efficient data collection. The questionnaire was completed anonymously, and the estimated completion time was approximately 3 minutes.

4. Dissemination Method

The questionnaire was disseminated through the university's institutional communication channels, namely:

- distribution via e-mail to the academic community;
- dissemination through faculties and doctoral schools;
- promotion through internal communication channels.

The dissemination process aimed to ensure the broadest and most representative participation possible from the targeted groups.

5. Target Group

The target population included the main categories involved in research activities at USV:

- doctoral students;
- researchers (including postdoctoral researchers);
- academic staff involved in research activities.

These groups represent essential components of the university's research ecosystem and are directly targeted by the measures included in the HRS4R strategy.

6. Confidentiality and Data Use

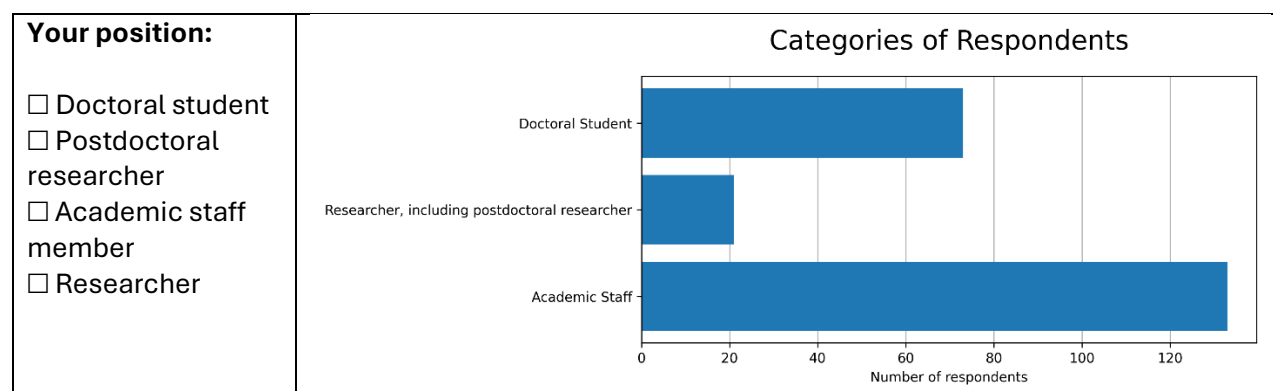
The questionnaire was designed and administered in compliance with the principles of confidentiality and anonymity, ensuring that the responses provided by participants could not lead to their identification. No personal data were collected, and the information obtained was used exclusively for statistical and analytical purposes.

The data collected through the questionnaire are used strictly within the context of implementing the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) at Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava. The main purpose of the analysis is to identify the needs, challenges, and perceptions of the academic community — researchers, academic staff, and doctoral students — regarding the implementation of the four pillars of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

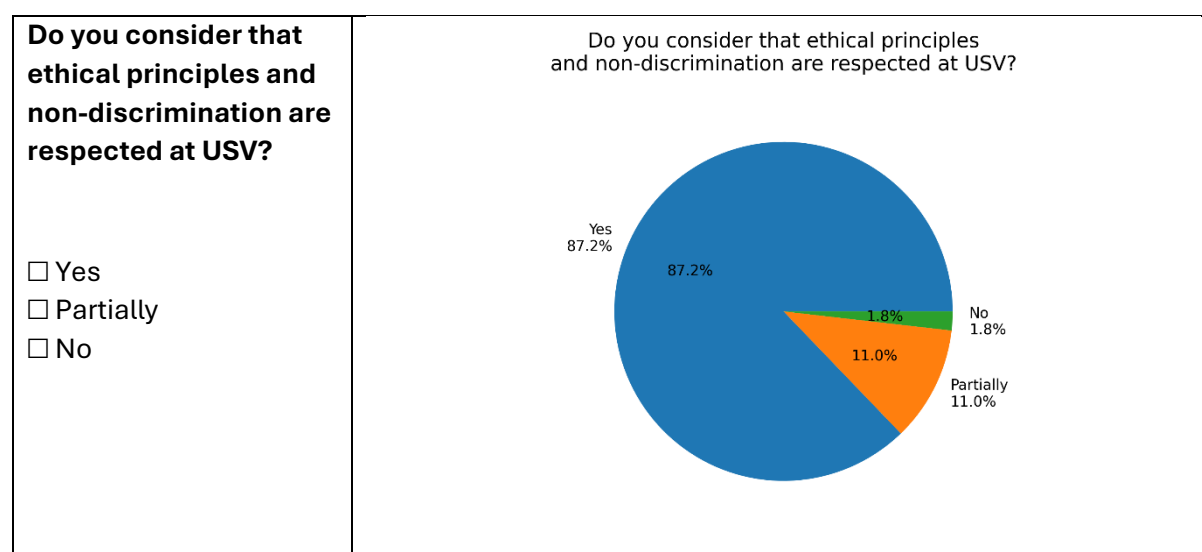
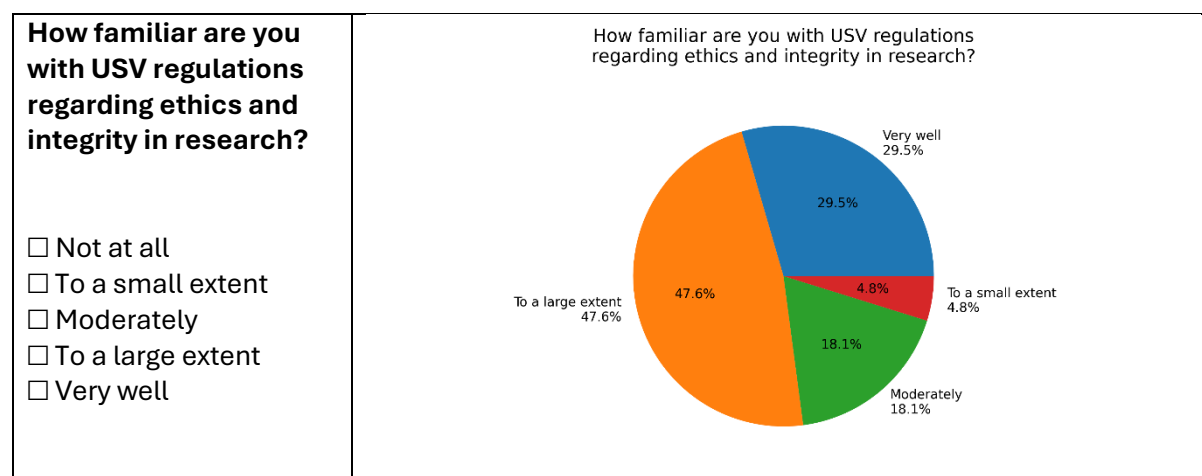
The results obtained are presented in an aggregated manner and contribute to substantiating the institutional measures included in the HRS4R Action Plan, without being used for individual, evaluative, or sanctioning purposes.

7. Questionnaire Results

Section 1 – General Information



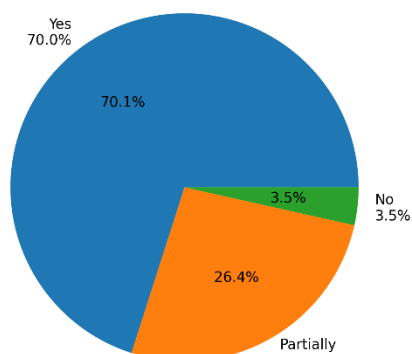
Section 2 – Ethics and Open Science



Are you familiar with Open Science / Open Access practices?

- ☐ Yes
☐ Partially
☐ No

Are you familiar with Open Science/Open Access practices?

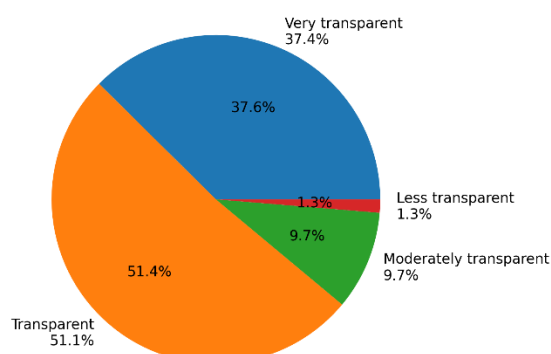


Section 3 – Recruitment and Career Development

How transparent do you consider recruitment and evaluation processes at USV?

- ☐ Not transparent at all
☐ Slightly transparent
☐ Moderately transparent
☐ Transparent
☐ Very transparent

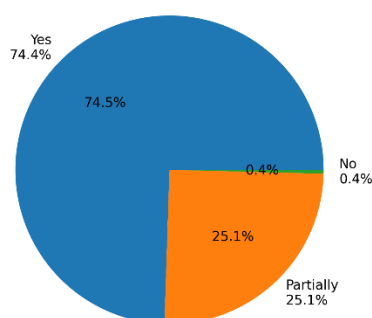
How transparent do you consider recruitment and evaluation processes at USV?



Do you consider that USV provides adequate support for career development?

- ☐ Yes
☐ Partially
☐ No

Do you consider that USV provides adequate support for career development?

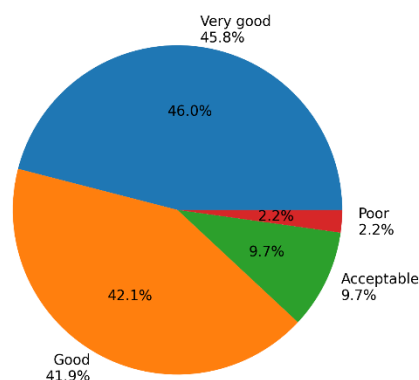


Section 4 – Work conditions

How do you assess working conditions (infrastructure, digital tools, support)?

- ☐ Very poor
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Acceptable
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Very good

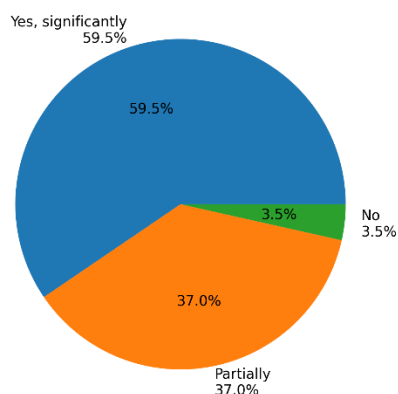
How do you assess working conditions (infrastructure, digital tools, support)?



Has digitalization (investments in digitalization at the university level, e.g. the USV Digital project and other initiatives) improved your activity?

- ☐ Yes, significantly
- ☐ Partially
- ☐ No

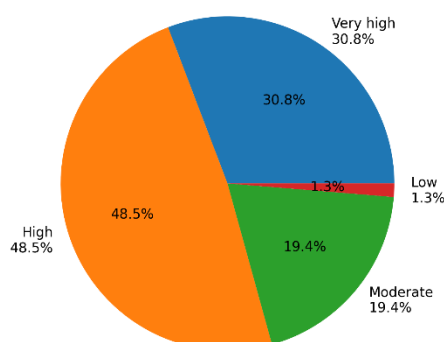
Has digitalization (investments in digitalization at the university level, e.g. the USV Digital project and other initiatives) improved your activity?



How do you assess the volume of administrative workload?

- ☐ Very high
- ☐ High
- ☐ Moderate
- ☐ Low

How do you assess the volume of administrative workload?

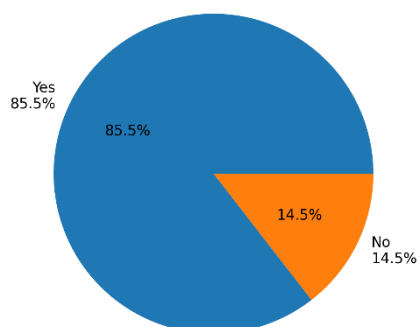


Section 5 – Research Support

Have you benefited from training, mentoring, or career support activities (e.g. the COACH USV project or other university-level initiatives)?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

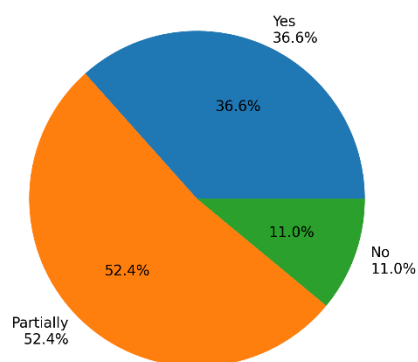
Have you benefited from training, mentoring, or career support activities (e.g. the COACH USV project or other university-level initiatives)?



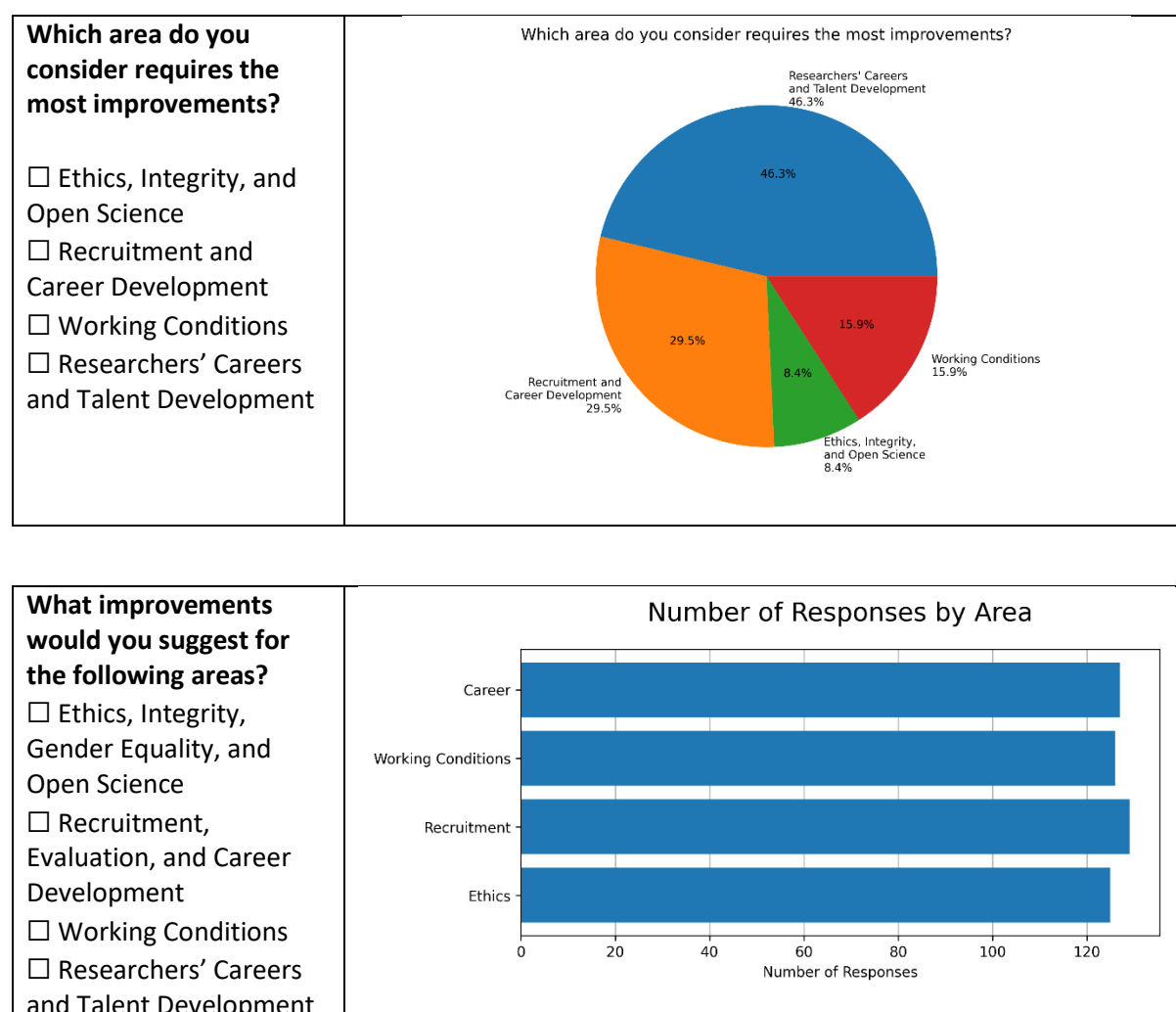
Do you consider that financial support measures (publications, conferences, patents) are sufficient?

- ☐ Yes
☐ Partially
☐ No

Do you consider that financial support measures (publications, conferences, patents) are sufficient?



Section 6 – Priorities and Feedback



In order to support the development of the measures included in the HRS4R Action Plan, the questionnaire administered to the academic community aimed not only to assess perceptions, but also to collect concrete suggestions regarding the improvement of institutional conditions and practices in relation to the four pillars of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

The responses provided by researchers, academic staff, and doctoral students highlight both the level of satisfaction with certain already functional aspects and a series of needs and directions for institutional improvement. The suggestions formulated reflect the respondents’ direct experiences and provide a relevant perspective on how existing policies and practices can be strengthened.

Their analysis enables the identification of the main areas requiring intervention, thus contributing to the development of coherent measures tailored to the real needs of the research community and aligned with HRS4R principles.

The table below summarizes the main themes identified from the open-ended responses and their relevance for institutional development within the HRS4R framework.

Domain	Main Issue	Key Findings	Priority
Ethics, Integrity, Gender Equality, and Open Science	• Information and raising awareness	The need to organize training sessions and workshops, and to increase the level of awareness regarding ethics and open science.	High
	• Institutional framework	The lack of practical guidelines, clear procedures, and the need for policies regarding AI and open access.	High
	• Transparency and organisational culture	The need to increase transparency, promote relational ethics, and shift the focus from sanctions to prevention.	Medium–High
	• Research support	The need for funding and better access to resources and open access publishing.	High
	• Collaboration and internationalization	The need to foster interdisciplinary and international collaboration.	Medium
Recruitment, Evaluation, and Career Development	• Evaluation criteria	The lack of equity across disciplines and the need for a more comprehensive evaluation system (not based solely on publications).	High
	• Career development	The need for mentorship, training, and opportunities for career advancement.	High
	• Recruitment and transparency	Low visibility of announcements and the need for clearer and more accessible procedures.	Medium
	• Bureaucracy	A large volume of documents and cumbersome administrative processes.	Very High
	• Motivation and retention	The need for financial incentives and a better work–life balance.	High
Work Conditions	• Infrastructure	Insufficient or inadequate spaces, and issues related to comfort (temperature, air quality, equipment/facilities).	Very High
	• Digitalization	The lack of process digitalization and efficient electronic systems.	High
	• Bureaucracy and administrative workload	A large volume of administrative tasks that negatively affects research activity.	Very High
	• Access to resources	Insufficient funding for consumables, equipment, and conference participation.	High
	• Working environment	The need to improve overall conditions and institutional support.	Medium–High
Researchers’ Careers and Talent Development	• Funding	Insufficient financial support for publications, conferences, and research.	Very High
	• Young researchers	The lack of stability and of dedicated programs (postdoctoral and retention programs).	Very High
	• Time for research	An imbalance between teaching, administrative duties, and research activities.	Very High
	• Training and skills development	The need for training sessions (grant writing, research methods, software tools).	High
	• Collaboration and visibility	The need for interdisciplinarity and international partnerships.	Medium

The analysis highlights a set of systemic issues of very high priority, particularly concentrated in the areas of working conditions, researchers' careers, and administrative processes.

Domain	Critical Priorities (Very High Priority)	High Priorities
Ethics, Integrity, Gender Equality, and Open Science		- The need to organize training sessions and workshops and to increase the level of awareness regarding ethics and open science - The lack of practical guidelines, clear procedures, and the need for policies on AI and open access - The need for funding and improved access to resources and open access publishing
Recruitment, Evaluation, and Career Development	Large volume of documentation and cumbersome administrative processes	- Lack of fairness across different fields and the need for a more comprehensive evaluation system (not based solely on publications) - The need for mentoring, training, and career advancement opportunities - The need for financial incentives and a better work–life balance
Work Conditions	- Insufficient or inadequate workspaces, including issues related to comfort conditions (temperature, air quality, equipment) - High volume of administrative tasks affecting research activities	- Lack of digitalization of processes and efficient electronic systems - Insufficient funding for consumables, equipment, and conference participation
Researchers' Careers and Talent Development	- Insufficient financial support for publications, conferences, and research activities - Lack of stability and dedicated programmes (postdoctoral opportunities, retention measures) - Imbalance between teaching, administrative, and research activities	The need for training programmes (grant writing, research methods, software tools)

The analysed data indicate the existence of major structural problems within the system, particularly related to bureaucracy, insufficient resources, and imbalances in researchers' activities, all of which directly affect research performance and development. These dysfunctions are not isolated; rather, they are systemic in nature and can be identified, in different forms, across all the analysed areas.

A first transversal issue is the high level of bureaucracy, which affects both recruitment and evaluation processes, as well as day-to-day activities. The large volume of documentation and the complexity of administrative procedures significantly reduce the time available for research, turning administrative

tasks into a constant burden. In this context, excessive administrative processes emerge as one of the main systemic barriers to research performance.

At the same time, underfunding represents a persistent problem across all dimensions of research activity. It affects participation in conferences, the publication of research results, as well as access to infrastructure, consumables, and resources necessary for scientific work. Financial limitations and restricted access to open access publishing impact not only scientific output, but also its visibility, indicating that the lack of adequate resources affects the entire research ecosystem. Another important issue is the imbalance between the different types of activities carried out by researchers. The cumulative pressure of teaching and administrative responsibilities leads to a significant reduction in the time allocated to actual research activities. Consequently, research activity becomes systematically subordinated to other institutional responsibilities, limiting development and innovation potential.

Last but not least, the analysis highlights a lack of stability and support for career development, particularly for early-career researchers. The absence of dedicated programmes, mentoring mechanisms, and clear professional development pathways negatively affects both individual progress and the institutions' capacity to retain qualified human resources. In this regard, the current system does not provide sufficient support mechanisms for researchers' development and retention. Overall, these findings outline a system in which administrative barriers, financial constraints, and the lack of a coherent career development framework accumulate, generating a significant impact on the performance and sustainability of research activities. In conclusion, the imbalances highlighted by the responses to the questionnaire's open-ended questions point towards the following problematic areas and potential mitigation measures:

Identified Discrepancies	Conclusions	Potential Solutions
Bureaucracy is a recurring critical issue - It affects both recruitment processes and working conditions - It directly impacts the time allocated to research activities	Excessive administrative processes represent one of the main systemic barriers to research performance.	- Simplifying procedures and reducing documentation requirements - Digitalizing administrative processes - Introducing dedicated administrative support for researchers
Underfunding affects all dimensions of research activities - Publications, conferences, infrastructure, and consumables are insufficiently funded - Limited access to resources and open access publishing	The lack of adequate funding affects the entire research ecosystem, from scientific output to research visibility.	- Increasing internal funding allocated to research - Providing active support for attracting research grants - Dedicated budgets for publications and conference participation (including open access publishing)
The imbalance between responsibilities negatively affects research activities - Teaching and administrative duties occupy most of the available time, to the detriment of research - Lack of dedicated time for research activities	Research activities are systematically subordinated to other institutional responsibilities.	- Clear allocation of time dedicated to research activities - Reducing administrative tasks for researchers - Balanced distribution of teaching responsibilities
Lack of stability and career support - Particularly affecting early-career researchers - Lack of dedicated programmes and mentoring opportunities	The system does not provide sufficient support for the development and retention of human resources in research.	- Dedicated programmes for early-career researchers (postdoctoral and tenure-track programmes) - Institutionalized mentoring systems - Financial incentives and retention measures

8. Conclusions

The analysis results are based on a sample of 227 respondents, consisting of 133 academic staff members (most of whom are also involved in research activities), 21 researchers (including postdoctoral researchers dedicated exclusively to research activities), and 73 doctoral students. Considering the size of the USV academic community, this sample is both relevant and representative. According to the Report on the State of the University for the year 2025, the total number of academic and research staff is 420. In this context, the share of respondents among academic and research staff represents 37%, which provides a high degree of credibility to the results and allows for well-founded conclusions.

Similarly, the inclusion of 73 doctoral students, out of a total of 215 doctoral students admitted during the 2023–2025 period, contributes to outlining a relevant perspective regarding this category as well. Therefore, the collected responses can be considered significant for the entire research community, offering valuable insights into the perceptions, needs, and challenges existing at the institutional level. Regarding the areas requiring the greatest improvements, the results indicate a clear concentration in the field of researchers' careers and talent development, considered a priority by 46.3% of respondents, followed by recruitment and career development, identified by 29.5% of respondents. These findings confirm the trends also highlighted in the analysis of the open-ended responses, which emphasize the importance of support measures for professional development, stability, and the reduction of structural constraints affecting research activities.

Ethics, Integrity, Gender Equality and Open Science

Regarding the area of Ethics, Integrity, Gender Equality, and Open Science, it should be noted that there are no critical issues within the USV academic community. More than 77% of respondents stated that they are familiar with USV regulations concerning research ethics and integrity. At the same time, 87% consider that ethical principles and non-discrimination are respected at the USV level. Furthermore, 70% of respondents indicated that they are familiar with Open Science/Open Access practices.

The analysis of responses to the open-ended questions indicates that this area is not affected by critical dysfunctions; however, it does require institutional consolidation. The responses consistently highlight the need to increase the level of information and awareness through the organization of training sessions and workshops dedicated to research ethics and open science practices.

At the same time, a lack of operational tools (practical guidelines, clear procedures, policies regarding AI and open access) was identified, which limits the practical implementation of the existing principles. Respondents also emphasized the importance of developing an organizational culture based on transparency and prevention, as well as the need for more consistent support for open access to research results and for international collaboration.

Overall, this area requires measures aimed more at structuring and operationalization than at major corrective interventions.

Recruitment, Evaluation and Career Development

Regarding the area of Recruitment, Evaluation, and Career Development, more than 88% of respondents consider recruitment and evaluation processes to be transparent or very transparent. At the same time, over 74% believe that USV provides adequate support for career development.

This area is characterized by a combination of structural issues and development needs. The responses clearly indicate that bureaucracy represents the main dysfunction, being perceived as excessive and negatively affecting the efficiency of processes.

At the same time, respondents pointed out the lack of fairness in evaluation across different fields, as well as the need for a more comprehensive approach that goes beyond criteria based exclusively on publications. In addition, there is a recurring need for mentoring, training, and genuine career advancement opportunities, alongside measures aimed at supporting motivation and retention, including financial incentives and a better work–life balance.

The main conclusion is that this area requires both administrative simplification and a reconfiguration of the evaluation and career development system.

Work Conditions

Working conditions at USV are considered good or very good by more than 87% of respondents. In addition, USV's continuous investments in digitalization (most of them financed through externally attracted funds) have significantly improved activities for over 60% of respondents. One vulnerable aspect identified by the respondents concerns the volume of administrative workload at the expense of research activities, this aspect being considered high or very high by 80% of the academic staff, researchers, and doctoral students who participated in the survey.

In this area, the most frequent suggestions refer to improving infrastructure and working spaces, including environmental conditions and spaces dedicated to research. Respondents also highlighted the need for extended digitalization of internal processes and improvements in IT infrastructure. A major issue concerns the reduction of administrative burdens and ensuring a better balance between teaching activities, research, and personal life. Furthermore, respondents indicated the need for better access to resources and funding for research activities.

Researchers' Careers and Talent Development

Regarding researchers' careers and talent development, more than 85% of respondents stated that they had benefited from training, mentoring, or career support. On the other hand, only 37% consider that the financial support measures for publications, conferences, and patents are sufficient, which represents an aspect requiring concrete action.

The responses predominantly highlight the need for more consistent and predictable financial support for research activities (publications, conferences, projects). Respondents also emphasized the importance of developing a structured mentoring and support system for early-career researchers, as well as creating clear opportunities for professional development and career stability. At the same

time, the need to reduce teaching and administrative workloads in order to allow greater involvement in research activities was underlined, together with the importance of encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration and international partnerships.

General Conclusion

Overall, the questionnaire results, based on a representative sample covering more than half of USV's academic and research staff, provide a credible and relevant overview of the current state of the university's research environment. The analysis highlights a functional institutional framework regarding ethics and general working conditions, confirmed by the high levels of satisfaction and familiarity reported by respondents, while also revealing a series of persistent structural challenges.

The areas requiring the most significant interventions are clearly researchers' careers and talent development (46.3%) and recruitment and career development (29.5%), reflecting the need to strengthen mechanisms related to financial support, professional stability, and fairness in evaluation processes. At the same time, both the responses to the open-ended questions and the quantitative data converge in highlighting systemic issues such as excessive bureaucracy, the imbalance between teaching, administrative, and research responsibilities, and insufficient access to resources.

Therefore, although there are solid premises for the development of research at the institutional level, a strategic orientation towards reducing administrative constraints, increasing funding opportunities, and providing coherent support for researchers' careers is necessary in order to strengthen the performance and attractiveness of the academic environment.