

Milestone 2.3: Plan for ACTRIS personnel training and human capital development

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Work package no	WP2
Deliverable no.	MS2.3
Lead beneficiary	UHEL
Deliverable type	X R (Document, report) <input type="checkbox"/> DEC (Websites, patent filings, videos, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: please specify
Dissemination level	X PU (public) <input type="checkbox"/> CO (confidential, only for members of the Consortium, incl. Commission)
Estimated delivery date	M18
Actual delivery date	26/05/2021
Version	Final
Reviewed by	Eija Juurola
Accepted by	Eija Juurola
Comments	

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1. Purpose of the document

The purpose of this document is to provide a plan to facilitate human resources training for ACTRIS to support a stable environment for personnel and their professional development in different implementation stages and continuously throughout the operational phase. The purpose is not to make detailed suggestions but provide a plan for outlining the aspects and steps that are needed to be considered for this kind of training and human capital development.

2. Introduction

ACTRIS is a distributed research infrastructure (RI) with National Facilities (NF) that are developed, managed, and operated by national Research Performing Organisations (RPOs). ACTRIS includes eight Central Facilities (CF): six Topical Centres (TC), the Data Centre (DC) and the Head Office (HO). TCs and DC consist of several CF Units hosted by ACTRIS member or permanent observer countries and are operated by the responsible RPO. The HO and partly the DC are operated by ACTRIS ERIC.

The main purpose of a distributed RI is to build up and maintain long-term facilities for scientific research. They are science based but they are not scientific projects as the focus is providing *services for users*. By establishing a research infrastructure as a legal entity, the work-mode changes from scientifically led networks towards a more professionally managed organisation, creating the need also for other than scientific expertise to run efficiently operated distributed RI such as expertise on governance, organisation, financial and staff management, funding, IP, service provision and outreach in an international context. At the same time the RIs provide new career paths that need to be supported and developed further.

According to the Strategy for ACTRIS human resources ACTRIS will need skills related to scientific expertise, financial and operational management, technical expertise, data management, data curation, and computing with research data as well as skills in communication, representation, and negotiation. As ACTRIS RPOs and ACTRIS ERIC aim at engaging the best professionals to provide the best services for its users, ACTRIS needs to provide training possibilities and competitive career opportunities for those who want to specialise in managing and operating an RI. Such training will also bring the community together, increasing the understanding of ACTRIS and RI operations. According to the strategy, ACTRIS should also provide staff exchange programmes across RIs to support professional growth as well as investigate ways to facilitate career development.

3. Starting point

ACTRIS has already provided training for its CF and unit leaders and the Interim HO personnel. This was arranged by RItrain, the Research Infrastructure Training Programme which is an EU-funded Horizon 2020 project aimed at improving and professionalizing the training of managerial and leadership staff in RIs¹.

¹ <http://ritrain.eu/home>

The training lasted three days and covered strategy, management, and leadership both in theory and practice. The teachers were professors at the University of Milano-Bicocca. The feedback from participants was mainly positive.

The plan is to use this kind of training, that especially targets RI personnel, also in the future.

4. Plans for training and development

The main goal is to facilitate training and development and to provide training tools both for the ACTRIS ERIC and the whole RI. At this stage, ACTRIS does not plan to provide any organised and scheduled training programmes with own certificates but plans first to facilitate the participation to specialised RI training events and/or programmes supported by experienced professionals. Later the possibility and needs for own programmes can be explored, though.

4.1 Personnel of ACTRIS and the needs for expertise

Every training plan starts with defining the needs for training, goals, and the target audience. It is crucial for ACTRIS to define well the different audience groups for the training (eg. CF leader, NF representative, national contact person, HO personnel etc.). However, it is important to note that people can have multiple roles and therefore the audience groups may overlap.

The expertise that is needed in ACTRIS are related to scientific expertise, financial and operational management, technical expertise, data management, data curation, and computing with research data as well as expertise in communication, representation, and negotiation. Due to having multiple roles the training needs can be very diverse and employees may have training needs from various fields and topics. However, there are also employees that have very specific tasks and only specific needs for training.

As the maturity of implementing and operating the RI varies, priorities for timing different types of training need to be considered. Training should also be seen as continuous process along with the development of the personnel.

4.2 Facilitating training possibilities

As most of the personnel is and will be working in the RPOs, ACTRIS ERIC can only facilitate the creation of a personal development plan for employees in the RI to ensure continuous and relevant professional development. ACTRIS ERIC will provide the framework for dedicated RI training, communicate about the various training opportunities, and encourage the RI personnel to participate in the training courses. In addition, ACTRIS ERIC plans to partner with educational institutes and other RIs so that high quality trainings can be provided to the RI employees.

The responsibility of attending any trainings and making most out of them will remain with the employees. Each employee within the RI should recognise his/her own training needs and make time for developing its own expertise. The organisations within ACTRIS should provide time and resources for employees to develop their expertise. The aim is to foster a learning culture in ACTRIS where each employee takes responsibility of their own development and is supported by the employer organisation.

Because the research infrastructure is distributed, it is natural that a major part of the trainings will most likely be held remotely or online. However, there are learning topics that are very difficult to train remotely and, thus, face to face trainings will certainly be needed.

4.3 Learning from training experiences

Following the training, tools and methodologies should be developed to ensure that the training is applied in practice. This should be done together with the training participants, HO and the RI. The purpose of the training should be practical knowledge which will eventually affect the operations of the RI in order for the RI to meet its strategic objectives.

The participants should share their training experiences at least within their teams so that the knowledge is disseminated. The HO can provide a portfolio of different kind of trainings that are recognised as worth taking and recommend them to targeted audiences.

4.4 Staff exchange within the RI and other RIs

As ACTRIS is a distributed RI, the competence in different parts of the RI may vary. Thus, staff exchange within the RI should be encouraged. The role of the HO will be to facilitate the process while the RPOs are expected to take responsibility of practical arrangements.

Naturally, staff exchange should happen also so that the HO arranges opportunities for RI personnel to work for awhile in the ERIC. Wide communication, information sharing and interactions between the ERIC and the TCs, DC and NFs are needed when running the RI. Staff exchange may be very beneficial to share best practices among different RI expert staff to experience how others work in practice and to facilitate the interactions.

However, learning does not happen within the RI only. Thus, ACTRIS will also consider arranging staff exchange with other ERICs. For example, the ERIC Forum (project under H2020 and also a forum established by Memorandum of Understanding between different ERICs), where different RIs work together, share experiences, and learn from each other has proven very useful. Staff exchange has already happened within the ENVRI projects² and a short staff exchange was recently organised for the person responsible for communication at the Interim HO to work at ICOS ERIC in spring 2021. Experience has been considered very useful.

4.5 Planned process

As part of the process to establish a suitable human resources training framework within ACTRIS, a first step is to address a set of practical questions that are specifically pertinent to ACTRIS, including³:

- What are the specific training needs and objectives?
- What is the target audience?
- What kind of learning styles and modes are most suitable?
- What kind of training content is needed?

² <https://envri.eu/>

³ https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_human-resource-management/s12-04-designing-a-training-program.html

- What are the required resources?
- How to communicate and arrange training opportunities?

Only after this kind of assessment ACTRIS can properly start planning further steps and implement practicalities. A list of all necessary steps foreseen for the process is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

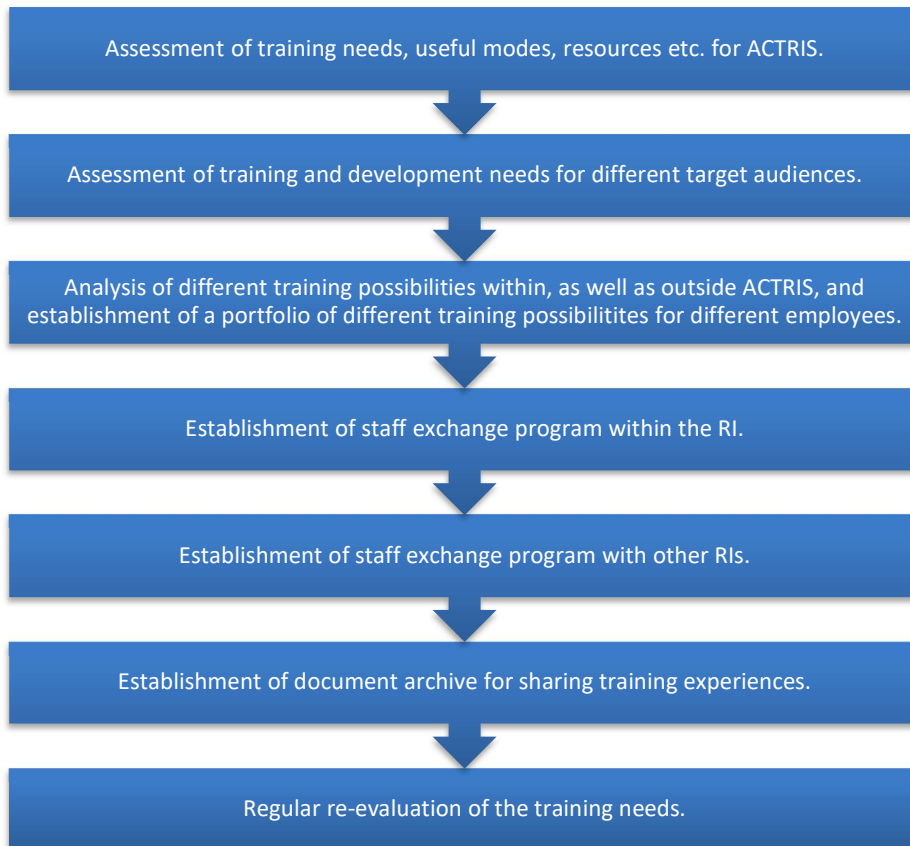


Figure 1. Steps forward

The implementation of the plan and the process is the responsibility of the HO but interaction with TCs, DC and NFs is needed.

5. Conclusions

Developing human capital is important but for newly established legal entities and distributed governance structures like ACTRIS it can be complicated. Therefore, it is important that the development needs are recognised and processes to facilitate training are started as soon as possible after the establishment of ACTRIS ERIC. This will most likely not happen during the first year of the ERIC, though, as the process to set up the HO and recruit Director General and the personnel will take time. But after the first year it is

recommended that the HO starts the process described in section 4.5 so that yearly trainings are gradually offered for employees.

6. References

ENVRI <https://envri.eu/>

Human resource management https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_human-resource-management/index.html

Research Infrastructure Training Programme <http://ritrain.eu/home>

Strategy for ACTRIS human resources https://www.actris.eu/sites/default/files/Documents/ACTRIS%20PPP/Deliverables/ACTRIS%20PPP_WP1_D1.4_Strategy%20for%20ACTRIS%20human%20resources.pdf