



National Academy of Theatre and Film Arts “Kr. Sarafov” (NATFA)

HRS4R GAP ANALYSIS

January 2026

1. Purpose and preparation

This Gap Analysis identifies areas of alignment and areas for development within the National Academy of Theatre and Film Arts "Kr. Sarafov" (NATFA) in relation to the 20 principles of the European Charter for Researchers (2023). It serves as the foundation for setting priorities and developing a targeted Action Plan within the HRS4R process.

The analysis was prepared using a mixed-methods approach:

Document and policy review: Systematic review of national legislation, institutional regulations, and policies related to ethics, recruitment, evaluation, career development, equality, and working conditions.

Institutional GAP questionnaire: Completed 14–21 December 2025 by focus group participants as preparatory work, structured in line with the four pillars of the Charter.

Focus group discussion: Held in December 2025 with senior researchers, junior researchers, doctoral candidates, NATFA's QA office, and administrative staff, during which the implementation of all 20 principles was discussed and validated.

The analysis reflects the specificities of artistic and practice-based research, the hybrid nature of research careers in the creative arts, and the national regulatory context in which NATFA operates.

2. Rating levels

Each principle is rated according to NATFA's current level of implementation:

++ Fully implemented	Clear policies in place; implementation consistent
+/- Almost but not fully implemented	Strong framework with identifiable needs for consolidation, visibility, or systematisation
-/+ Partially implemented	Practices exist but lack formal structure or consistency
-- Insufficiently implemented	Significant gaps in both policy and practice

European Charter for Researchers: GAP analysis overview – reference date: January 2026			
Principle	Implementation: ++ Fully implemented +/- Almost but not fully implemented -/+ Partially implemented -- Insufficiently implemented	Status and the gap: to what extent does NATFA meet the following principles?	Initiatives undertaken and/or suggestions for improvement:
Pillar 1: Ethics, Integrity, Gender, and Open Science			
1. Ethics and research integrity	+/-	<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No explicit reference to the ALLEA European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, the primary European framework referenced in the 2023 Charter - No formal training program on research ethics and integrity for all researchers - Emerging technologies not yet systematised: Responses to the questionnaire and internal discussions highlight that the application of ethical principles to emerging research practices, particularly in relation to artificial intelligence (AI), generative technologies, and intellectual property (IP) in artistic research, is still evolving. Ethical guidance related to AI currently exists primarily through disciplinary discussions, teaching practice, and expert knowledge, rather than through a consolidated institutional framework. <p>Impediments: rapid evolution of AI tools; complexity of authorship/IP in collaborative arts outputs; need for cross-faculty applicability.</p>	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethics Code (2008; amended 2025); - Ethics Committee with broad representation; - StrikePlagiarism mandatory; ethics revision sessions; strong survey awareness. <p>New proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Add ALLEA Code reference to Ethics Code - Develop annual research integrity training); - Develop and adopt institutional guidelines on AI ethics, IP, and artistic research, aligned with the Ethics Code - Integrate AI ethics into research ethics review, doctoral supervision, and staff induction
2. Freedom of scientific research	++	<p>No gaps identified. Academic freedom is comprehensively guaranteed by Article 20 of the Higher Education Act and institutionally embedded in the Regulations (Articles 4 and 36).</p>	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong legal guarantee (Higher Education Act Art. 20); - embedded in NATFA Regulations;

		<p>The approval processes for doctoral themes and research for academic progression represent appropriate quality assurance mechanisms rather than restrictions on freedom. A standalone institutional policy is not necessary given the robust legislative framework.</p> <p>Impediments: none institution-specific; national QA processes may be misread as restrictions unless explained.</p>	<p>- doctoral topic approval = QA not restriction; - survey confirms no concerns.</p> <p>New proposal conditional: if requested, add website/HRS4R regulation statement (as needed).</p>
3. Open Science	+/-	<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No formal institutional Open Science policy, despite national legislative requirements - No institutional Research Data Management guidelines aligned with FAIR principles - Limited institutional mechanisms to support open access publishing in external venues, due to the absence of a dedicated research budget - No dedicated institutional Open Access repository formally integrated with BPOS or EOSC - Citizen science and participatory research methodologies not systematically formalised, although relevant in selected artistic and community-based contexts <p>Impediments: no dedicated institutional research budget; public funding mainly through doctoral positions & competitive projects; artistic outputs require rights-sensitive access models.</p>	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - OA Yearbook and Bulletins; - digital access to theses & artistic outputs; - compliance with funder dissemination rules; - use of platforms (NCID, EBSCO, CEEOL). <p>New proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop and adopt an institutional Open Science Policy - Develop Research Data Management guidelines aligned with FAIR principles - Establish a mechanism to support Open Access publication fees (within budgetary constraints) - Explore integration with the Bulgarian Portal for Open Science (BPOS) - Integrate Open Science principles into doctoral training
4. Gender Equality	+/-	<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EDI governance not consistently visible across institution; - coordination EDI - Ethics Committee needs clearer roles; - uneven awareness of policies/support services; 	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GEP (2023–2025); EDI Officer + Committee; - Ethics Code non-discrimination; - Psychological Support Centre;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - monitoring/reporting not yet systematic. <p>Impediments: committee activity varies over time; field-driven recruitment pools limit use of targets/quotas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gender balance in leadership & staff; - flexible measures. <p>New proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen coordination and role clarity between EDI structures and the Ethics Committee - Improve visibility of EDI policies, and support services - Introduce systematic monitoring equality indicators - Implement training on inclusion and prevention of harassment
5. Embracing diversity	+/-	<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - limited visibility/communication of diversity measures; - accessibility & reasonable accommodation not formalised in one procedure; - no systematic diversity/unconscious bias training; - limited international doctoral/staff diversity due to national language rules; - diversity monitoring not consolidated into routine reporting. <p>Impediments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - national language requirements for instruction/doctoral training; - sensitive nature of some diversity metrics; - infrastructure constraints (campus accessibility still improving) 	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - non-discrimination framework; - Ethics + EDI structures; - Psychological Support Centre; - improving accessibility (3/4 buildings); - transparent recruitment; - HR capability to monitor. <p>New proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formalise procedures for reasonable accommodation and accessibility - Introduce awareness-raising or training activities on diversity and unconscious bias - Explore measures to support international engagement within national language constraints
6. The Researcher	+/-	<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - structured career guidance beyond PhD not yet systematised; - financial management training exists but elective; - inter-sectoral mobility frameworks not formalised beyond projects. 	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - doctoral candidates recognised as researchers; - hybrid careers normalised; - Erasmus+/projects mobility; - active research culture (annual conference + seminars); - accountability via audits/attestation.

		<p>Impediments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hybrid workload model; - research time not formally regulated; - mobility and dissemination largely project-driven. 	<p>New proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop structured career guidance resources for post-doctoral and mid-career researchers - Integrate financial management training into mandatory induction for project holders - Explore structured inter-sectoral mobility opportunities (industry placements, secondments)
7. Free circulation of researchers	+/-	<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - longer-term incoming mobility constrained by language requirements; - inter-sectoral mobility not formalised; - virtual mobility not systematically documented/recognised. <p>Impediments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - national language requirements; - limited pool in highly specialised fields; - administrative instruments exist but portability rarely tested. 	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strong outgoing mobility; - regular visiting professors/artists; - mobility recognised via NCID points; - virtual mobility practiced in projects. <p>New proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore options to facilitate incoming researcher mobility within language constraints (e.g., short-term stays, English-medium workshops, joint formats) - Develop an institutional framework for structured inter-sectoral mobility opportunities (industry/cultural placements, secondments) - Introduce systematic documentation and recognition of virtual mobility within institutional records
8. Sustainability of research	-/+	<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sustainability policy not adopted (in development); - no systematic training/awareness; - sustainable research practices not yet formalised; - limited monitoring; - limited sustainability-focused research programmes (though artistic projects exist). 	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sustainability dimension in strategy; - campus initiatives (recycling, LED, green production); - preference for virtual participation emerging; - artistic sustainability projects (EMPACT, In-Situ); - EU compliance in projects. <p>New proposals:</p>

		<p>Impediments: early-stage institutional maturity; infrastructure constraints; sustainability requirements often project-led.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adopt an institutional sustainability policy addressing research activities - Develop institutional guidelines for sustainable research practices (travel, events, resource use) - Introduce awareness-raising or training activities on sustainable research practices - Explore integration of sustainability themes into research and doctoral training - Establish basic monitoring of research-related environmental impact
Pillar 2: Researchers' Assessment, Recruitment, and Progression			
9. Researchers' assessment	+/-	<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - evaluator training not standardised; - broader Open Science practices beyond OA publications not explicit in criteria; - documenting individual contributions in collaborative outputs can be strengthened. <p>Impediments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - national points logic already complex; - artistic collaboration requires role-based credit models; - evaluator training must fit legal procedures. 	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - two-level system (recruitment + attestation); - recognition of artistic outputs and broad activities; - anonymous peer voting + student input; - performance rewards. <p>New proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop standardised training for members of scientific and evaluation committees - Explore integration of broader Open Science practices (FAIR data, open methods) into assessment criteria - Strengthen documentation of individual contributions in collaborative outputs
10. Recruitment	+/-	<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - committee training on fair recruitment not standardised - international visibility could be enhanced (e.g., EURAXESS), within legal constraints <p>Impediments:</p>	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - public adverts (website + State Gazette + internal) - detailed ads (competencies, conditions, timeline) - evidence-based CVs - career breaks not penalised; feedback to candidates

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - national procedures and language rules - limited applicant pools in niche artistic areas 	<p>New proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop training for scientific committee members on fair recruitment principles - Explore options to enhance international visibility of vacancies (e.g. EURAXESS)
11. Selection	+/-	<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - training gap same as 9/10; - gender-balance monitoring not treated as actionable due to narrow field (expertise prioritized). <p>Impediments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - small pool of qualified professors nationally/internationally; - language constraints; - need for external expertise. 	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - majority external experts; - written reviews published in advance; - jury does not meet candidate until final stage; - detailed feedback through published reports; - Faculty Council final decision. <p>New proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Include fair selection and bias-awareness components in training for scientific committee members (linked to Action 10.1)
12. Career Progression	+/-	<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no institutional co-authorship/authorship guidance; - no structured ethical authorship training; - no international members in attestation committees (structural). <p>Impediments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - language constraints for international membership; - national rules for points splitting in co-authorship; - high collaboration in film/theatre. 	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clear pathway; - multi-stakeholder attestation committee; - multidimensional eligibility across categories; - mobility valued via NCID; - role-based attribution in collaborative outputs; - performance rewards. <p>New proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop institutional guidelines on co-authorship and authorship attribution - Integrate ethical authorship and contribution practices into doctoral training and early-career induction
Pillar 3: Working Conditions and Practices			
13. Working Conditions, Funding & Salaries	+/-	<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - teaching workload regulated, but research/artistic time not integrated into workload planning; 	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - flexible “non-regulated working schedule”; - remote work; - OHS;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supplementary guidance on pension rights/long-term benefits not consolidated; - no dedicated research-only infrastructure beyond shared spaces; - no ombudsperson-type function. <p>Impediments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - structural/spatial campus constraints; - teaching/production scheduling; - public funding model. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Psychological Support Centre; - standardised teaching workload by rank; - payslips show tax & contributions. <p>New proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop institutional guidance on recognition of research and artistic production time in relation to teaching workloads (without mandating time reporting). - Prepare supplementary guidance (BG/EN) on pension rights and long-term social security benefits and make it available at induction and via HR channels. - Explore designation of an ombudsperson or informal dispute-resolution function for researchers - Integrate research infrastructure priorities into strategic and capital investment planning within existing spatial constraints
14. Stability of employment	+/+	<p>No significant gaps.</p> <p>Impediments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fixed-term assistant contracts are legally defined (2–4 years); - other posts permanent once awarded. 	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - stable employment; - social security coverage; - attestation supports careers. <p>Continuous improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor employment patterns (permanent vs fixed-term contracts) and report biennial findings to the Academic Council - Ensure researchers on fixed-term or project-based contracts receive information on career development services (Centre for Career Development)
15. Contractual & legal obligations	+/-	<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no single BG/EN obligations guide; 	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - robust legal framework; - contracts + policies;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IP & AI obligations not consolidated into one document; - induction not systematic on obligations (data protection/cybersecurity/knowledge security). <p>Impediments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - breadth of obligations; - uneven awareness across disciplines; - evolving AI/IP practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - project compliance structures; - H&S training; - ethics and plagiarism controls; - growing IP/AI awareness. <p>New proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a concise “Legal and Contractual Obligations Guide for Researchers” (BG/EN) covering contracts, funder rules, IP, data protection, and cybersecurity - Integrate key legal and contractual topics into induction for new academic staff and doctoral candidates - Coordinate with IP/AI guidelines development to ensure cross-referencing and consistency
16. Dissemination, intellectual assets & public engagement	++	<p>Further consolidation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - institutional intellectual assets strategy not yet unified; - recognition/reward of OS & public engagement could be made more explicit in templates. <p>Impediments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - need to harmonise IP approaches across collaborative, practice-based outputs and AI-assisted processes. 	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - extensive dissemination channels; - OA publications and archives; - strong public engagement culture; - IP/AI educational initiatives. <p>New proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen recognition of Open Science and public engagement in attestation and promotion templates - Develop an institutional intellectual assets management strategy (coordinated with IP guidelines) - Continue and expand institutional support for public engagement showcasing research and artistic projects
Pillar 4: Research Careers and Talent Development			
17. Valuing Diverse research Careers	+/-	<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - diverse profiles not explicitly described in guidance; 	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - diverse contributions recognised in evaluation;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - limited structured mobility/career info; - institutional comms doesn't systematically showcase diverse achievements. <p>Impediments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - decentralised mentoring; - reliance on informal networks; - hybrid careers hard to "standardise" without guidance materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strong cultural/industry connections; - hybrid careers common. <p>New proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop guidance materials illustrating diverse research and artistic career profiles (case studies, alumni examples) - Integrate discussion of diverse career opportunities and inter-sectoral mobility into mentoring and career advising - Showcase interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral achievements in institutional communication
18. Career Development & Advice	+/-	<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Centre mandate not fully formalised for researcher advising; - limited coordination; - no systematic support at transition points; - no individual career planning tools. <p>Impediments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - decentralised practice; - reliance on supervisors/deans/rector; - limited dedicated advisory capacity. 	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - formal Academic Staff Strategy; - clear legal pathways; - Centre + alumni office exist; - strong informal mentoring. <p>New proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formalise the mandate of the Centre for Career Development for researcher career guidance and placement - Establish structured career guidance at key transition points - Develop optional individual career planning templates and resources - Strengthen coordination between academic staff strategy and career services
19. Continuous professional development	+/-	<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no central CPD coordination; - limited strategic alignment with transversal skills (AI literacy, PM, entrepreneurship, OS); - no systematic effectiveness assessment; - low uptake for early-career heavy teaching; 	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CPD through EU/national programmes; - CPD recognised in evaluation; - strong discipline-specific learning; - teaching valued. <p>New proposals:</p>

		<p>- entrepreneurship not systematised.</p> <p>Impediments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - decentralised, researcher-driven model; - time constraints; - funding often project-linked. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Map internal and external CPD opportunities relevant to research and transversal skills - Develop a coordinated institutional CPD framework with annual priorities - Assess CPD take-up and effectiveness through surveys and tracking - Improve CPD visibility via a dedicated online portal. - Support entrepreneurial competence development through training and mentoring
20. Supervision & Mentoring	-/+	<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - doctoral supervision formal, but no unified mentoring model across stages; - limited structured mentoring after PhD; - matching mechanisms missing; supervisor training inconsistent; - limited R3–R4 guidance. <p>Impediments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strong departmental autonomy; - mentoring largely informal; - no unified framework yet. 	<p>Undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - formal doctoral supervision and study plans; - progress reviews; - supervisory training initiatives; - strong informal mentoring traditions. <p>New proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop an institutional supervision and mentoring framework covering R1–R2 researchers - Establish regular training for supervisors and senior researchers (R3–R4) - Pilot mentoring schemes for early-career researchers - Develop mentoring resources addressing bias, well-being, and career support