



Victor Babes
National Institute of Pathology

ACTION PLAN FOR CoARA

2025 - 2027



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Introduction

About Victor Babeș National Institute of Pathology

The Victor Babeș National Institute of Research and Development (IVB), named after its founder Prof. Dr. Victor Babeș, was established on April 28, 1887, making it the oldest medical scientific institute in Romania. It was originally conceived as a superior practical medical school for all healthcare professionals and as a complex medical institute modeled after the Pasteur Institute in Paris. At its founding, it included departments such as pathological anatomy, bacteriology, rabies vaccination, veterinary pathology, serology, and chemistry, reflecting the scientific demands of that era.

Over time, some of these fields were taken over by newer institutions inspired by the Victor Babeș Institute, such as the Cantacuzino Institute, the Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, the Institute of Virology, and the Pasteur Institute. Since 1899, the institute has operated from its building on Splaiul Independenței in Bucharest, where it remains active today.

Victor Babeș himself was part of the spiritual and scientific lineage of pioneers like Louis Pasteur, Robert Koch, and Emil Adolf von Behring, who laid the foundations of microbiology, microbial pathology, and immunology—disciplines critical to modern medical science. Under Babeș's leadership, the institute gained international renown for contributions in complex medical fields such as pathological anatomy, bacteriology, virology, immunology, hygiene, comparative pathology, and even medical history.

The institute also fostered the first Romanian scientific medical school, producing notable students like Gheorghe Marinescu, Constantin Levaditi, Titu Vasiliu, and Nicolae D. Lupu, who became internationally recognized figures. The institute addressed pressing medical needs of the time, including contagious disease prophylaxis, rabies control, ensuring clean drinking water for Bucharest, and animal disease prevention and treatment. Babeș also tackled social-medical issues such as pellagra (vitamin B3 deficiency) and advocated for the creation of a Ministry of Health in Romania.

Several distinguished Romanian medical specialists have directed the institute, including Gheorghe Proca, Constantin Bacaloglu, Nicolae Gh. Lupu, Emil Crăciun, and Ioan T. Moraru, who in turn trained new generations of researchers and professors, expanding the institute's prestige as a reference center for fundamental and applied medical research.

In 1999, the institute was renamed the National Institute of Research and Development in Pathology and Biomedical Sciences „Victor Babeș” (INCD „Victor Babeș”).

IVB has signed CoARA Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment in 14/10/2022 as a commitment to align to European Research initiatives. Currently, IVB is represented by the General Manager, Prof. Mihail E. Hinescu and Scientific Director, Prof. Mihaela Gherghiceanu.

By doing so, IVB continues to support its main values and principles:

- **Excellence in the field** – IVB aims, through its research activities, at approaches of excellence, innovation, high quality, and topicality. The institute's specialists seek to put their experience and knowledge in the biomedical field at the service of society and the advancement of knowledge, taking into account the needs of patients and the healthcare system, including through direct medical services. Both research activities and medical services strive to align with international standards in the field, find solutions to specific national problems, and integrate into the European Research Area.
- **Competence, integrity, and responsibility** – IVB conducts its research activities with a focus on



increasing competence, promoting continuous development, creativity, and innovation in the biomedical field, as well as responsibility and integrity, in accordance with current regulations (The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity). Activities associated with medical services and accurate patient information are directly linked to the institute's mission, with internal procedures ensuring this. Transparency in information, a fundamental component of responsibility and integrity, covers all IVB activities.

- **Partnership** – IVB makes all necessary efforts to strengthen existing partnerships and intends to develop activities involving cooperation to find innovative solutions for social needs. Partnerships are based on open communication, professionalism, team spirit, and building long-term relationships founded on seriousness, fairness, and trust. These partnerships, established both nationally and internationally, are a means of progress in biomedical research and sustainable development.
- **Financial sustainability** – As an organization engaged in research and innovation, education and professional training, and as a provider of medical services, IVB seeks strategic medium- and long-term solutions to secure sufficient financial resources to achieve its development objectives.
- **Patient-oriented attitude** – IVB promotes research directions and studies aimed at preventing, early diagnosing, monitoring disease progression, and therapy. The institute's research staff is concerned with transferring knowledge gained from research into medical practice. Additionally, IVB promotes the education and information of medical professionals alongside providing medical services to patients, including specialized counseling. Thus, IVB supports Romania's healthcare system, patients, and their close ones.
- **Respect for diversity** – IVB operates based on the principles of autonomy and dignity. It honors patients' informed choices, enabling them, through informed decisions, to take control over their own health-related lives. IVB staff equally supports people without discrimination, whether as a result of research activities or directly. Through its activities, the institute seeks to respect the environment and all living beings.
- **Continuous education** – Through its contribution to biomedical knowledge, IVB educates the public on health matters, aiming for the best long-term interests of patients and the community. Equally, IVB is committed to the continuous education and specialization of its own staff, offering training services also to personnel from other medical institutions.

Process for elaborating the Action Plan

The development of the IVB Action Plan for CoARA was based on:

1. a review and mapping of current practices and activities, using the CoARA official site (<https://coara.eu/>) and its Zenodo-related repository;
2. internal consultation meetings with the heads of all laboratories.

The Action Plan is structured as follows:

- a section that summarizes the main changes performed in the regulatory procedures of IVB, in order to align to new legislation and CoARA requirements
- a section that will briefly present a list of new documents and measures to be implemented for a full alignment with CoARA actions



Action plan

In the table below is summarized the progress made by IVB in implementation of CoARA principles

Table 1. Victor Babes Institute alignment with CoARA principles.

Principle	Implementation status	Action/document
1. Recognize the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research	Implemented	Periodical evaluation of personnel
2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators	Partially implemented	Periodical evaluation of personnel
3. Abandon inappropriate uses in research assessment of journal- and publication-based metrics, in particular inappropriate uses of Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index	Partially implemented	Periodical evaluation of personnel
4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organizations in research assessment	Addressed	Recruitment methodology
5. Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organizational changes committed to	In progress	Appoint a CoARA responsible within the organization
6. Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes	Partially implemented	Periodical evaluation of personnel
7. Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use	On-going	Periodical information provided within the Scientific Council sessions
8. Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition	To be implemented	Webinar/info days/direct contact
9. Communicate progress made on adherence to the Principles and implementation of the Commitments	On-going	Social media posts
10. Evaluate practices, criteria and tools based on solid evidence and the state-of-the-art in research on research, and make data openly available for evidence gathering and research	On-going	To be developed as part of CoARA alignment

Part A. Changes already in place by 2025

Recognize the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research

IVB has modified the evaluation criteria used for periodical evaluation of the research personnel in the first trimester of 2025. The new criteria now include mentorship and training activities, as well as involvement in public awareness activities related to biomedical research. Peer-reviewing of research activity is acknowledged as part of the researcher's activity, related to journal peer-reviewing as well as committee-related peer-



reviewing, such as project proposal assessment, thesis defense committees, obtaining the PhD supervisor quality. This implementation was achieved by several consultation rounds with the head of the laboratories and approval of the final form in the Scientific Committee of IVB in February 2025.

Updated assessment processes

Since the first trimester of 2025, a new procedure for personnel assessment has been implemented, in-line with national legislation and CoARA indications on usage of both quantitative and qualitative indicators.

Part B. New documents and measures to be implemented in agreement with COARA principles

Appropriate and inappropriate uses of quantitative indicators

The translation to preponderant quality-related assessment, while reducing the impact of scientometric indicators is one measure that IVB has to modify according to further suggestions, coming from regulatory bodies and European committees, such as CoARA.

Practical tools suggested in the Annex 4 of the AGREEMENT ON REFORMING RESEARCH ASSESSMENT will be browsed and selected for the specific research of IVB.

Milestone: set a general outline of practices in need of change by the end of 2025.

Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organizational changes committed to

Taking the first steps towards alignment with CoARA principles firmly engaged IVB to pursue the next steps, whether in the form of budget or staff capacity, to improve research assessment practices. We are yet to allocate dedicated staff and evaluate the financial requirements for their training, as well as support the necessary infrastructure such as tools and services for the transparent collection and processing of data on research assessment practices.

Milestone: name a CoARA responsible by July 2025.

Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use

Changes to be made on assessment criteria have been opened to public consultation within the research groups of IVB. The feed-backs received on the initial document revising research personnel evaluation were discussed in the Scientific Council in several meetings until consensus was achieved. Implementation will start in 2026.

Milestone: CoARA info session during the IVB Annual Conference, starting with 2026.

Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition

IVB will seek support from other coalition members for implementation of best practices. The first step taken was to address other Action Plans listed on Zenodo (https://zenodo.org/communities/coara_action_plans/). In the year to come, IVB staff involved in CoARA implementation will make contact and learn from other partners how to efficiently implement changes in research assessment and personnel recruitment, as well as which tools can be used to put this plan in motion.

Milestones: Participation in CoARA working group meetings



Communicate progress made on adherence to the Principles and implementation of the Commitments

As IVB progresses with implementation of CoARA principles, the information will be disseminated through media channels, such as the institute's web page (www.ivb.ro) and its accounts on social media platforms. We foresee an update every 6 months.

Milestones: one social media post every 6 months, starting with June 2025

Evaluate practices, criteria and tools based on solid evidence and the state-of-the-art in research on research, and make data openly available for evidence gathering and research

Some assessment tools, such as recruitment methodology for vacant research positions, are publicly available on the site of IVB and updated periodically, to address legislative changes or European practices, such as European Carta of Researchers. In addition, all IVB researchers can access on intranet the assessment criteria. Changes in methodologies are proposed for consultation via the Scientific Secretary of INCDC and disseminated to all laboratories for feedback.

Milestone: Revised Action Plan

Research Data Management Plan

Until the end of 2025 IVB is to describe the practices for Research Data Management used during project implementation in line with FAIR principles. Such DMPs have been proposed already in various project proposals.

Open Science practices

Similar to the case of Research Data Management, IVB will describe how Open Science practices will be addressed, in accordance with the specificities of the research domain.

Timeline and milestones

As INCVB will implement CoARA principles and align them with open science and FAIR activities, training, and capacity building, the engagement and visibility of IVB will grow over time. Below is a proposed timeline of its commitment, with periodical milestones.

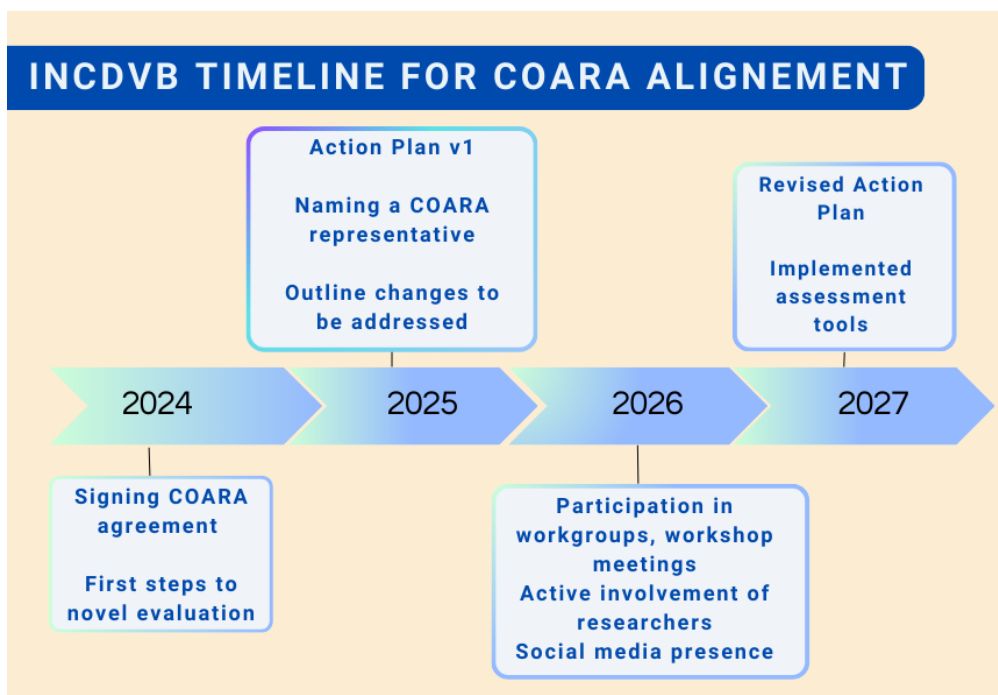


Figure 1. Timeline and milestones for COARA alignment

Activities being implemented as part of different projects and other supporting actions

Other actions already implemented fall in line with CoARA principles, such as Gender Equality Plan and Human Resources Strategy.

Gender Equality Plan

IVB has a Gender Equality Plan in action for the next four years (2025-2029). It was drafted and revised to its final form during the last year, and respects both national legislation as well as recommendation found in the European Carta of Researchers 2023.

HR plan – seal of excellence received

IVB received the seal of excellence for HRS4R in May, 2024 and it is actively involved in the 2-year plan of implementation.

Further references

- The Strategic Plan Research and Development IVB www.ivb.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Plan-Strategic-de-Dezvoltare_IVB_2025-2029.pdf
- Gender Equality Plan <https://www.ivb.ro/egalitate-de-gen>
- HRS4R <https://www.ivb.ro/hrs4r-strategia-de-resurse-umane>