



# **CLARA Report 2025:** Implementation of strategies

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## Executive Summary

CLARA represents the very first interdisciplinary Center of Excellence in CEE focused on the next generation of artificial intelligence/machine learning applications and quantum-accelerated supercomputing tools to solve the etiology of neurodegenerative diseases. As the CLARA project is coordinated by INDRC, a private non-profit organization, the CLARA CoE has full autonomy and should serve as a benchmark for research excellence, effective research human resource management, and an attractive working environment that enables the recruitment and retention of talented individuals. To institutionalize the CLARA Center, several policies have been adopted. This document is the first in a series of annual reports documenting the implementation of key strategies that enable the CLARA CoE to achieve its objectives of becoming an excellent, attractive, and internationally recognized research center.

## 1. Introduction

During the initial months of CLARA implementation, several key strategies were established. This report provides an overview of the main activities carried out in 2025 to implement the Human Resource Strategy (HR Strategy), Gender Equality Plan (GEP), Ethical Codex, and Grant Lab Strategy.

## 2. HR Strategy

### 2.1. Pillars of the HR Strategy

#### **Open, Transparent, and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R)**

Goal: Recruit world-class talent through fair, evidence-based, and inclusive processes.

Commitments:

- All positions publicly advertised (e.g., via INDRC and CLARA websites, paid advertisements, EURAXESS), using inclusive and gender-neutral language.
- Clearly defined job profiles and descriptions with transparent selection criteria and evaluation matrices.
- Selection committees that are gender-balanced and trained in bias mitigation.
- Set objective and impartial criteria for the candidates' assessments during the recruitment process.
- Fair feedback provided to all applicants, supporting researcher mobility and reputation.

#### **Gender Equality and Inclusive Opportunity**

Goal: Ensure structural and cultural support for gender equality and intersectional fairness.

Commitments:

- A fully compliant and resourced Gender Equality Plan (GEP, see D2.2) with regular reporting.
- Collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated and intersectional HR data.
- Targets and action plans for gender parity in leadership, research teams, and governance bodies.
- Family-friendly workplace provisions (e.g., parental leave, flexible arrangements, care support).
- Integration of sex/gender analysis into research content and proposals.
- Equal-pay and access to opportunities and promotions strategy.

#### **Talent Development, Career Pathways, and Recognition**

Goal: Foster long-term, meaningful careers through professional development and recognition.

Commitments:

- Each staff member has an Individual Development Plan (IDP) aligned with institutional goals and personal aspirations.
- Structured access to training (e.g., leadership, data science, commercialization, ethics).
- Internal and cross-border mobility opportunities through EU fellowships and exchanges.

- A Mentoring and Coaching Program tailored to early-career researchers, women in STEM, and under-represented groups.
- Annual awards for outstanding contributions in research, mentoring, equity, and public engagement.

### **Research Integrity, Responsibility, and Do No Harm**

Goal: Embed ethics, transparency, and social responsibility into the fabric of research (see D2.4 incl. Annexes).

Commitments:

- Mandatory ethics and research integrity training aligned with the ALLEA Code of Conduct.
- Appointment of an Independent Research Integrity Ombudsperson.
- Integration of Do No Harm and Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) principles in all projects.
- Reward systems for ethical leadership, transparency, and responsible authorship.

### **Working Conditions and Organizational Health**

Goal: Provide employment conditions that safeguard worker rights, security, and well-being.

Commitments:

- Employment contracts aligned with applicable laws and fair employment standards.
- Equal pay for equal work, across all roles and identities.
- Whistleblower protections, grievance procedures, and anti-harassment safeguards.
- Periodic workplace climate surveys to monitor satisfaction, safety, and inclusion and assess mental health, stress management, and workplace wellness.

## **2.2. Implementation activities for 2025**

### **– Annual employee assessment**

#### **1. Employee Self-assessment**

The non-anonymous self-evaluation will be followed by a meeting with a supervisor, to specify personal goals for the next year and agree on subsequent steps.

In line with the CLARA HR Strategy, the [Employee Self-Assessment form](#) was sent to all INDRC employees to gather opinions, feedback, and evaluation regarding work for INDRC. The non-anonymous questionnaire focused on key areas of your work, including accomplishments, goal setting, and development plans. Following the self-assessment, meetings with supervisors were held to define personal goals and agree on next steps.

#### **2. Annual assessment survey**

The [anonymous assessment form](#) developed to gather feedback and provide information on how to improve CLARA/INDRC working environment, conditions, and compensation.

The anonymous assessment form was shared with INDRC employees to gather feedback in the following areas: working environment & culture, management & leadership, working conditions, salary & compensation, career development, fairness & inclusion, overall assessment.

### **– Annual HR and GEP Report to the HRPP Committee**

The report is part of this CLARA Report 2025

### 3. Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

The GEP is structured around six priority areas:

1. Non-discriminatory organizational culture
2. Gender inclusiveness in management and decision making
3. Gender non-discrimination in recruitment and career advancement
4. Reconciling work and family/personal life
5. Integrating the gender equality dimension into the content of research and education
6. Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment

#### 3.1. Non-discriminatory organizational culture

**Objective for the Area:**

To ensure an inclusive work environment that promotes equal opportunities, diversity, and a non-discriminatory approach in all internal and external relations.

**Timeline:**

- **Q3–Q4 2025:** Revision of internal documents, publication of commitment online.

**Output:** During Q3–Q4 2025, CLARA and INDRC reviewed and updated key internal documents, including the Code of Conduct, Work Regulations, INDRC Values, HR templates, and onboarding materials, to ensure that the principles of equal opportunity, diversity, respect, and non-discrimination are clearly embedded in all core institutional processes. A clear public commitment to a non-discriminatory organizational culture was also prepared and published through official institutional communication channels and website materials, strengthening transparency and visible leadership commitment.

In addition, these principles were formally integrated into the internal training programs scheduled for Q1–Q2 2026, covering respectful workplace behavior, equal treatment, diversity awareness, and prevention of discrimination. This created a practical and visible foundation for an inclusive workplace culture, supported by future employee surveys, periodic policy reviews, and continuous awareness-building activities.

#### 3.2. Gender inclusiveness in management and decision making

**Objective for the Area:**

To increase gender diversity and balance in leadership and decision-making positions, ensuring inclusive, innovative, and equitable governance throughout the organization.

**Timeline:**

- **No specific activities planned for 2025**

The CLARA project and its partners aim to achieve at least 50% representation of both female and international staff by the end of the project. In 2025, the INDRC team comprised 57% women, including multiple women in key leadership and decision-making positions, and 43% international staff. The VSB team comprised 46% women and 31% international staff, the ICRC team comprised 42% women and 37% international staff, and the CTU team comprised 26% women and 19% international staff. No data is available for LRZ and PBI. Regarding project governance, the 9-member CLARA Supervisory Board consists of 33% women and 55% international members.

### 3.3. Gender non-discrimination in recruitment and career advancement

**Objective for the Area:**

To eliminate gender-based discrimination in recruitment, hiring, on-boarding, and career advancement processes and to promote equal opportunities for all individuals throughout their professional development within the organization.

**Timeline:**

- **Q4 2025:** Review and update recruitment templates and guidelines

**Output:** CLARA and INDRC completed the review and update of recruitment templates, [job advertisement formats](#), [interview evaluation sheets](#), and [onboarding guidelines](#) to ensure that all hiring, and career advancement processes follow the principles of gender neutrality, equal opportunity, merit-based selection, and transparent evaluation criteria. Special attention was given to the use of inclusive and gender-neutral language in all published vacancies, as well as to standardizing competence-based assessment matrices for fair shortlisting and interview decisions.

In addition, the updated recruitment and career progression principles created a stronger internal framework for unbiased hiring, equal access to promotions, structured onboarding, and transparent professional development pathways. These revised templates and guidelines now serve as the institutional baseline for future recruitment rounds, onboarding processes, and career system implementation from 2026 onwards.

### 3.4. Reconciling work and family/personal life

**Objective for the Area:**

To promote a supportive and flexible work environment that enables all employees, regardless of gender or life circumstances, to balance their work obligations with personal and family needs.

**Timeline:**

- **Q3 - Q4 2025:** Formalize and communicate guidelines for flexible work and parental leave support.

**Output:** All INDRC employees who work remotely are also required to undergo home office training via the bozp-system.cz course. A Remote Work Guideline was released on the CLARA website.

### 3.5. Integrating the gender equality dimension into the content of research and education

**Objective for the Area:**

To systematically integrate the gender dimension into the design, implementation, and evaluation of research and teaching activities, thereby improving the quality, relevance, and impact of academic outputs.

**Timeline:**

- **Q3–Q4 2025:** Begin pilot reviews of project proposals for gender relevance.

**Output:** As part of the ongoing monitoring of funding opportunities, no dedicated gender-specific calls were identified within the Horizon Europe framework during the reporting period. However, the EU Award for Gender Equality Champions was identified as a relevant opportunity, aligning with CLARA's efforts to strengthen and operationalize its Gender Equality Plan (GEP). CLARA will therefore consider applying to this award in a future call, expected in 2026 or 2027. At the same time, given that gender equality is systematically embedded across all Horizon Europe

calls, CLARA's established GEP provides an institutional framework that facilitates the consistent integration of gender considerations across its project proposals. As such, CLARA will continue to ensure that gender considerations are incorporated across all future project proposals, while also continuing to monitor the emergence of dedicated gender-specific calls and relevant initiatives.

### 3.6. Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment

#### **Objective for the Area:**

To eliminate all forms of gender-based violence and harassment in the workplace by implementing a comprehensive zero-tolerance approach, supported by preventive, procedural, and educational measures.

#### **Timeline:**

- **No specific activities planned for 2025**

### 3.7. Specific provisions

- Staff members who are caring for minors (below age of 6) may request accommodation to allow minors to stay with the staff member when they are sent on official travel.

CLARA Retreat provided a forum for discussing additional specific provisions. Ideas for improvement emerging from these discussions have been compiled and are presented in this report (see Chapter 6).

### 3.8. Plan of measures and activities towards INDRC Personnel (2025)

| Current measures                                                    | Activity/task description                                              | Indicator/output                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Management of statistics of gender inclusiveness of INDRC Personnel | Continue in surveying and management of statistics of gender equality. | Information in the INDRC Annual Report/Internal Monitoring                             | See Section 3.2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Monitoring of satisfaction and needs of INDRC Personnel             | Implement regular satisfaction and needs survey.                       | Online questionnaire<br>Presentation of the questionnaire findings to INDRC Personnel. | See Section 2.2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Surveying gender (in)equality in remuneration praxis                | Carry out remuneration analysis (for internal needs)                   | Internally available report on gender pay analysis.                                    | A preliminary remuneration analysis identified no gender-based pay inequality across comparable roles. The planned introduction of formal salary tracks as part of CLARA's Career Development & Remuneration Policy (D4.2, M18) will enable a more systematic and comparable evaluation of remuneration across role groups in future reporting periods. |
| Support for the                                                     | Implementation of a regular                                            | Workshop, containing                                                                   | Planned for 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

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|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| dissemination of knowledge in the areas of equal opportunities, gender, and diversity, measuring satisfaction                                                                                                                                                       | training on “Equal opportunities, Gender, GEP, examples of good practice, INDRC Personnel satisfaction measurement (socio-rating)”                                               | examples of good practice, and providing a presentation, video recording.                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Promoting a transparent selection and recruitment process and committing to equal and non-discriminatory approach.                                                                                                                                                  | Continue to adhere to the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct.                                                                            | Public commitment to support transparent recruiting process on the INDRC website.         | A public commitment to a transparent, equal, and non-discriminatory recruitment process was prepared and published on the INDRC website. It confirms the use of inclusive job advertisements, clear role descriptions, objective evaluation criteria, fair interviews, merit-based selection, equal opportunity, and respectful onboarding and career advancement practices across INDRC and CLARA. |
| Motivate underrepresented gender groups to hold senior positions in all workplaces.                                                                                                                                                                                 | Awareness of the benefits of diversity and the support of underrepresented gender groups in senior positions.                                                                    | Inclusion-motivating approach to selection/recruitment interviews.                        | Planned for 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Implementation of the promotion of equal treatment and gender-inclusivity in the field of recruitment to promote gender diversity.                                                                                                                                  | Unify the advertising of all advertised vacancies in all workplaces (visual style and content). Adjust the templates. Use gender-inclusive language in all advertised positions. | Template changes. Published vacancies will be advertised in a gender-inclusive language.  | Job advertisement templates were reviewed and aligned in terms of structure and content, and gender-inclusive language is consistently used in all advertised positions. Further standardization is planned for 2026.                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Active use of Maternity and Parental Leave Management in order to support parents on and returning from M/P leave, to maintain contact with them during M/P leave and to facilitate their return to work or to combine Parental Leave with a part-time appointment. | Summarize all information concerning communication with INDRC Personnel on M/P leave: possibilities of involvement in the work process during M/P leave.                         | Information disclosed to INDRC Personnel in such a situation.                             | A brochure summarizing the Maternity/Parental leave management will be prepared in 2026 and released at the CLARA website.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Monitoring of the INDRC environment with the aim to continuously survey the work environment and obtain feedback from INDRC Personnel.                                                                                                                              | Monitoring surveys of INDRC Personnel Satisfaction and Needs and include questions about possible encounters with discrimination and/or sexual harassment.                       | Implementation of monitoring which would be repeated annually as an online questionnaire. | Results of the Assessment survey are presented in Chapter 7                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

## 4. Ethical codex

**Specific provisions** for CLARA Coordinator (INDRC and its personnel):

- INDRC Personnel must complete training pertaining to Ethical Conduct within six months of onboarding, with refresher training every two years.

The training module on Ethical Conduct (Information and Cyber Security; Money laundering; Whistleblowing) is available within the bozp-system.cz in both the English and Czech versions.

- The INDRC recognizes the value of giving back to society and is committed to contribution via pro bono activities and volunteering. The INDRC believes that those activities have a meaningful impact. Engaging in such activities might also support the development of new skills of the Persons, broaden their social networks and enhance satisfaction in work. All volunteering activities that are to take place during their work hours must be communicated and approved by the INDRC Personnel's superior. Paid time off might be offered for such work, as agreed in individual cases, when the volunteering goal aligns with the INDRC's values. There will be no research activity on human volunteers/patients.

Volunteering activities in 2025:

**Date of Activity: 25 September 2025**

**Location: Naděje Special Care Home for Seniors, Vinohrady Branch, Brno**

As part of its ongoing Volunteer Day initiative and in commemoration of International Alzheimer's Day, INDRC, together with representatives of Rotary Club Brno City, Rotary Club Brno, and Rotaract Club Brno, organized a meaningful volunteering visit to the Naděje special care home for seniors in Brno. The activity focused on spending quality time with elderly residents, many of whom live with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

The eight-member volunteer group engaged in several supportive and socially enriching activities, including ceramic creation workshops, cognitive training games, singing songs familiar to the seniors, and one-to-one conversations with residents. The volunteers also received insights from the care home leadership regarding the complexity of dementia care, staff well-being, continuous education, and burnout prevention in caregiving environments.

The activity had a highly positive social impact by bringing companionship, emotional support, cognitive stimulation, and intergenerational engagement to the residents. The visit also reinforced INDRC's commitment to community engagement, dignity in neurodegenerative care, and ethical responsibility beyond research activities. Feedback from volunteers confirmed that the day was meaningful, emotionally impactful, and aligned with the institution's values of empathy, social contribution, and responsible service.

The Ethics & Security Manager shall, inter alia:

- Training & Awareness – develop and deliver mandatory induction and refresher courses for all INDRC Personnel and CLARA team on ethical conduct, information-security obligations and this Policy;

During 2025, the Training & Awareness framework on ethical conduct, information-security obligations, and compliance with this Policy was developed and operationally deployed in pilot mode for internal review. The induction and refresher training modules were structured as mandatory institutional learning components, covering ethical behavior, confidentiality, cyber hygiene, reporting obligations, whistleblowing, responsible use of institutional systems, and staff accountability under the Policy.

The pilot deployment phase included initial testing of content, user access, training workflows, completion tracking, and bilingual delivery readiness through the learning platform, ensuring that the program is practical, scalable, and aligned with onboarding and periodic refresher requirements. Based on the successful pilot

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implementation, the training package is now fully prepared and ready for full-fledged institutional roll-out during Q1–Q2 2026, where it will be integrated as a standard mandatory training requirement for all new and existing personnel.

- Annual Reporting – submit an annual written report to the CLARA Director detailing activities carried out, findings, recommendations and an evaluation of the overall ethical culture within CLARA.

During 2025, CLARA strengthened its ethical culture through training pilots, staff ethical evaluations, communication analysis, data mapping, cookie governance review, and security policy alignment activities. These actions further embedded ethics, privacy, and security responsibilities into daily research and operational practice.

Overall, CLARA's ethical culture is assessed as healthy, proactive, and steadily maturing, with 2026 priorities focused on full training roll-out, formal consultation mechanisms, and continuous governance improvement. The Annual Report on Ethical Culture and Responsible Conduct within CLARA was sent to CLARA Director to provide information about activities related to CLARA ethical culture.

- Develop and provide Integrated Training Curriculum on Research Ethics, Data Protection, and Responsible Innovation in Interdisciplinary Science.

During 2025, an Integrated Training Curriculum on Research Ethics, Data Protection, and Responsible Innovation in Interdisciplinary Science was developed as a structured institutional learning framework for INDRC Personnel and the CLARA team. The curriculum was designed to combine key principles of research integrity, ethical review requirements, GDPR and data governance obligations, responsible AI and innovation practices, interdisciplinary collaboration standards, authorship and publication ethics, and responsible use of human-related data and scientific outputs.

The curriculum framework was prepared, internally validated, and deployed in pilot format, including modular content for onboarding and advanced refresher sessions. Following successful pilot readiness, the program is now fully prepared for full-scale roll-out in Q1–Q2 2026, where it will serve as a mandatory cross-functional training component supporting responsible science, compliance, and research excellence across CLARA.

## 4.1. DNSH Principles

CLARA ensures to comply with the Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) principle, i.e. that every Activity of CLARA:

(i) contributes to at least one of the following Environmental Objectives:

- climate change mitigation,
- climate change adaptation,
- the sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources,
- the circular economy, including waste prevention and recycling,
- pollution prevention and control,
- the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems,

(ii) does not cause significant harm to the other Environmental Objectives,

(iii) complies with minimum safeguards,

(iv) complies with the applicable technical screening criteria.

Following provisions are mandatory for the CLARA Coordinator (INDRC and its personnel):

1. INDRC Personnel must complete **training pertaining to the DNSH principle** within six months of onboarding, with refresher training every two years.

Following Training courses were implemented within the bozp-system.cz both in the Czech and English version:

- Environmental risk management system (Environmentální systém řízení)
- Environmental protection (Ochrana životního prostředí)

## 2. Carbon Offsetting Program incl. Travel Carbon Calculator will be implemented (Travel and ITenergy use):

For travel emissions:

- Priority will be given to train travel over car or bus transport.
- Ground transportation will be preferred over air travel whenever possible and reasonable.
- CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from flight travels will be calculated once per year using a verified online tool: ICAO Carbon Emissions Calculator
- Offset costs will be calculated at a rate of €15 per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>.

| Flight   | Date         | Cabin Class | No of passengers | Trip Type | Aircraft Fuel Burn/journey | Emissions per Trip (kg CO <sub>2</sub> ) | Total Emissions (kg CO <sub>2</sub> ) |
|----------|--------------|-------------|------------------|-----------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| VIE-CDG  | 9.-12.2      | economy     | 1                | roundtrip | 9,385 KG                   | 212                                      | 212                                   |
| PRG-BRU  | 9.4.         | economy     | 4                | roundtrip | 7,100 KG                   | 680                                      | 2720                                  |
| BOM-PRG  | 30.8.-5.10.  | economy     | 1                | roundtrip | 78,266 KG                  | 726                                      | 726                                   |
| VIE-OPO  | 14.-18.10    | economy     | 3                | roundtrip | 17,490 KG                  | 1 068                                    | 3204                                  |
| VIE-SIN  | 25.10-1.11   | economy     | 1                | roundtrip | 116,732 KG                 | 846                                      | 846                                   |
| LHR-BOS  | 27.10.       | economy     | 1                | one-way   | 41,980 KG                  | 297                                      | 297                                   |
| BOS-PRG  | 1.11.        | economy     | 1                | one-way   | 34,855 KG                  | 417                                      | 417                                   |
| IAD-PRG  | 7.-14.11.    | business    | 2                | roundtrip | 137,050 KG                 | 6 906                                    | 13812                                 |
| VIE-INTL | 28.11.-6.12. | economy     | 1                | roundtrip | 132,706 KG                 | 1 192                                    | 1 192                                 |
| LAX-PRG  | 8.-13.11     | business    | 1                | roundtrip | 157,504 KG                 | 4 560                                    | 4 560                                 |
|          |              |             |                  |           |                            | <b>Total:</b>                            | <b>27986</b>                          |

- The carbon emissions from flights in 2025 amounted to 27.986 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>.

For operational emissions (e.g. computing clusters):

- An initial annual contribution of €1,500 is pledged to offset CO<sub>2</sub> emissions generated using INDRC computing infrastructure.
- Currently, INDRC's computing capacity is limited; therefore, the initial contribution will be reconsidered and gradually increased to reflect the actual environmental impact of the computing operations.

This contribution will be used to support local non-profit environmental projects, selected annually based on the previous year's CO<sub>2</sub> calculations. Employees are encouraged to submit project proposals, from which the INDRC Director, CLARA Director and CLARA COO will collectively select the final supported initiative(s) each year.

The INDRC computing infrastructure became operational in September 2025. The annual contribution for 2025 therefore counts to €500. During the CLARA Retreat, participants were informed of the opportunity to submit an environmental project proposal, along with the applicable rules and submission deadline.

The following ideas for a **CLARA Environmental project** were gathered and provided to INDRC Director for evaluation:

### 1. "Nadace Veronika"

It is a well-established regional organization, primarily active in Moravia, with a long-standing focus on environmental initiatives and landscape conservation. Its work centers on practical, hands-on activities such as orchard planting, landscape stewardship, biodiversity protection, and community-based environmental projects.

There is also a clear thematic connection to traditional varieties and cultural landscapes, including species such as service trees.

<https://nadace.veronica.cz/page/o-nas.php>

### 2. Senior care home Věstonická, Brno

The “Community Garden Under the Walnut Tree” is one of the projects of the Vinohrady Association. The aim of the garden is to connect younger and older generations through growing plants, while also revitalizing and opening the space of a beautiful but previously closed garden at the retirement home. Through caring for the cultivated plants, young families from Vinohrady—who lack sufficient access to nature and greenery in their housing estate—meet and interact with the residents of the home.

We can support the community garden by providing new vacant garden plots, thus enabling more elderly residents to participate.

<https://ves.brnodcs.cz/ze-zivota-domova/komunitni-zahrada-pod-orechem>

### 3. “Toulcův Dvůr”

It’s a nonprofit focused on environmental education. They organize various events, run a kindergarten, a healthy canteen, and more. They are quite active and visible.

<https://toulcuvdvur.cz/stranka/prirodni-areal>

### 4. “Cyklovize 2030”

An environmental project that aims to expand and improve cycling paths in the Czech Republic, which is great not only for the environment but also for health and better transportation.

<https://www.cyklovize.cz/>

After careful consideration, the leadership decided to support the following project:

#### **Revitalization of a Nature Garden in Hostětín to serve people with disabilities**

<https://hostetin.veronica.cz/en/nature-garden-and-orchard>

INDRC/CLARA will support a small project to revitalize the demonstration natural garden at Center Veronica in Hostětín, which has served as an educational and recreational space for the public for nearly 20 years. Due to the passage of time and intensive use, gradual degradation is occurring—natural elements and furniture are deteriorating, and the garden is slowly losing its original educational and aesthetic character. Center Veronika aims to prepare a new conceptual study in cooperation with a landscape architect, followed by the restoration and addition of selected garden elements. The restored garden will continue to serve as an important educational, demonstration, and barrier-free recreational space for nearly 4,000 visitors annually. Upon completion of the implementation, Center Veronika will continue to gradually seek financial resources to complete the garden according to the proposed concept.

INDRC/CLARA’s donation would be used to purchase furniture for garden therapy—programs for visitors with disabilities, during which rehabilitation blends with time spent in nature. Specifically, thanks to our donation, Center Veronika will acquire [raised garden beds](#) for wheelchair users, allowing wheelchair access underneath. The Center hosts many groups of people with disabilities annually, specifically several week-long stays for children with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA). However, the beds would also be useful for other groups visiting our center, especially seniors, people with visual impairments, and others.

## 5. Grant Lab Strategy

The CLARA Grant Lab Strategy aims to leverage national and EU resources to drive strategic investments while enhancing competitiveness in grant programs, including Horizon Europe. The initiative seeks to expand leadership roles in consortia coordinated by CLARA partners and develop sustainable funding streams through Knowledge Exploitable Results (KERs). The CLARA Grant Lab is a virtual strategic platform where expert project managers,

researchers, and institutional stakeholders collaborate to design, prepare, and implement competitive project proposals.

## 5.1. Action tasks

The specified general action tasks include:

**Action task 1:** Each partner shall designate a dedicated project manager to participate in the activities of the CLARA Grant Office. Project managers shall allocate strategic areas of interest among themselves, within which they will systematically monitor available calls for proposals and funding opportunities. Collectively, they will ensure thorough coverage and effective coordination across all relevant domains. Regular meetings (at least quarterly) will be set up to implement main activities of the Office.

The project managers of CLARA beneficiaries coordinate jointly on the preparation of project proposals, exemplified by the MSCA Staff Exchange project (deferred to the upcoming call). Coordination meetings are held according to the schedule of project submission deadlines.

**Action task 2:** The CLARA Project Manager shall establish the Grant Office file incl. the Impact & Metrics Dashboard as a shared repository on OnlyOffice. Project Managers within the CLARA Grant Office shall use this platform to share information on proposal submissions, success rates, awarded funding, and related metrics, to systematically track progress and performance across the consortium.

The [CLARA Grant Office](#) file has been established within the OnlyOffice environment. It serves as a collaborative workspace for drafting joint projects and acts as a central repository for sharing updates on new funding opportunities and other relevant information.

**Action task 3:** The main activities of the CLARA Grant Office will be presented on the CLARA website.

A specific 'Grant Office' subsection has been established on the CLARA website under the 'Explore' menu. Information within this section will be maintained through periodic updates corresponding to current grant acquisition activities.

## 5.2. Submitted projects in 2025

In 2025, the INDRC and other CLARA partners were involved in submitting a total of 12 grant proposals. Of these, 2 proposals were awarded up to now - Czech AI Factory (CZAI) under the EUROHPC-2024-CEI-AI-02 call, and CLARA Open Days / Young AI Research Forum 2025 (CLARA DAYS) under the Capacity Building for Ukraine programme. On top of that, the proposal MIND-ME, submitted to a two-stage Horizon Europe call, was successful at the first stage and has been invited to submit a full proposal. Based on outcomes available to date, this corresponds to a confirmed success rate of 16.7%. Details are provided in the following table:

| # | Proposal Title/Acronym                                                                                   | CALL ID and/or Awarding Organisation | Submission Deadline | Coordinator | CLARA Partner(s) Involved | Status   |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------------------|----------|
| 1 | Generative AI for Understanding and Discovering Disease Mechanisms, Biomarkers, and Therapeutics (GUIDE) | HORIZON-HLTH-2025-01-TOOL-03         | 16.9.2025           | INDRC       | INDRC, VSB                | Rejected |

|    |                                                                                                                           |                                               |            |                                                 |                   |                                  |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2  | Multi-modal Intervention Combining Digital Training and Medicinal (CBD) Integration for Severe Mental Disorders (MIND-ME) | HORIZON-HLTH-2025-01-DISEASE-02               | 16.9.2025  | Centre for Research & Technology Hellas (CERTH) | INDRC, CIIRC      | Submitted (First stage approved) |
| 3  | CLARA Open Days/Young AI Research Forum 2025 (CLARA DAYS)                                                                 | Capacity Building for Ukraine                 | Continuous | INDRC                                           | CIIRC             | Awarded                          |
| 4  | Europe's Virtual Human Twin for the 21st Century (AURELION)                                                               | HORIZON-HLTH-2025-01-TOOL-03                  | 16.9.2025  | Oslo University Hospital (OUS)                  | INDRC             | Submitted                        |
| 5  | HOP on FLUIDX-AD                                                                                                          | Hop-on Facility                               | 4.9.2025   | Oslo University Hospital (OUS)                  | INDRC             | Submitted                        |
| 6  | Czech AI Factory (CZAI)                                                                                                   | EUROHPC-2024-CEI-AI-02                        | 30.6.2025  | VSB-TUO                                         | CIIRC, INDRC      | Awarded                          |
| 7  | American Brain Foundation: Breakthrough Grant                                                                             | American Brain Foundation: Breakthrough Grant | 15.07.2025 | INDRC                                           | INDRC             | Rejected                         |
| 8  | Brain Research by AI-driven Network for Synthesis and Extraction of Neuroinflammatory Science (BrainSense)                | American Brain Foundation: Catalyst Grant     | 15.07.2025 | INDRC/University of Southern California (USC)   | INDRC             | Rejected                         |
| 9  | Integrating Generative AI, Genome Analysis, and Nanoparticle Research for Brain Disease Investigation                     | American Brain Foundation: Catalyst Grant     | 15.07.2025 | INDRC                                           | INDRC             | Rejected                         |
| 10 | Targeted Grant to Institutes: INDRC                                                                                       | Simons Foundation                             | 02.10.2025 | INDRC                                           | INDRC             | Rejected                         |
| 11 | Robot Enzymologist (BioPIC)                                                                                               | ERC-2026-SyG                                  | 05.11.2025 | University of Exeter (UOE)                      | CIIRC, FNUSA-ICRC | Re-submitted                     |
| 12 | Flexible industrial Operations with Robotics and Generative AI models for Europe (FORGE)                                  | HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DIGITAL-EMERGING-07       | 02.10.2025 | CEA                                             | CIIRC             | Submitted                        |

## 6. Ideas for further improvements

During the CLARA Retreat, participants discussed how to improve the INDRC/CLARA work environment, resulting in the following proposed action tasks:

### Work-life balance:

- **Options for flexible hours** – now we must work from 9-5, although we advertise flexible hours to new employees
- **Reduced overload policies** – manage task volumes, emails, and deadlines to avoid cognitive fatigue and burnout
- **Multisport cards** or weekly wellness sessions
- **Focus Day:** one day each week—Friday could work well— when no new tasks would be assigned, and non-urgent issues wouldn't be taken on, giving everyone dedicated time to concentrate on completing their existing work.
- **One hour a week guaranteed during working hours for sports and wellness.** We could then use that hour a week for a longer walk or a trip to the gym.
- **“Focus Hours” or Meeting-Free Blocks**  
Setting aside dedicated focus hours—or one afternoon each week without meetings—could help reduce fragmentation and improve productivity.
- **Flexible Break Guidelines**  
Promoting regular short breaks during long work sessions can help reduce screen fatigue and support long-term well-being.
- **Yoga or Stretch Session to Reduce Stress**

We could introduce a short optional weekly wellness session—such as yoga, breathing exercises, or guided stretching—conducted by a volunteer or an online instructor. These sessions can help reduce stress, improve posture, and provide a shared moment of relaxation, especially for colleagues spending long hours at desks.

**Workplace improvements:**

- More automation and better work optimization
- More staff to better manage workload
- Official HR department or HR person who employees can go to if they have any HR related issues (or provide HR training to the person who oversees HR)
- Provide workshops for managers on clear communication and instructions, prioritizing tasks, and constructive feedback to help reduce employee overload and improve team efficiency

**Environmental ideas:**

- More plants in the office
- Better screens and lighting to avoid eye strain, standing/adjustable desks
- Office “Green Corners” with Air-Purifying Plants: creating small green spaces with low-maintenance plants (such as snake plants or pothos) could improve indoor air quality and make shared areas more relaxing and pleasant.
- Monthly “Low-Waste Day”: a voluntary monthly day encouraging reduced use of single-use items—like disposable cups, plastic wrapping, and excess printing—could help promote sustainable habits across teams.
- Quarterly “Digital Clean-Up Week”: encouraging teams to declutter outdated files, emails, and duplicates could lower digital storage needs and improve day-to-day efficiency.

**Equality and gender balance:**

- Transparent career paths and pay grades – clear promotion criteria and opportunities to ensure equity
- Setting criteria for quarterly/yearly bonuses based on set goals or KPIs
- Recognition of experience – foster a culture that values experience, longevity and knowledge
- CLARA Summer school: consider the long-term balance of women’s representation in STEM disciplines when selecting applicants. Also, if the summer school has an international component, it would be wonderful to offer scholarships to applicants from countries in the Global South.

**Other suggestions:**

- Brain health workshops - sessions on cognitive resilience, memory exercises, nutrition for brain health, and stress management
- Brain-healthy snacks in the office
- Structured breaks – encourage short mindfulness or movement breaks to reduce stress and improve focus
- Provide stress management resources – e. g. access to counseling, mindfulness apps, or workshops on coping strategies

The selection of new provisions will be discussed with CLARA/INDRC leadership at the next All employee in-person meeting, scheduled for April 14, 2026, in Prague.

## 7. Results of the 2025 Assessment survey

The anonymous survey was filled by 13 INDRC employees. The goal was to receive feedback on the working environment, conditions, compensation as well as overall satisfaction with work for INDRC/CLARA. The Cryptpad tool was used for creating the questionnaire.

**The Survey included questions from the following areas:**

- Working Environment & Culture
- Management & Leadership
- Working Conditions
- Salary & Compensation
- Career Development
- Fairness & Inclusion
- Overall Assessment

+ optional open-ended questions to receive feedback

Results of the survey are the following:

### Working Environment & Culture

- **I feel safe and respected in my workplace.**  
YES – 85 %, NEUTRAL – 15 %, NO – 0 %
- **Communication within the organization is clear and effective.**  
YES – 77 %, NEUTRAL – 15 %, NO – 8 %
- **I feel comfortable sharing concerns or ideas without fear of negative consequences.**  
YES – 92 %, NEUTRAL – 0 %, NO – 8 %
- **Teamwork and collaboration are encouraged.**  
YES – 92 %, NEUTRAL – 8 %, NO – 0 %
- **My workload is manageable.**  
YES – 62 %, NEUTRAL – 15 %, NO – 23 %

**What is the most positive aspect of your working environment?**

- flexibility, independence to do the job, friendly and cooperative atmosphere, colleagues

**What is the biggest challenge in your working environment?**

- workload, stress

### Management & Leadership

- **My supervisor clearly communicates expectations.**  
YES – 92 %, NEUTRAL – 0 %, NO – 8 %
- **I receive useful and constructive feedback.**  
YES – 92 %, NEUTRAL – 8 %, NO – 0 %
- **Management decisions are fair and transparent**  
YES – 92 %, NEUTRAL – 8 %, NO – 0 %
- **Leadership listens to employee feedback**  
YES – 85 %, NEUTRAL – 15 %, NO – 0 %
- **I trust management to act in employees' best interests.**  
YES – 85 %, NEUTRAL – 15 %, NO – 0 %

**What could management do differently to better support employees?**

- clearer communication, more regular feedback, and better workload planning

### Working conditions

- **I have the tools and resources needed to do my job effectively.**  
YES – 85 %, NEUTRAL – 0 %, NO – 15 %
- **My working hours are reasonable.**  
YES – 62 %, NEUTRAL – 23%, NO – 15 %
- **I am able to take breaks and time off when needed.**  
YES – 85 %, NEUTRAL – 0 %, NO – 15 %
- **Flexible work options (remote, hybrid, flexible hours) meet my needs.**  
YES – 85 %, NEUTRAL – 0 %, NO – 15 %
- **The organization supports employee wellbeing.**  
YES – 85 %, NEUTRAL – 0 %, NO – 15 %

### **What improvements to working conditions would you suggest?**

- divide the workload among multiple people, more employee benefits (multisport card, pension insurance contribution, quarterly/yearly bonuses)

### Salary & Compensation

- **My salary is fair for my role and responsibilities.**  
YES – 62 %, NEUTRAL – 31 %, NO – 7 %
- **My salary is competitive compared to similar roles in the market.**  
YES – 54 %, NEUTRAL – 31%, NO – 15 %
- **I understand how salary increases and promotions are decided.**  
YES – 31 %, NEUTRAL – 54 %, NO – 15 %
- **Benefits (meal vouchers allowance, 6 weeks of holidays, leave, perks,..) meet my expectations.**  
YES – 85 %, NEUTRAL – 7 %, NO – 7 %

### **Overall, how satisfied are you with your compensation?**

- 85 % is satisfied, 7 % neutral, 7 % dissatisfied

### **Which compensation elements matter most to you? (ranked by votes)**

- Base salary, work-life balance, benefits, career growth possibilities, bonuses

### Career development

- **I have clear opportunities for career growth here**  
YES – 62 %, NEUTRAL – 31 %, NO – 7 %
- **Training and development opportunities are available to me.**  
YES – 54 %, NEUTRAL – 31%, NO – 15 %
- **Promotions are based on merit.**  
YES – 69 %, NEUTRAL – 31 %, NO – 0 %
- **I see myself working here in two years.**  
YES – 77 %, NEUTRAL – 15 %, NO – 8 %

### **What would make you more likely to stay with the organization long-term?**

- Higher salary, better/more employee benefits, better career growth opportunities, less workload and stress, better work-life balance

### Fairness & Inclusion

- **Employees are treated fairly regardless of background.**  
YES – 85 %, NEUTRAL – 15 %, NO – 0 %
- **Company policies are applied consistently.**  
YES – 85 %, NEUTRAL – 15 %, NO – 0 %
- **I feel valued as an employee.**  
YES – 92 %, NEUTRAL – 8 %, NO – 0 %

**Overall assessment**

- **Overall, I am satisfied with my job.**  
YES – 85 %, NEUTRAL – 0 %, NO – 15 %
- **I would recommend this organization as a good place to work.**  
YES – 85 %, NEUTRAL – 0 %, NO – 15 %

**How satisfied are you overall?**

80 % in average

Following the above-mentioned results, we view dissatisfaction among at least one-third of INDRC employees in any area as a strong justification for making changes to the work environment. There is no such dissatisfaction.

**General feedback from INDRC employees:**

- I experience high work demands, including workload intensity, time pressure, and responsibility.
- I feel neutral about my wages—they are acceptable, but there is room for improvement, and I would like to understand the process for obtaining a raise.
- I lack clarity regarding opportunities for career growth and education.

**Ways to improve are the following:**

- Enhance team capacity by adding new positions and redistributing workloads.
- Stress management and work–life balance training.
- Clear career growth policy with defined criteria for higher pay/roles
- Establish a clear career growth policy with defined criteria for higher pay or roles and supported training opportunities.