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STRATEGIC PLAN FOR INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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1. development framework

1.1. General context

The European framework for research, development and innovation

Research, development and innovation activities occupy a central place amongst the sectors that enjoy support and recognition at European Union level. Investments in research and innovation aim to develop technologies, products and services capable of increasing the global competitiveness of European industries, generating economic and social development, and improving the quality of life of the population.

The EU-funded research and innovation framework programmes directly target five areas of action: a) strengthening the EU's role as a driving force in the international scientific community; b) strengthening innovation through investment in key technologies; c) addressing a range of major societal challenges; d) supporting public-private partnerships; e) accelerating international cooperation in research and innovation. The instruments used by the EU to ensure the targeted progress include a range of funding programmes (including Horizon Europe, the ERDF, ESIF, LIFE and Cohesion Fund programmes), scholarships and individual research grants (ERC Grants, Marie Curie – Research Fellowship Programme), as well as various awards for excellence in research and innovation.

The Horizon Europe programme 2021–2027, the European Union's main funding instrument for research and innovation, aims to support all relevant fields, focusing on scientific excellence, global challenges, industrial competitiveness and building an innovative Europe. It also promotes broader participation and the strengthening of the European Research Area (ERA), with the aim of maximising impact by strengthening scientific and technological foundations, stimulating innovation capacity and driving the green and digital transitions. At the same time, it supports an economic recovery that is conducive to social inclusion.

Horizon Europe aims to generate major impacts in three key areas. **Scientific impact** involves the creation of new, high-quality knowledge, the strengthening of human capital in research, development and innovation (RDI), as well as the promotion of knowledge dissemination and open science. **Societal impact** aims to address the European Union's policy priorities and global challenges through RDI, delivering tangible benefits through research and innovation missions, as well as integrating the results of these initiatives into the real economy. **Economic impact** aims to stimulate innovation-driven economic growth, create more high-quality jobs and mobilise investment in research and development.

To achieve these objectives, the programme is based on three main pillars. (1) **Scientific excellence**, which aims to strengthen and expand excellence in Europe's scientific base. This pillar supports fundamental and advanced research, providing support to top researchers across Europe to develop their innovative projects.

(2) **Global challenges and European industrial competitiveness**, which focuses on developing key technologies and solutions to support EU policies and sustainable development goals. This pillar is structured into six clusters, each addressing critical themes (health, culture and creativity, security, digitalisation, climate and energy, food and natural resources). (3) An **innovative Europe**, which aims to stimulate breakthrough innovations capable of creating new markets and developing innovation-friendly ecosystems. This pillar supports entrepreneurship, in nd collaboration between the public and

private sectors, facilitating the transformation of groundbreaking ideas into solutions that have an impact on society and the economy.

Through these three pillars, Horizon Europe aims to accelerate the transition to a sustainable and digitalised economy that is resilient and inclusive. By focusing on scientific, economic and social impacts, the programme aims to transform Europe into a global leader in innovation and research, capable of responding to both current and future challenges.

The European Strategic Agenda 2024–2029, adapted to the new challenges and risks facing Europe, identifies three areas of action for the coming period: a) ensuring freedom and democracy; b) ensuring security; c) ensuring prosperity and competitiveness. Regarding Europe's prosperity and increased competitiveness, the European Strategic Agenda outlines the EU's commitment to improving citizens' economic and social well-being by increasing purchasing power, creating quality jobs and ensuring access to quality goods and services. Underpinning the efforts to achieve these targets are investments in key areas, including research and development.

For ICCV, European programmes designed to support research represent both opportunities and targets for the coming period. Thus, ICCV aims to attract funding both through the lines provided for in the Horizon Europe programme and through programmes funded by the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) or the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Programme.

Reform of research, development and innovation in Romania

At national level, the research and development system is undergoing a period of reform, with a number of measures being implemented to improve the efficiency of the activities carried out by the relevant institutions. A key milestone in this process is the inclusion in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) of several concrete measures aimed at reforming key components of the research and development sector. Among the reforms envisaged by the PNRR and implemented, at various stages to date, are:

a) Improving the efficiency of governance in the field of research through the establishment of a dedicated reform implementation unit. In this regard, Government Decision No. 371/2021 established the PSF Reform Implementation Unit, with responsibilities in five specific areas: a) governance of the research, development and innovation system; b) framework conditions for public research, and human resources for research and innovation; c) the internationalisation of research, development and innovation organisations; d) public-private partnerships in the field of research, development and innovation; e) the impact of structural funds on the research, development and innovation system.

b) The adoption of a law to stimulate, facilitate and regulate the voluntary and functional integration, as well as the merger, of research institutions in Romania. This requirement of the PNRR was implemented through the adoption of Law 25/2023 on the merger of research organisations, which reorganises the research system and provides for the periodic external evaluation (every 5 years) of all research and development institutes in Romania, based on international standards designed to promote scientific excellence and socio-economic impact. Another major provision of Law 25/2023 concerns research organisations' access to financial and non-financial support linked to the results obtained in the aforementioned periodic evaluation.

c) The creation of a decision-making body, focused on the field of research, development and innovation and on smart specialisation policies, at government level, which will ensure the coordination of research, development and innovation activities at national level.

d) Reforming the research career path by adopting legislation regulating the status and career of researchers. To this end, in 2024, Law No. 183/2024 on the status of research, development and innovation staff was adopted, which includes key indicators for performance evaluation, standards of good conduct in scientific research, as well as financial and non-financial incentives designed to support the implementation of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers within research institutes.

e) Strengthening collaboration between the business and research sectors will be achieved through incentives designed to help meet the target that 40% of publicly funded research, development and innovation projects include at least one commercial partner.

f) The establishment of 5 centres of excellence to reduce thematic fragmentation within research, development and innovation organisations, selected through a competitive call for proposals based on complex and applied research, development and innovation projects proposed by consortia comprising public and private RDI organisations (including SMEs), which will jointly implement the strategic research and innovation agenda related to the mission in the Horizon programme.

g) Supporting Romania's active participation in the partnerships and missions of the Horizon Europe 2021–2027 programme, with a focus on promoting excellence in research and innovation. Funding will cover various types of eligible activities, including: fundamental research (capped at 10% of the allocated budget), industrial research, experimental development, feasibility studies and innovative initiatives that contribute to scientific and technological progress.

h) Implementation of a programme aimed at attracting highly qualified specialists from abroad to Romania to carry out research and development activities.

i) The establishment and financial support of a national network of eight regional career guidance centres as part of the ERA TALENT PLATFORM.

Following the implementation of these measures and the decisions of the Romanian Academy, the ICCV carried out an evaluation process in 2023–2024, covering the period 2018–2022, which revealed both the institute's position in relation to similar entities in terms of field of activity and expertise, as well as priorities for the future and the sectors where performance needs to be improved.

National Strategy for Research, Innovation and Smart Specialisation 2022–2027

The National Strategy for Research, Innovation and Smart Specialisation 2022–2027 (SNCDI 2022–2027) places significant emphasis on the allocation of funds to the areas of smart specialisation identified at national level, which represent strategic priorities for the sustainable development of the Romanian economy and society: 1. Bioeconomy, 2. Digital economy and space technologies, 3. Energy and mobility, 4. Advanced manufacturing, 5. Advanced functional materials, 6. Environment and eco-technologies, 7. Health – prevention, diagnosis and advanced treatment. These areas were selected following detailed analyses of the needs of the national economy and global challenges, and are considered essential for increasing competitiveness and innovation in our country.

Although the strategy considers the social sciences essential for understanding and addressing the challenges facing society, none of the traditional fields of the social sciences benefit from funding lines

explicitly dedicated to them, which requires continuous adaptation of research areas and closer collaboration with institutes, universities and the private sector. Thus, to increase the chances of success in securing funding available through programmes developed in line with the SNCDI 2022–2027, the ICCV needs to strengthen its capacity to initiate and develop effective partnerships with organisations in the technological and private sectors, in order to become eligible in competitive funding rounds.

Thus, it is necessary for the ICCV to expand its scope of interest beyond traditional partnerships by establishing collaborations with public and private institutions whose areas of expertise fall within the six fields identified as priorities in the SNCDI 2022–2027: a) digitalisation, industry and space; b) climate, energy and mobility; c) food, bioeconomy, natural resources, biodiversity, agriculture and the environment; d) health; e) culture, creativity and an inclusive society; f) civil security for society. By focusing on societal impact, the Strategic Research Agenda differs from the areas of smart specialisation, whilst at the same time complementing them. This allows for the broader integration of social science research into research approaches that take into account global needs and challenges, such as climate change, digital transformation or public health.

1.2. Mission and vision

Now in its 35th year of operation, the Institute for Quality of Life Research, part of the Romanian Academy and the 'Costin C. Kirițescu' National Institute for Economic Research, is a leading institution in social research in Romania. The Institute combines the tradition of fundamental research with a modern approach, with the primary objective of analysing and improving quality of life and social policies, thereby contributing to the development of Romanian society.

Through its projects, the ICCV addresses key areas such as quality of life, social policies, poverty, education, social and symbolic capital (the study of social values), standard of living (income and consumption), health, employment, the socio-economic situation of vulnerable groups, the social economy, migration, demographic changes and the impact of pandemics (COVID-19). Its research output includes over 200 books and 1,000 published articles, many in prestigious international journals, alongside social reports used by governmental and non-governmental partners.

ICCV contributes to the development of strategies and legislation in the social sector, having been involved in key documents such as the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, the package of laws on the social assistance system, and others. With over 50 nationally and internationally recognised researchers, ICCV is a pillar of social research, active in research consortia and networks at both national and European level.

ICCV's mission is to conduct fundamental and applied research that responds to society's needs and supports public policies aimed at improving the population's well-being.

2. 's scientific and financial SWOT analysis

2.1. Scientific SWOT analysis

STRENGTHS

- Affiliation with a highly prestigious institution – the Romanian Academy – which lends the ICCV credibility and authority in the field of scientific research, and also enables the establishment of

inter-institutional collaborations that can facilitate access to funding and international research opportunities.

- The ICCV's already solid reputation in the field of research gives it an advantage in attracting partnerships and resources.
- The Institute's strong integration into Romanian society through the research topics it addresses, which are relevant to current social and economic realities, thereby increasing the applicability of ICCV's research and its capacity to influence public policy development.
- ICCV's pioneering role in Romania in certain research areas: ICCV has set a precedent in researching sensitive topics, such as vulnerable groups and social inequalities, which has given the Institute a leading position in these fields.
- Extensive experience in field research gives the ICCV a significant advantage, as applied studies are highly relevant to the formulation of public policy solutions.
- The establishment of a doctoral school provides a structured framework for training future researchers and can ensure the continuity of research within the Institute.
- Flexible leadership style and diversity in research: Flexibility in the choice of research topics and the ability to integrate researchers from diverse fields (Sociology, Social Work, Economics, Psychology, Political Science, etc.) has led to the creation of a dynamic academic environment. At the same time, the extensive expertise of ICCV researchers has enabled research to be carried out in multiple fields, thereby broadening the Institute's portfolio.
- ICCV benefits from solid expertise in securing internal and external funding, which contributes significantly to the continuity of research activities.
- The strong commitment and stability of the research team

WEAKNESSES

- Budgetary constraints constitute a significant barrier to carrying out applied research and attracting the resources necessary to maintain the Institute's competitiveness. The general trend of **declining research funding** in Romania means that the ICCV is dependent on external sources, such as European grants or funding from international or national organisations or the private sector.
- Insufficient logistical infrastructure: Although the ICCV has a competent team with extensive research experience, its infrastructure is not comparable to that of private organisations, which limits the Institute's ability to collect and process large volumes of data and to implement advanced research tools.
- Insufficient resources for the continuous training of researchers, which limits their opportunities for professional development. Insufficient financial resources affect researchers' participation in international conferences, summer schools and training courses, which are essential for maintaining a well-trained, competitive team that is up to date with trends in the field of research.
- Lack of a clear distinction between research work and administrative tasks: On the one hand, the team's flexibility is an advantage; on the other hand, it leads to researchers being overburdened with administrative tasks. Insufficient administrative staff reduces the institute's efficiency and capacity to attract and manage external funding.
- Limited access to specialist databases and the software required for quantitative and qualitative analyses significantly reduces the quality and relevance of research and leads to a loss of competitive advantage.

- Low external visibility: Despite its academic achievements, ICCV does not always succeed in effectively communicating research results to the general public and decision-makers, which reduces their use in public policy.

OPPORTUNITIES

- High interest in research topics in which ICCV possesses considerable expertise. As a range of social and economic issues become increasingly pressing, ICCV can attract research funding in relevant fields: social innovation, migration, education, the impact of technology on society, mental health, security and global conflicts, etc.
- Expanding international networks and strengthening collaborations with research institutes at European level, which can facilitate access not only to additional resources but also to training opportunities for researchers.
- Investment in the continuous professional development of researchers through postdoctoral training programmes, participation in international conferences and summer schools is essential to enable ICCV to increase its visibility and maintain its leading position in research.
- Diversifying funding sources through external partnerships with international organisations, grant schemes and European cooperation projects
- Enhancing strategic planning capabilities to help ICCV respond more effectively to financial and organisational challenges.

THREATS

- Declining research resources: The general trend of declining research funding in Romania means that ICCV is dependent on external sources, such as European grants or funding from international or national organisations or the private sector.
- Fluctuation in financial resources: this may affect the long-term stability of projects and the continuous training of researchers.
- Poor utilisation of research results by decision-makers: Decision-makers' lack of interest in research results may limit the actual impact of research on social change.
- Risk of losing specialists: Although the ICCV can attract young researchers by developing new professional training opportunities, such as the doctoral programme, budgetary constraints, financial instability and the precarious nature of resources may lead to their migration to better-paid jobs in other organisations or in the private sector.
- Increased competition with other public and private research centres, as well as with universities, which invest heavily in human resource development and access to research resources.
- The risk of compromising on the choice of research topics: There is a risk that, faced with financial pressures, researchers may opt for 'trendy' or more easily funded topics, to the detriment of major but unfunded topics, which, in the long term, may lead to a reduction in the relevance of the research carried out by the institute.
- Difficulties in recruitment and/or promotion, due to the constraints imposed by current legislation on public sector employment.

2.2. Financial SWOT analysis

STRENGTHS

- The ICCV's experience in securing European grants diversifies funding sources and reduces dependence on national funds. In recent years, the institute's fundraising capacity has increased approximately threefold, from one million lei to three million lei.
- The Institute's experience in managing externally funded research projects makes it a reliable partner for funding bodies.
- The Institute's prestige increases its chances of securing funding from international organisations, private funders, etc. Collaborations with public and private institutions facilitate access to funding sources, including from the private sector.
- Flexibility in adapting to funding opportunities allows the ICCV to quickly draft project proposals and apply for grant competitions. In recent years, a team of researchers with experience in writing grant applications has emerged within the Institute.

WEAKNESSES

- Dependence on grants and external funding hinders long-term strategic planning.
- Fluctuation in income: The variable and unpredictable nature of funding sources affects financial stability and the continuity of projects. This, in turn, affects the Institute's ability to conduct research on topics of major interest and to maintain the continuity of longitudinal studies, and consequently the ICCV's ability to provide relevant data to inform public policy.
- Limited access to investment for infrastructure modernisation: Financial resources do not allow for the purchase of specialised software, access to international databases or modern research equipment.
- Insufficient budget for human resources development: Researchers' participation in international academic events and training/development courses is hampered by a lack of funds, which leads to reduced competitiveness in the global research market.
- Low salaries, compared to higher education and other public institutions or private research organisations, constitute a significant barrier to attracting and retaining high-quality staff. In the long term, this leads to a decline in the institute's performance.
- Difficulties in the administrative management of funds: Insufficient administrative staff increases the risk of delays in securing and managing grants and affects the institute's efficiency.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Accessing new funding sources: European research funds (e.g. Horizon Europe) and funding from international organisations represent significant opportunities for diversifying the ICCV's funding sources.
- Developing international partnerships: Involvement in European research networks can facilitate access to new funding sources and strategic collaborations.
- Diversification of revenue streams: To generate its own revenue, the ICCV can explore the possibility of offering consultancy services, professional training and applied research for public institutions or private companies.

- Increasing visibility to attract private funding: Better promotion of research results can attract funding from companies, institutions and foundations interested in social policies and sustainable development.
- Use of technology: Investment in digitalisation and advanced analytics software can increase research efficiency, saving time in the data analysis process and reducing operational costs.

THREATS

- Extremely low level of national funding for RDI/fundamental research and social sciences: The limited number of national funding competitions restricts funding opportunities for ICCV research, putting pressure on researchers to intensify their fundraising efforts. Furthermore, the long waiting period between the submission of applications and the announcement of competition results affects the institute's ability to plan and implement research projects effectively.
- Economic and political instability can affect access to funding.
- Frequent and unpredictable changes to fiscal and budgetary regulations affect the institute's cash flow and its ability to undertake medium- and long-term financial planning. Restrictions on filling vacant posts and the level of payments for certain categories of expenditure affect both the institute's ability to attract and retain qualified staff and the implementation of research projects.
- The complexity of bureaucratic procedures and delays in the reimbursement of project expenses can hinder the smooth running of research activities, affecting the institute's ability to implement projects on time and potentially leading to additional costs.
- The increasingly frequent requirements for co-funding of research projects place pressure on the institute's financial resources, particularly in the context of internal budgetary constraints.

3. Objectives and strategic directions for development

The general objectives of the strategic institutional development programme consist of the following proposals:

1. Maintaining, consolidating and enhancing the ICCV as a centre of excellence in fundamental and applied socio-economic scientific research by increasing the national and international visibility and prestige of ICCV researchers and the outputs resulting from their research
2. Ensuring the financial stability of the institute by increasing the proportion of extra-budgetary funds attracted to finance relevant research projects and to develop infrastructure
3. Improving and developing infrastructure and ensuring the necessary and competent human resources required to carry out the institute's activities

1. Maintaining, consolidating and enhancing the ICCV as a centre of excellence in fundamental and applied socio-economic scientific research by increasing the national and international visibility and prestige of researchers

In an effort to elevate economic scientific research and strengthen the national and international standing of researchers, the ICCV will undertake a number of initiatives. These strategic initiatives not only enhance visibility but also foster a collaborative environment that stimulates innovation and impact. The enhancement of economic scientific research and the national and international visibility

and prestige of researchers will be achieved through their better integration into national, European and global scientific communities and their alignment with major economic and social concepts and trends.

Collaboration and access to professional networks

International partnerships are crucial to achieving this objective. By forging alliances with renowned international research institutions, researchers can participate in joint projects and co-author publications. This not only expands their professional networks but also exposes them to diverse methodologies and expertise, leading to more robust and globally relevant research outcomes.

Another key aspect is participation in conferences. Encouraging researchers to present their work at prestigious international conferences is vital for building connections and increasing visibility. These events provide researchers with a platform to share their findings, receive feedback and establish relationships with colleagues from around the world. Such interactions can lead to future collaborations and opportunities for joint research initiatives.

Research visibility strategies

In today's digital age, visibility in the public sphere and through media outlets plays a vital role in disseminating research updates to a global audience. This approach helps create a wider impact and draw international attention to the institute's research efforts.

Open access publishing is another critical strategy for increasing research visibility. By publishing in open-access journals, researchers can ensure that their work is accessible to a wider audience, thereby increasing citations and the potential for collaboration. This approach aligns with the global trend towards open science, which aims to make research more inclusive and impactful.

Integrating research with economic and social trends

To ensure that research is relevant and applicable, it is essential to integrate it with current economic and social trends. Policy engagement involves collaborating with policymakers to align research with pressing economic and social challenges. This not only enhances the practical impact of research but also positions the institute as a thought leader in addressing global issues.

Partnerships with the private sector, other government organisations and civil society are equally important. By developing partnerships with major economic stakeholders, researchers can apply their findings in practical contexts. This collaboration not only encourages innovation but also ensures that research outcomes are translated into tangible economic benefits.

Strengthening individual and institutional capacities

Capacity building is essential to support these efforts. ICCV development programmes should focus on improving researchers' skills in international collaboration and communication. This includes training in collaboration tools, cultural awareness and conflict resolution to ensure smooth interactions with international partners. Furthermore, securing research infrastructure is essential. Providing adequate technological support and infrastructure is necessary to produce high-quality research outcomes. This includes access to state-of-the-art equipment, software and digital platforms that facilitate collaboration and data analysis.

Actions and performance indicators for achieving Strategic Objective 1

Definition of the action	Performance indicators
Collaboration and networking	▪ Number of presentations and workshops held at international conferences. ▪ Collaboration index (ratio of co-authored publications with international partners) ▪ Participation in strategy development, in the work of commissions and committees, and in the drafting of major works of significant public interest;
Increasing internal and international visibility	▪ Ranking of research in international, European and national rankings, in terms of the quality, quantity and visibility of scientific output (articles, books, citations, etc.); ▪ Number of papers published in peer-reviewed journals with an impact factor ▪ Frequency of the institute's research results appearing in the media ▪ ICCV's ranking in international, European and national rankings, in terms of the quality, quantity and visibility of its scientific output (articles, books, citations, etc.);
Integration of ICCV research into economic and social trends	▪ The number of research findings informing policy decisions ▪ Frequency of interactions with the international scientific community, government institutions, the business sector and civil society ▪ Number of projects addressing major societal challenges.
Strengthening individual and institutional capacities	▪ The number of training sessions offered to researchers. ▪ Assessment of the quality and accessibility of research facilities. ▪ Retention rate of researchers with different types of scientific outputs ▪ Number of courses organised by ICCV staff for the training of PhD students ▪ Participation of ICCV researchers as members of supervisory and public defence committees for doctoral theses

2. Ensuring the institute's financial stability by increasing the proportion of extra-budgetary funds secured to finance relevant research projects and develop infrastructure

Ensuring the institute's **financial stability** is essential for its long-term sustainability and effectiveness. A key strategy for achieving this objective is to increase the proportion of extra-budgetary financial resources. To achieve this, several comprehensive courses of action can be pursued. Firstly, identifying potential sources of funding is essential. This involves conducting a thorough analysis of government grants, international organisations, private foundations, and partnerships with the business sector and other civil society or private sector organisations, as well as other state institutions. By understanding the eligibility criteria and application processes for these sources, the institute can tailor its proposals to align with the funding priorities of these entities.

Improving research infrastructure is also vital. Investment in modern facilities, equipment and IT resources can significantly increase the institute's appeal to potential collaborators and funders. This

not only supports the delivery of high-quality research projects but also fosters an environment conducive to innovation.

Building partnerships with other research institutions, industry partners and government agencies can lead to co-funded projects and shared resources. This collaborative approach not only diversifies funding streams but also enhances the impact of the institute's research.

Increasing **the visibility of research** is another critical area. By publishing research findings, participating in conferences and engaging with the media, the institute can demonstrate its value and relevance to potential funders and partners.

Finally, developing a diversified funding portfolio involves actively pursuing multiple funding streams to ensure financial stability and resilience in the face of changing economic conditions. By implementing these strategies, the research institute can effectively increase its extra-budgetary resources and ensure long-term financial stability, as well as resources for investment in infrastructure and staff training, procurement, and the development of new national and international collaborations.

Actions and performance indicators for achieving Strategic Objective 2

Actions	Performance indicators
Development and effective use of support and technical infrastructure, partnerships and the attraction of new resources	▪ Number of new funding sources identified. ▪ Amount of funds secured from these newly identified funding sources ▪ Number of grant proposals successfully submitted. ▪ Success rate of proposals. ▪ Value of infrastructure upgrades (digital, software, etc.) completed/purchased. ▪ Increase in the number of research projects hosted thanks to improved infrastructure. ▪ The number of new partnerships established. ▪ Value of co-funding secured. ▪ Number of publications in peer-reviewed journals ▪ Media coverage of research and individual expertise from the ICCV ▪ Percentage of total funding from diversified sources. ▪ Reduction in financial risk due to diversification.

3. Improving and developing the support infrastructure and ensuring the necessary and competent human resources required to carry out the work

Strengthening and developing the support infrastructure for the ICCV is a complex undertaking that requires careful planning and strategic execution. This involves several key areas of action, each critical to ensuring the institute's success in advancing knowledge and addressing complex social challenges.

Infrastructure development

The foundation of any research institute is its infrastructure, which includes both physical and digital components. Physical infrastructure comprises facilities such as libraries, laboratories and meeting spaces. Modernising or constructing these facilities is essential to effectively support research activities. Libraries should be equipped with comprehensive collections of books, journals and

databases to meet the diverse needs of researchers. The institute requires modern equipment to facilitate experiments and data collection. Meeting spaces should be designed to encourage collaboration among researchers and to facilitate seminars and workshops.

Digital infrastructure is equally important in today's digital age. The implementation of robust IT systems, high-speed internet and digital tools for data analysis and collaboration is crucial. This includes setting up data repositories and acquiring software to support advanced data analysis techniques. Digital tools also enable remote collaboration, which is increasingly important for international research projects. By investing in digital infrastructure, the institute can enhance its research capabilities and remain competitive in the global research landscape.

Human resources development

Human resources are the most important asset of any research institution. Developing a strong team of researchers and support staff is essential for achieving the institute's objectives. Recruitment and training programmes should focus on hiring qualified staff and researchers with diverse skill sets. **Training programmes** should be designed to improve data analysis skills, research methodologies and proficiency in digital tools. This not only enhances the quality of research but also ensures that the team is equipped to tackle complex socio-economic challenges.

Professional development opportunities are vital for maintaining a competitive edge. Encouraging participation in workshops, conferences and international collaborations helps researchers stay abreast of the latest trends and methodologies. These opportunities also provide a platform for networking and forging links for future projects. By promoting an environment that supports continuous learning and collaboration, the institute can attract and retain top talent.

Diversity and inclusion policies are essential for creating a vibrant and inclusive research environment. Implementing policies that ensure a workforce is diverse in terms of gender, disability, ethnicity and other factors enriches the research perspective and promotes a culture of inclusion. This diversity can lead to more innovative solutions and a better understanding of socio-economic issues from multiple angles.

Resource allocation

The efficient allocation of resources is essential for the sustainability and growth of the institute. Budget planning involves the efficient allocation of funds for infrastructure modernisation and human resource development. This requires strategic financial management to ensure that resources are used optimally. Resource optimisation involves ensuring the efficient use of existing resources through strategic planning. This could involve streamlining processes, reducing waste and using technology to boost productivity.

Collaboration and partnerships

Collaboration and partnerships are essential for accessing global expertise and resources. International partnerships with other research institutions can provide access to cutting-edge research methodologies, shared data and collaborative projects. These partnerships can also facilitate the exchange of researchers and students, enriching the research environment and promoting global perspectives.

Partnerships with the business sector and civil society are equally important for opportunities in applied research and funding. Collaboration with these stakeholders enables researchers to tackle real-world problems and develop practical solutions. This not only enhances the relevance of research but

also provides opportunities for funding and resource sharing. By engaging with industry, the institute can ensure that its research has a tangible impact on socio-economic development.

In conclusion, strengthening and developing the support infrastructure for a research institute in socio-economic studies requires a comprehensive approach that includes infrastructure development, human resource development, resource allocation and collaboration. By focusing on these areas, the institute can improve its research capabilities, stimulate innovation and make a significant contribution to addressing complex socio-economic challenges.

Actions and performance indicators for achieving strategic objective 3

Actions	Performance indicators
Efficient use of human, financial, technical and information resources and the attraction of new resources Development of human resources and infrastructure Maintaining and developing partnerships and collaborations	▪ The number of staff trained in new skills or methodologies. ▪ Increase in publications, projects or grants secured. ▪ Increase in employment and retention rates across various components ▪ Increased intergenerational balance in academic positions ▪ Increase in international partnerships and those with other state, private sector and non-governmental organisations ▪ Number of researchers involved in joint publications or projects with partners. ▪ Degree of utilisation of available human resources and capacity to attract new resources; ▪ Number of staff involved in international and national projects/grants won through competition or awarded; ▪ Newly attracted financial, technical and informational resources.

4. Human Resources Strategy

4.1. Introduction

In a competitive academic and research environment, it is essential to develop a human resources strategy that meets the needs and aspirations of researchers, promotes excellence, and fosters an innovative and collaborative organisational culture. Collaboration on international and national scientific research projects is a crucial lever for raising awareness of the organisational culture of the Institute for Quality of Life Research (ICCV), for bringing teams together and for attracting new researchers. The ICCV's Human Resources Strategy is designed to enable the attraction and recruitment of staff with the qualities necessary to fulfil the Institute's mission. This strategy also aims to identify ways of retaining highly qualified staff through motivation schemes, performance-related rewards, effective management, leadership and the development of a culture and environment conducive to creativity and personal development.

Established in 1990, the ICCV's human resources include a considerable number of young researchers who are scientifically mature. In 2024, 61 posts were approved for the ICCV, of which: 8 CS I, 11 CS II, 23 CS III, 10.5 CS and 6.5 ACS.

ENI FTE (full-time equivalent)	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
Permanent staff with higher education, total, of which:	48.9	47.62	47.29	49.42	54.67
Staff with academic ranks CS III, CS II, CS I	41.4	39.45	38.46	42.34	43.17

Most ICCV researchers hold a PhD. Compared to the reference period, some fluctuations can be observed, the most significant being the increase in the number of PhD holders, from 36 in 2021 to 44 in 2023.

Since 2021, the number of RDI staff has been steadily increasing. Most of the institute's researchers hold PhDs in sociology, with significant scientific contributions reflected in specialist publications (books, articles, strategies, reports, etc.). However, the structure of posts has not evolved in line with this trend, due to the stalling of promotion processes in recent years. A direct consequence of this situation is the career stagnation of the new generation of researchers, trained between 1994 and 2004, who, although they have reached scientific maturity and have top-level results, remain at the level of Researcher III. Most of them far exceed the minimum length of service required for promotion, with some having over 10 years of additional experience.

This problem is exacerbated by the low level of salaries in the research sector and by the recent policies of the Ministry of Research, which do not adequately support the development of sociology and, by extension, the ICCV's mission. In this context, ensuring a predictable career path and access to scientific and financial resources becomes a major challenge for the institute. Given the chronic underfunding of the scientific research in e in Romania, the current situation poses a significant risk to the development of social research.

4.2. Structure of scientific research staff by academic rank

An analysis of the ICCV's annual reports (2019–2024) confirms the bottleneck in the promotion of researchers at lower grades (CS, CS III), despite the fact that many of them meet the necessary criteria for advancement. The distribution of researchers by academic rank is disproportionate: the number of CS I researchers remains extremely low, and over the last five years, the 11 researchers at CS II level have had no opportunity to advance. These are internationally recognised specialists, with relevant publications, successful research projects and awards attesting to their performance. The number of CS III researchers is very high, which exacerbates the imbalances in the ICCV's staff structure.

This stagnation, coupled with the rigid promotion system and limited financial resources, affects researchers' motivation and the ICCV's competitiveness within the national and international research landscape.

The number and proportion of PhD supervisors.

The number of PhD supervisors has increased between 2019 and 2023. Whilst the institute had 7 PhD supervisors in 2019, this number rose to 9 over the following 4 years. However, the proportion of PhD supervisors remains low relative to the total number of ICCC researchers, mainly due to a backlog in promotions.

The quality of the research team and its suitability for the ICCV's mission and activities can be assessed using the following indicators:

a. **Areas of research and expertise:** The research programmes carried out by the ICCV cover the fundamental areas of sociology. Initially specialising in quality of life and social policy, the institute has significantly expanded its research topics to include issues such as: the social situation in Romania (analysis of transition, crisis and recovery), planned social change/development, poverty and anti-poverty policies, social and symbolic capital, social values, living standards, income and consumption, international migration, the socio-economic situation of vulnerable groups, the social economy, employment and income, demographic changes, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. ICCV's expertise is supported by a team of researchers with specialisations complementary to sociology, such as anthropology, economics, social work, statistics and psychology. This thematic diversity reflects the institute's ability to fulfil its mission and vision.
b. **Scientific publications**. ICCV researchers publish regularly at both national and international levels, with excellent results over the past five years. Publications include: articles in Web of Science and BDI-indexed journals, other academic journals, books and chapters in edited volumes, and reports of public interest. ICCV reports enjoy high visibility among policy-makers, practitioners and the general public. The quality of the publications is confirmed by the significant number of citations in journals indexed by Web of Science and BDI, and in volumes published by prestigious publishers both in Romania and abroad.
c. **Research projects**. Over the past five years, ICCV has secured competitive funding, which has contributed to improving the quality of research and the scientific results achieved by the institute's researchers. ICCV researchers have participated as project coordinators or team members in projects funded by: the Romanian Academy, Horizon Europe, the World Bank, UNICEF, the Council of Europe, the General Secretariat of the Romanian Government, COST Action, UEFSCDI, universities, professional associations, and national and international foundations.
d. **National and international scientific events:** The ICCV regularly organises national and international scientific conferences, facilitating the dissemination of research findings. Notable examples include: the commemorative conference 'Dimitrie Gusti – 140 years since his birth' (2020) and the international conference held in 2021, which took place during the COVID-19 pandemic and attracted over 100 participants from Romania and abroad. At the same time, ICCV researchers frequently attend national and international scientific events, where they participate as speakers or present results from the institute's research projects, thereby increasing the ICCV's visibility within the global scientific community.
e. **Recognition and awards:** The quality of the scientific results achieved by ICCV researchers is confirmed by numerous awards and distinctions received over the last five years. Among the institutions that have recognised the scientific value of ICCV's work and awarded various distinctions or prizes to its researchers are the Romanian Academy, UEFSCDI, universities, professional associations and foundations – both national and international (e.g. the World Association for Public Opinion Research).

4.3. Objectives of the strategic direction for human resources

The objectives of ICCV's human resources strategy reflect the vision of the current management team, which aims to transform the institute into a benchmark for young researchers in the field of quality of

life and an attractive option for experienced academics and researchers from universities and other research institutes.

1. Developing the organisational culture and working environment

The main objective of ICCV's human resources policy is to develop an organisational culture based on excellence, innovation and collaboration. This involves recognising and rewarding scientific performance, adapting to a changing competitive environment, promoting work in diverse, multidisciplinary and multicultural teams, and creating a working atmosphere that fosters innovation and professional development.

2. Retaining highly qualified staff

The Institute aims to improve researcher retention through clear and transparent promotion policies, analysis of each researcher's career path and the tailoring of career opportunities, and the creation of an attractive and stimulating working environment that offers continuous opportunities for professional and personal development (continuous training, mentoring, state-of-the-art research infrastructure) and by recognising and rewarding exceptional performance. By harnessing the individual potential of each researcher, the Institute increases its competitiveness and strengthens its capacity to innovate and generate impactful solutions in areas of strategic interest.

3. Attracting and retaining high-calibre students and PhD candidates

The ICCV supports the integration of early-career researchers through: the active involvement of PhD supervisors and researchers who sit on doctoral committees; the participation of PhD students in research projects and national and international scientific events; and their contribution to the institute's publications (articles, books, reports, etc.). Strengthening the doctoral school is an objective of the ICCV, which has been largely achieved, as evidenced by the increase in the number of supervisors from 7 in 2019 to 9 over the last 4 years, as well as the increase in the number of doctoral students.

An important aspect is the financial support provided to students and doctoral candidates through competitive scholarships and the creation of mentoring programmes, through which they are guided by renowned specialists in their field of study, thus ensuring high-quality and inter professional training and opening up international career opportunities for them. At the same time, it is crucial to create a stimulating, collaborative academic environment that encourages excellence and innovation in research.

4. Development of research staff management

To increase the efficiency of research teams, the institute aims to continuously update researchers' knowledge, encourage participation in conferences, seminars and workshops to strengthen expertise, ensure access to resources—including by creating an internal platform where research staff can access learning resources, guides and case studies relevant to their field of activity, as well as implementing a feedback and performance evaluation system. Providing regular and constructive feedback to help staff identify their strengths and areas for development is one of the ICCV's priorities for the period covered by the development plan. By implementing these measures, the management of research staff can be significantly improved, which will lead to better results in research projects and greater employee satisfaction.

5. Recruitment and professional development of support staff

Financial, accounting, administrative and IT staff play an essential role in supporting research activities. In this regard, the institute's objectives aim to recruit, retain and provide professional development for financialand administrative staff, hiring at least one IT specialist to maintain the functionality of IT

equipment, manage online communication channels and develop the databases required for reporting, establishing a dedicated department for the management of extra-budgetary projects, and developing a communications team to disseminate research results and increase the institute's visibility.

6. Promoting continuous professional development

The Institute aims to support the continuous development of its staff through: participation in international mobility schemes for researchers and support staff, postdoctoral placements for early-career researchers, the organisation of internal debates on research ideas and findings, access to up-to-date scientific literature, and support for the publication of scientific findings in prestigious journals, creating a collaborative working environment that fosters academic excellence.

5. New research directions. Mechanisms to encourage the emergence of new research topics and themes

5.1. Current research directions

Within the Quality of Life Research Institute, the scientific research programme for 2025 is structured into **11 general themes/programmes,** each comprising several specific sub-themes.

The 11 general research themes/programmes are:

1. Uneven development and types of social inequalities in Romania (2024–2025)
2. Quality of life of older people. Challenges of an ageing population (2024–2026)
3. Imbalances in household consumption and problems accessing certain basic goods and services (2025–2026)
4. The dynamics of social vulnerabilities in uncertain contexts. Priorities for action (2025)
5. Social indicators: analysis, evaluation and forecasts (2024–2030)
6. The quality of society: working from home, migration and community engagement – contemporary social change (2025–2027)
7. Between crisis, prestige and precariousness. Survival strategies in the field of employment (2024–2025)
8. Demographic and cultural changes in Romania: the role of ecological and institutional factors (2023–2025)
9. Aspects of religious life in contemporary Romania. The process of secularisation (2024–2026)
10. Romanian society in 2050 – Emerging from the crisis with a view to 2050 (2025)
11. The social and economic situation of the Roma and support policies (2023–2025).

Specific research topics focus on:

- The dynamics of the main economic and social inequalities in Romania: wealth, income, occupational, access to public services and development inequalities at the regional level; identifying and describing the sources, mechanisms and factors that generate and exacerbate inequalities; identifying and describing the social effects of inequalities in Romanian society; critical analysis of public policies affecting the distribution and redistribution of wealth.
- Understanding the challenges that population ageing poses for the quality of life of older people; the macro-level mechanisms contributing to social isolation and loneliness; the

consequences of loneliness for women and men; social policies in the field of labour market integration.

- The dynamics of employment, income, consumption and housing; analysis of the relationship between income and the minimum consumption basket, as well as a study of global and European poverty in comparison with the situation in Romania; analysis of the impact of the energy crisis on the population, a study of poverty among children and young people, an evaluation of the performance of social protection in Romania and an analysis of housing in conditions of poverty.
- Analysis of the diversity of forms of violence in modern society; violence in the context of global changes and the resetting of global values; public policies focused on controlling and reducing forms of violence; analysis of two divergent explanatory models, namely one model arguing for a reduction in all types of violence globally and another model supporting a significant increase in violence; analysis of the impact of the promotion of violence through the media.
- Social policies and social development programmes; cross-sectional and longitudinal social indicators.
- Understanding the directions in which societies are moving in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, with a three-dimensional focus: working from home and associated values, international migration and associated phenomena, participation in associations (with an emphasis on three major types: professional associations, associations dedicated to migrants, and sports associations).
- Addressing the current employment crisis from the perspective of quality of life, at the micro level (the main difficulties individuals face in finding decent jobs, as well as the risk of job loss), meso (identifying and retaining a skilled workforce in the long term, identifying the workforce in specific contexts such as redundancies/furloughs during the COVID-19 pandemic) and macro (the importance of employment policies that can counteract the effects of various crises on the labour market, as well as the role of the state in balancing the relationship between labour supply and demand, and the involvement of social services).
- Analysis of inequality and social exclusion viewed through the lens of four types of challenges facing Romanian society: demographic imbalance (economic and social effects, analysis of fertility and policies affecting it, social inclusion of older people); mobility within the European area (the situation of the diaspora and its exposure to social exclusion, the medium- and long-term effects of transnationalism, social risks arising from cross-border mobility); regional disparities (social effects, human and social capital at regional level, internal migration, policies to reduce disparities); digitalisation (inequalities in access to resources and services, impact on work, impact on private life, new social risks arising from this);
- The study of the phenomenon of religious secularisation in the context of contemporary society, particularly in the context of the complexity of diverse religious identities, as manifested in Romania and within the European Romanian diaspora.
- Analysis of the directions in which Romanian society is heading following the multiple crises that have occurred over the last five years, at global, regional and local levels, as well as in the context of the social, economic, technological and political changes that these have already brought about or which are anticipated in the future; the socio-economic state of contemporary Romanian society; the social and economic situation of the Roma and support policies; an assessment of social problems in rural Romania; perspectives on the development of digital technologies; scientific forecasts regarding Romania's long-term development.

- The socio-economic situation of the Roma population according to the specific characteristics of their residential areas.

5.2. Mechanisms for stimulating the emergence of new research topics and themes

In the social sciences, research is constantly evolving, adapting to social, political, economic and technological changes. The emergence of new research topics and themes is essential for the progress and continued relevance of this field. In this context, the Quality of Life Research Institute is exploring **mechanisms that can stimulate the emergence of innovative and relevant themes**, designed to address the current challenges facing society.

Factors that stimulate the adoption of new research themes:

1. **A supportive institutional framework for scientific debate:** The Institute for Quality of Life Research runs a dedicated institutional development programme focused on scientific debate, which encourages the dissemination and analysis of research findings produced by both team members and external researchers, as well as the exploration of new avenues of research. In addition to this programme, the institute organises a series of conferences and seminars, attended by participants from Romania and abroad, which facilitate the exchange of ideas and intra- and interdisciplinary collaboration. Interaction between researchers from various fields, such as sociology, economics, psychology, anthropology and political science, encourages the identification of new approaches and theories, leading to the emergence of new research topics. For example, the integration of the social sciences with fields such as neuroscience, behavioural economics or computer science can generate innovative perspectives.
2. **Access to continuing professional development and international mobility:** Continuing professional development for researchers plays a crucial role in stimulating the emergence of new research topics. Training programmes, conferences and academic mobility schemes offer researchers essential opportunities for learning and professional development, whilst facilitating the exchange of knowledge. This contributes to the diversification of research topics and the strengthening of international collaborations.
3. **Promoting meritocracy and rewarding exceptional scientific achievements**: Clear and objective criteria for assessing individual performance are defined at institute level. The continuous adaptation of evaluation criteria to international standards and national specificities is an important aspect in establishing a system for rewarding researchers for their scientific work.
4. **Professional autonomy:** Researchers organise their professional work independently, with the freedom to choose the topics they address and their working methods, in line with the institute's objectives. This flexible framework contributes to positive outcomes in three key areas: motivation and satisfaction; performance; and responsibility and personal development. As researchers can tackle topics that reflect their personal interests and address current societal challenges, this autonomy also encourages the exploration of innovative research topics and the diversification of the institute's research directions.
5. **Modern research infrastructure:** The main directions the Institute for Quality of Life Research is considering for the development of its research infrastructure are: investment in advanced technologies (e.g. statistical analysis programmes, software for qualitative data analysis) and digital platforms for data management and sharing, thereby facilitating high-quality research and effective collaboration within and between research teams.

5.3. New research directions

The Quality of Life Research Institute aims, in the coming years, to integrate scientific themes into its research programmes that are aligned with the objectives defined by European bodies and internationally renowned academic institutions, such as:

1. **Climate change and its social impact**

Climate change has become a central topic of research in the social sciences, not only from an environmental perspective but also in terms of its impact on society. Research topics include:

- Climate migration: How does climate change affect population migration, particularly in vulnerable regions?
- Social inequalities and climate: How are vulnerable groups, such as poor communities or minorities, affected by climate crises?
- Adaptation and environmental policies: What are the political and social solutions to combat the inequalities generated by climate change?

2. **Technology and its impact on society**

Technology plays a fundamental role in the evolution of society, and recent research focuses on its impact on various aspects of social life:

- Artificial intelligence and ethics: What are the ethical implications of implementing artificial intelligence in various fields (education, work, health, academic research)?
- The impact of automation and artificial intelligence (AI) on the labour market: How do automation and the development of artificial intelligence affect the labour market, particularly traditional industries? How might this contribute to the emergence of new industries and new job opportunities? To what extent, and in what ways, is AI changing the skills required in the labour market? How does AI affect inequalities in the workplace? What solutions exist for the retraining and social protection of affected workers?
- Use of personal data: How does the digitisation and collection of personal data affect citizens' rights and freedoms?
- The impact of social media on social behaviour: How do social media influence human interactions, political dynamics, the formation of public opinion and individual psychology? What are the effects of social media on mental health, social identity or social polarisation ? How do social media contribute to the spread of disinformation and the formation of collective behaviours?

3. **Security and global conflicts**

Conflict and security are major themes in the social sciences, and in this context the institute aims to explore topics such as:

- Asymmetric conflicts and terrorism: How have modern armed conflicts evolved, particularly unconventional ones such as hybrid warfare?
- Refugees and forced migration: What are the challenges in managing refugee flows and forced migration, particularly in the context of regional conflicts and climate change?
- Global security in the digital age: How can emerging technologies, such as cybernetics and cryptography, influence national and global security?

- Cyber security and data protection: How do cyber attacks affect national security and citizens' fundamental rights?

4. Education systems and societal changes

Education is a key factor in shaping and adapting society to current changes. In this area, the proposed themes focus on:

- Innovation in education: How can new technologies (e.g. online learning and digital tools) improve education systems and reduce educational disparities?
- Education for sustainability: How can concepts of sustainability and social responsibility be integrated into global education?
- Equality in education: How can education reduce social and economic inequalities and provide equal opportunities for all?
- Inclusive education: How can education meet the diverse needs of children from vulnerable groups (Roma, children with disabilities, migrants, refugees)?

5. Mental health

Mental health is an increasingly important area in social research, having a significant impact on the individual and society:

- The effects of global crises on mental health: How have the COVID-19 pandemic, armed conflicts and other social crises affected the mental health of the population, and how can society respond effectively to these challenges?
- Social stigma and mental health: How can the stigmatisation and discrimination faced by those suffering from mental health conditions be combated?
- Technology and mental health: What are the effects of continuous exposure to technology and social media on the mental health of children and young people?
- An integrated approach to physical and mental health: How can public health interventions address both physical and mental health simultaneously to improve the population's well-being?

6. Research, development and innovation infrastructure and research facilities. Objectives and lines of action for infrastructure development

6.1. Existing infrastructure

The current level of development of the research, development and innovation infrastructure at ICCV meets the minimum and appropriate conditions for carrying out the scientific research specific to the institute. Based on the recent assessment of scientific activity for the period 2019–2023, the ICCV has demonstrated that it possesses the institutional capacity to produce high-quality scientific research in the fields of sociology, quality of life and social policy.

By creating an institutional framework conducive to attracting extra-budgetary funding and by developing its own technical infrastructure, the ICCV has succeeded in maintaining a profile of academic excellence from its establishment in 1990 to the present day.

In accordance with the objectives and action measures set out in this institutional development plan, the ICCV aims to continue investing in the modernisation of its existing RDI infrastructure, by adapting it to the needs of research staff, as well as with a view to increasing the impact and visibility of the scientific research results produced by the institute.

Furthermore, strengthening operational research capacity and ensuring the quality of research infrastructure are priorities undertaken by the ICCV with a view to maintaining its leading position in the field of social research and improving the quality of life in society.

To keep pace with rapid developments in the institute's fields of activity, the acquisition of new IT equipment and the updating of software licences, as well as the continuous development of online platforms to enhance the accessibility and interactivity of research outputs with the public, are key objectives. An important component in infrastructure development is the acquisition of software dedicated to the processing and sociological analysis of data, for example SPSS licences and dedicated licences for the use of qualitative analysis software.

The research infrastructure at ICCV currently makes efficient and sustainable use of its fixed assets, demonstrating ICCV's ability to maximise the value of its investments. However, to increase the level of provision and modernise IT equipment, continued investment will be a key priority for ICCV for the period 2025–2030.

Balance of IT fixed assets at ICCV according to the 2019–2023 assessment

Fixed assets	Number
Laptops and tablets	26
Computer systems	16
Printers and multifunction devices	11
Servers	2
Video conferencing systems	5

The institute's main fixed assets are: laptops, notebooks and tablets: 26; computer systems: 14; photocopiers: 2 (library and administration office); printers and multifunction devices: 9; servers: 2; and conference systems: 5.

Most of the IT equipment was purchased between 2007 and 2014, whilst 11–12 items were purchased between 2018 and 2022. The equipment available to the institute for carrying out its research activities has exceeded its normal service life but is currently functioning normally. As regards data analysis software, the latest inventory from 2023 shows that these were acquired between 2012 and 2022, and all software licences were acquired by 2015.

As regards the level of digitisation of the research infrastructure, since 2020, through the efforts of the ICCV research staff, the resources available online have been constantly improved, offered freely to the scientific community in Romania and internationally. The components of the online infrastructure are as follows: the Virtual Sociology Library, the Database of Romanian Sociology Publications, the journals Calitatea Vieții and Sociologie Românească available in full online, and the Social Innovation and Social Romania platforms. These electronic resources are managed autonomously by ICCV staff and provide free access to bibliographic resources, specialist academic articles and short public statements by researchers. These digital platforms not only facilitate the dissemination of the scientific research produced by the institute, but also provide an essential access point for the academic

community and the general public. Furthermore, the ICCV maintains a specialist physical library offering readers access to approximately 3,000 volumes, making it one of the most comprehensive book collections in Romania in the fields of quality of life and social policy. The library also provides access to a number of titles in the field of methodology (qualitative/quantitative) applied in the social sciences.

6.2. Objectives for the development of research infrastructure

The 2025–2030 Institutional Development Plan includes a series of objectives and concrete measures for the medium- and long-term consolidation of the ICCV's research, development and innovation infrastructure. The objectives aim to bring this infrastructure up to date with current and future requirements of technological development in the field of sociology, as well as in related fields at ICCV, quality of life and social policies. In order to improve research staff's access to modern infrastructure, necessary for conducting scientific research under optimal conditions, the ICCV aims to capitalise on the strengths of its activities. This research infrastructure development plan sets out the following main objectives:

1. **Attracting extra-budgetary resources**

Increasing the institutional capacity to attract extra-budgetary financial resources from international European (e.g. Horizon) and national (e.g. UEFISCDI) projects in order to fund the equipment required for the ICCV's RDI infrastructure.

2. **New programmes and licences for data analysis and processing**

Continued investment in state-of-the-art programmes and software for data analysis and processing, as well as expanded storage space for personal data and the development of *repository-type* files. The need to acquire softwareis particularly high for the quantitative analysis component, in order to run complex analysis models using large databases such as the Survey on the Quality of Life (EU-SILC) and the Labour Force Survey (LFS) from EUROSTAT, as well as other databases used in projects funded by public and extra-budgetary funds within the institute. , specialised software is also required for qualitative data analysis (e.g. NVivo, ATLAS.ti, etc.) and digital platforms for data management and sharing, to support effective collaboration within and between research teams.

3. **Continuous professional development of research staff**

The professional development of the institute's researchers through the funding of continuing professional development courses, particularly in the field of advanced qualitative and quantitative research methods (e.g. social network analysis, big data analysis, use of data analysis software). In addition to these, there are courses on research ethics (including aspects relating to personal data protection and sensitive research), research management and project writing, as well as the use of artificial intelligence in social research.

4. **IT equipment**

Increased investment to equip the institute with new computer systems (laptops, desktops, tablets), as well as photocopiers and multifunctional printers necessary for the optimal conduct of scientific research. Increased investment in new servers for data storage and in the development of the existing internet network, by extending Wi-Fi access to all rooms within the institute.

5. **Modern data storage and sharing solutions**

At the same time, resources must be allocated to create a private cloud dedicated to the storage, processing and sharing of sensitive data, enabling researchers to access information essential to research projects quickly and securely, including a collaborative space for sharing and developing joint deliverables between research teams and partners in national or international projects. At the same time, investment in cybersecurity is vital to protect sensitive data.

6. **Access to international databases**

Adapting research infrastructure to meet the needs of research staff for unrestricted access to recognised international databases and recent scientific literature.

7. **Video-conferencing systems**

To enhance the capacity to organise high-profile scientific events by investing in modern conference facilities that enable the organisation of hybrid events (in-person and online). The aim is therefore to replace the existing video projectors with smart board systems, video projectors, microphones and sound systems for the institute's conference rooms, and to purchase a portable video projector.

8. **Open-access publications**

Increasing the visibility of researchers' publications by publishing in international journals indexed by WoS and Scopus that are *open access.*

9. **ICCV Library**

To support researchers and improve available resources, the institute aims to develop the ICCV's physical library by purchasing new specialist books necessary for conducting research in the field of sociology, expanding the physical library with digital resources (including books that can be accessed online at), purchasing subscriptions to specialist journals that are available online to researchers.

6.3. Action plans for the development of research infrastructure

To keep pace with the rapid progress of technology in the field of scientific research, through this institutional development plan, ICCV adopts a strategy to modernise the existing infrastructure. Thus, the proposed objectives are aligned with the following action points designed to ensure the sound development of research infrastructure during the period 2025–2030 and its adaptation to the needs of research staff:

1. **Improving the ICCV's current performance and the efficiency of research activities by conducting an annual assessment** of the requirements of the existing RDI infrastructure. The assessment will be carried out in accordance with the legal regulations in force, as well as from the perspective of researchers' needs, taking into account the latest technologies that can improve the productivity of research carried out at the institute in the long term. This course of action will facilitate the link between the quality of research infrastructure and staff satisfaction, which will also influence the attraction of young researchers to the institute.
2. Ensuring a high level of productivity and innovation within research teams through **continuous access to international databases**, including by providing research staff with *open-access* publishing options. This course of action will lead to the gradual development of researchers' scientific potential, by increasing international visibility and promoting the institute as a dynamic institution on the international research market. Last but not least, the increased visibility of ICCV researchers through publications in the *Web of Science* or *Scopus* databases

will lead to more effective institutional collaborations, consolidating ICCV's position as a leader in the field of social research.

3. Continuing efforts to **develop the** existing **RDI infrastructure** by equipping it with new IT equipment and data analysis software. This course of action is important for ensuring optimal working conditions at the institute through the acquisition of modern fixed assets and licences dedicated to sociological research, data analysis and processing.
4. Ensuring **decent conditions for carrying out research activities at the institute** by modernising workspaces and furniture, as well as by upgrading the internet network and extending Wi-Fi access to all rooms in the institute.

This institutional development plan estimates a minimum budget under a pessimistic scenario for funding the investments required to carry out research activities. Thus, the estimated amount for 2025 is €57,000, €40,101 for 2026 and €39,534 for 2027.

Minimum budget for the investment strategy over the next three years, 2025–2027

	2025	2026	2027
Total EUR Pessimistic scenario	57,070.40 EUR	EUR 40,100.40	EUR 39,533.40
Total EURO Optimistic Scenario	141,432.00 EUR	€74,685.00	€69,518.00

7. Support for innovation and technology transfer. The group of potential users/beneficiaries and trends in the evolution of its configuration and structure

7.1. Supporting innovation and technology transfer

The Institute for Quality of Life Research conducts research in the fields of quality of life, social policy and related areas: health, education, employment, housing, family life, living standards, poverty, public services, social development and the social economy. Although most of the institute's researchers hold PhDs in sociology, multidisciplinary research has been encouraged within the institute, an approach that fosters innovation in the field of research.

A distinctive feature of social research is that innovation is ever-present, from the research topics adopted to the research methodology designed for each individual topic, through the methods and techniques of data collection, as well as through the methods of analysis and interpretation. Innovation in terms of social research outcomes can be translated into new research methodologies, models of good practice, the identification of solutions to specific social problems, social policies (legislation), measures for development strategies, etc. In this field of research, innovation differs from other research fields, as technology transfer to the economic/industrial sector or the patenting of results/solutions is more difficult to achieve, particularly within an institutional and legislative context that favours patenting in the fields of exact sciences and life sciences.

At the Institute for Quality of Life Research, scientific research is structured across several levels:

1. fundamental and advanced scientific research in the social sciences;

2. applied scientific research for the development of strategies, to inform social policies or legislation in the social sphere;
3. research carried out within the framework of competitively awarded projects, research to provide consultancy for local and central authorities, the business sector, and national or international non-governmental organisations, etc.

Within the institute, fundamental research is combined with applied research, focusing on the current issues facing Romanian society. Partnerships with other research institutions, the private sector, government agencies or civil society can lead to co-funded projects and shared resources, whilst also promoting innovation and the applicability of research results across various fields. Collaboration with public and private institutions whose areas of expertise fall within the six fields identified as priorities in *the National Strategy for Research, Innovation and Smart Specialisation* (2022–2027) is essential for the institute, particularly given the absence of a priority area in the social sector.

Scientific research within the Institute for Quality of Life Research takes into account the objectives set out in *the National Strategy for Research, Innovation and Smart Specialisation* (2022–2027), as well as the Horizon Programme (2021–2027). The Institute aims to create favourable conditions for innovation in social research, whilst respecting the specific nature of the field.

Innovation in ICCV's research can be supported through investment in human resources and research infrastructure, as well as through participation in various national and international research projects.

Investment in human resources	Investment in research infrastructure
▪ researchers' participation in numerous national and international research projects; ▪ researcher training programmes; ▪ participation in researcher mobility programmes; ▪ participation in professional associations at both institute and researcher level; ▪ participation in conferences/scientific meetings/academic exchanges; ▪ support for scientific publication (including *open access*).	▪ access to equipment; ▪ access to various software for research data analysis and data storage; ▪ access to databases of scientific publications or research databases.

At the Quality of Life Research Institute, it is necessary to create a framework conducive to the practical implementation of initiatives officially/legally recognised as innovation and technology transfer activities through measures such as:

- implementing innovation management;
- understanding the national and European legal and institutional framework;
- raising awareness within the institute of the importance of steps towards the official recognition of innovative scientific results that can be transferred to other fields, and the protection of intellectual property rights over research results;
- compiling an inventory of innovative results and transferable knowledge;
- identifying mechanisms for patenting innovative results obtained in social research and transferable knowledge;

- establishing partnerships with potential beneficiaries of research results, from the public or private sector, including the business sector;
- establishing partnerships with universities and research institutes and participating in interdisciplinary research that may lead to innovative results and has potential for technology transfer;
- developing innovation skills for the institute's researchers;
- increasing the visibility of innovative scientific results produced by the institute's researchers;

7.2. The group of potential users/beneficiaries and trends in the evolution of its configuration and structure

The Quality of Life Research Institute has had numerous collaborations with users/beneficiaries on various research topics, including:

- The academic community (researchers from research institutes or universities; collaborators on national or international projects);
- Local or central public authorities (contribution to social policies or local/national strategies in various fields);
- National or international non-governmental organisations;
- The economic sector/business sector, etc.

This group of users/beneficiaries of the institute's social research findings may expand in the future, contributing to innovation.

8. Defining scientific and technological identity at national and international level. Promotion and visibility

8.1. Scientific identity

The Institute for Quality of Life Research of the Romanian Academy is one of the most important social research institutes in Romania. Since its establishment, the ICCV has opened up new avenues of research in Romania, made essential contributions to the development of many research fields, and participated in the drafting of social legislation.

The research areas addressed by the institute cover key fields such as quality of life, social policies, poverty, education, social and symbolic capital (the study of social values), standard of living (income and consumption), health, employment, the socio-economic situation of vulnerable groups, the social economy, migration, demographic changes and others.

The institute's mission is to conduct fundamental and applied research that meets the needs of society, supports public policies aimed at improving the population's well-being, and contributes to the development of Romanian society.

The Institute for Quality of Life Research has a strong reputation in the field of social research. Through the topics it addresses, the institute has demonstrated a sound understanding of Romanian society and current social and economic realities. In certain research areas, the ICCV has played a pioneering role, such as in research on vulnerable groups and social inequalities.

The institute has accumulated extensive experience in field research, including applied studies, which are highly relevant to the formulation of public policy solutions.

Through its researchers, the institute possesses solid expertise in securing internal and external funding, which contributes significantly to the continuity of research activities. The institute has benefited from a diversity of funding sources through external partnerships with international organisations, grant programmes and European cooperation projects.

8.2. Promotion and visibility

The Institute's activities and research results can be promoted and made visible through numerous channels, such as:

- Website and Facebook page: www.iccv.ro; https://www.facebook.com/ICCV1;
- Scientific journals (indexed in international databases):
- Quality of Life Journal: https://www.revistacalitateavietii.ro/journal
- Romanian Sociology Journal: https://revistasociologieromaneasca.ro/sr
- Social Innovation Journal: http://www.inovatiasociala.ro/ro/
- Romanian Sociological Association: https://www.arsociologie.ro
- Social Romania Platform: https://www.romaniasociala.ro
- Sociology Library: https://bibliotecadesociologie.ro

Other ways to promote and increase visibility:

- Participation in national and international academic conferences;
- Researchers' participation in the media;
- Researchers' scientific publications and citations; open access publishing;
- Participation of the institute and researchers in national and international professional associations;
- Launching of books and reports produced by the institute with media coverage;
- Organisation of workshops, debates and conferences.