

Action 3:

Advance towards the reform of the Assessment System for research, researchers and institutions to improve their quality, performance and impact

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Member State/associated country/stakeholder¹: UAS4EUROPE

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[Indicate the organisation, name, position, e-mail address.]

The action includes the following types of activities:

[These are examples of activities, in which the country or organisation could participate in. For more detailed information, including the objectives, please refer to the explanatory document(s) of this action.]

- Contributing to the mapping and analysis of legal and administrative barriers at national and trans-national level for a modern research assessment system
- Participating in a Mutual Learning Exercise (MLE) on reform of research assessment and conducive national frameworks
- Stimulating participation of the national/regional evaluation agencies and of the main national research funders to the Coalition
- Participating in periodic exchanges between the ERA Forum and the Coalition to reform research assessment
- Participating in exchanges with the Coalition members from my country
- Supporting Coalition members from my country in the design, piloting and implementation of reformed research assessment criteria, tools and processes

Comments, planned or ongoing activities regarding the implementation of the action¹:

[Activities at the level of countries or organisations can be shared in this box. The activities could include national measures (e.g. reforms, initiatives, studies), the participation in EU-level activities, which are described in the explanatory document, and the engagement in transnational activities with other Member States, associated or third countries. Moreover, any other comments can be added.]

Research assessment should take into account the various ways of evaluating quality of research work and its outputs. A broader reform of research assessment methods is key for the work of our institutions and our researchers, in order to promote impact-focused and practitioner-oriented research activities as well as engagement with society. We actively contribute to the coalition on reforming research assessment.

We urge member states to commit to this action, and we offer to commit to :

- Participating in a Mutual Learning Exercise (MLE) on reform of research assessment and conducive national frameworks
- Stimulating participation of the national/regional evaluation agencies and of the main national research funders to the Coalition
- Participating in periodic exchanges between the ERA Forum and the Coalition to reform research assessment
- Participating in exchanges with the Coalition members from countries where we are represented
- Supporting Coalition members from countries where we are represented in the design, piloting and implementation of reformed research assessment criteria, tools and processes

¹ Please fill in these boxes.

This document is a working document and should not be considered as representative of the European Commission's official position.

EXPLANATORY DOCUMENT

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<i>Contact point: Jean-Emmanuel Faure, DG R&I.A4</i>	
1. Description	<p>The way research projects, researchers, research units, and research institutions are assessed is fundamental for a well-functioning R&I system. However, current systems often use inappropriate and narrow indicators and methods to assess the quality, performance and impact of research. The quantity of publications in journals with high Journal Impact Factor and the number of publications and citations are dominant proxies for quality, performance and impact.</p> <p>The way in which research and innovation are practiced is changing, towards mainstreaming of a culture of sharing of knowledge and tools and of open collaboration, and with the rise of transdisciplinary research and intensified interactions between basic and applied research, to tackle ever more complex scientific questions and societal challenges. Insufficient incentives and rewards hamper the further uptake of such new practices. Moreover, the diversity of tasks and outputs related to the work of researchers and academic staff, needs to be better recognised and properly rewarded.</p> <p>Some research funding and performing organisations are already taking steps for improving the way they assess their research and researchers. Many promising new practices are emerging, as illustrated by case studies identified by the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) together with the European University Association and SPARC (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition) Europe. However, progress remains slow, limited and fragmented across Europe.</p> <p>This action will facilitate and speed up changes to research assessment so that the quality, performance and impact of research and researchers are assessed on the basis of more appropriate criteria and processes. This includes moving away from the overreliance on journal- and publication-based metrics and enable the recognition of diverse outputs; diverse activities, including leadership, mentoring, and teamwork; and diverse practices, including those that contribute to robustness, openness, transparency, and inclusiveness of research and the research process. Recognising the broad diversity of contributions that researchers make will maximise the quality of research and the resulting impacts, and further strengthen trust in research. The way in which the system is reformed should be appropriate for each type of assessment (research projects, researchers, research units, and research institutions). In particular, the assessment of individual</p>

researchers should be based primarily on qualitative evaluation with peer-review, supported by responsibly used quantitative indicators, in agreement with DORA. It is important that peer review processes are designed to ensure rigour and transparency, and meet internationally accepted principles. Also, a reformed system should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the diversity of countries (with different R&I governance and institutional arrangements), disciplines, research cultures, research maturity levels, missions of institutions, and career paths.

In 2021, an **extensive consultation of stakeholders** (including researchers, research funding organisations, research performing organisations including universities, and Member States' representatives) identified the objectives, principles and types of actions for a reformed research assessment system that could be agreed between stakeholders. Establishing a robust common understanding and an ownership of the consultation outcomes have been crucial since research organisations have the responsibility to define the criteria and processes to assess their researchers and research projects.

This action consists in **establishing a coalition** of individual research funding organisations, research performing organisations and their associations as well as national/regional assessment authorities and agencies, learned societies, and other relevant organisations, all willing to reform the current research assessment system. An agreement between the coalition members will confirm the commitment of the signatories to changes. An **implementation plan** will be established by the signatories, including milestones and timeframes, to translate commitments into effective changes. Governance and measures for monitoring the progress made and for exchanging information will be agreed among the signatories to ensure that commitments translate into tangible changes, and to ensure mutual learning for evidence-informed changes. The agreement will respect the autonomy of research organisations in setting their own recruitment/assessment policies, will respect the differences among scientific disciplines and will allow for diversity in practices.

National authorities play a very important role in the reform of research assessment, by developing policies and legislative frameworks that enable changes, and by facilitating coordination between stakeholders in the field at national or regional level. For example, institutional criteria for the assessment of research are often conditioned by criteria set at the national level to assess the performance of institutions and/or to allocate funds to projects. It will therefore be important to **analyse the existing legal and administrative frameworks at national and trans-national level** and to identify potential barriers to institutional changes, notably for the coalition members who are signing up to the agreement and

	<p>committing to implement concrete changes.</p> <p>The expected outcomes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of a coalition of European research funders and research performers who agree on a new approach for research assessment, following wide and inclusive consultations at European and international level; • An implementation plan of the coalition to roll-out the new approach, including pilots in different domains; • An analysis of legal and administrative barriers at national and trans-national level for a modern research assessment system.
<p>2. Actors</p>	<p>The Commission has issued in December 2021 a call for expression of interest for stakeholder organisations to become part of the coalition. Over 310 entities from 35 countries have already declared interest (data as of 25 April 2022). These organisations are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual research funding organisations, including private funders, and their associations; • Individual research performing organisations (including universities, research centres, and research infrastructures), and their associations; • National/regional assessment authorities and agencies; • Academies, learned societies and researchers organisations. <p>The list of organisations having expressed interested is provided via this link. This list is updated periodically.</p> <p>Participation in the call and in the coalition will remain open to any additional organisation willing to commit and contribute. The initiative is and will also remain open to non-European organisations considering that coherence in assessment approaches globally is also a desired effect of the initiative.</p> <p>National authorities play a very important role, by helping to develop the policies and legislative framework necessary for, and which encourage and support, a reform of research assessment. They also facilitate coordination between stakeholders at national or regional level. Representatives of Member States and Associated Countries in the ERA Forum will therefore be closely associated to the definition and development of the action, notably by providing input during the drafting of the agreement, by contributing to the analysis of legal and administrative barriers at national and trans-national level, and by participating in periodic exchanges with the coalition as a whole and the coalition members from their country.</p> <p>The Commission acts as a facilitator for the development of an agreement between stakeholders. It is also expected to become one of the signatories in its capacity as funding organisation.</p>
<p>3. Timing and</p>	<p>Q1-2 2022: Drafting of an agreement between stakeholders. A team</p>

<p>milestones</p>	<p>has been established to lead the drafting process, composed of: representatives from the European University Association (EUA) and from Science Europe; a researcher (Karen Stroobants, acting in her individual capacity); and representatives from the European Commission, which also act as a facilitator. The drafting team leads the process of drafting the agreement and acts as decision-making body, deciding about the release of the drafts and final agreement and about the suggestions to retain or reject following consultation with stakeholders. The drafting team is working in close cooperation with a core group of 20 representatives, representing the diversity of stakeholders across Europe. The list of core group members and their main contact persons is available at this link. The core group provides opinions and in depth feedback to the evolving drafts on a frequent basis, by working closely with the drafting team. All organisations having expressed their interest through the call are also associated to the process. MS/AC representatives in the ERA Forum and in the European Research Area Committee (ERAC) had the opportunity to provide inputs to the draft agreement and will continue to be closely associated to the process.</p> <p>Q2 2022: Starting the analysis of legal and administrative barriers at national and trans-national level. This would be achieved by collecting and analysing inputs from ERA Forum members and members of the coalition on reforming research assessment. Due consideration will also be given to barriers that might exist at sub-national level. The analysis could be complemented by consulting other groups such as National Points of Reference on Scientific Information (NPRs) and/or by establishing one or more expert contracts to analyse barriers and formulate recommendations during the course of 2022.</p> <p>Q3 2022: Signatures by stakeholders, following finalisation of the agreement, including commitments, governance and monitoring mechanisms.</p> <p>As from Q4 2022: Roll-out of the initiative. With signatories of the agreement developing, piloting and implementing assessment criteria, tools and processes [according to an action plan with milestones set out by each signatory] and mutually learning from each other. Additional signatories may join the coalition at any time.</p> <p>Q1 2023: Results from analysis of legal and administrative barriers at national and trans-national level. This would eventually be complemented by launching a Mutual Learning Exercise under the Policy Support Facility (PSF).</p>
<p>4. Funding</p>	<p>The Horizon Europe Work Programme for 2021-2022 includes call topics that will provide support to the reform of research assessment. Under the <i>“Widening participation and strengthening</i></p>

	<p><i>the ERA</i>” part, the call topic HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-45 (with maximum EU contribution of EUR 2 million) aims to facilitate the sharing of good practice and to support pilots for new methods of research assessment that reward the practice of open science. The call was already published and closed, and evaluation results are expected to be published very soon. Under the “<i>Research infrastructures</i>” part, the call topic HORIZON-INFRA-2022-EOSC-01-01, which closed on 20 April 2022 (with maximum EU contribution of EUR 6 million), aims to enable the gathering and monitoring of information and data on the use and uptake of research outputs and of open science practices, being essential for assessment systems that valorise open science.</p> <p>The Horizon Europe Work Programme for 2023-2024 which is under preparation may provide for additional support from the “<i>Widening participation and strengthening the ERA</i>” part, in particular for coordination of stakeholders including the signatories of an agreement, and for changes necessary in individual institutions.</p> <p>The European Universities Alliances currently supported with Horizon 2020 funding, constitute further platforms to test new metrics and practices, and coordinate schemes for research assessment across Europe, where appropriate and on a voluntary basis.</p> <p>In addition, it is expected that members of the coalition, including research funders, would commit to allocating resources (whether in the form of additional budget or staff capacity) explicitly dedicated to the reform of the assessment system (for implementing changes in research assessment; raising awareness of all actors; educating and training; supporting the necessary infrastructure).</p>
<p>5. Expected impact</p>	<p>On the short and medium term, the establishment of a coalition is expected to provide a safe space for testing and piloting improved criteria and processes for the assessment of researchers’ performance, research proposals, research institutes and centres, and to allow for mutual learning. It is thereby expected to facilitate the implementation of changes by research performing organisations, research funders, and national/regional authorities and agencies involved with assessment. These changes are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote qualitative judgement with peer-review, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators; • Consider the value and impact of a diversity of research outputs; • Rewards the diversity of tasks of researchers, and supports team science; • Incentivize open collaboration and early knowledge and data sharing. <p>The coalition approach is also expected to ensure coherence between different assessment types, research organisations, and countries, and to facilitate international alignment, therefore</p>

	<p>facilitating the mobility of researchers.</p> <p>On the long term, the reform of the assessment system is expected to trigger higher quality, more performant and more impactful research and to contribute to more attractive research careers. It would better value knowledge and data sharing and open collaboration including societal engagement leading to increased trust in the research and innovation system and its outputs.</p>
<p>6. Monitoring</p>	<p>Monitoring the progress made and the adherence to commitments by members of the coalition is thought to be an important part of this initiative since its ambition is to go beyond what is achievable by merely signing a declaration.</p> <p>All signatories are expected to commit to regular, and public ‘light’ reporting on their organisation’s progress towards realising the commitments (in line with the timeframe set in the agreement), thereby being subject to scrutiny from their own communities and staff, yet at the same time allowing to build trust between coalition members and to focus the coalition work on the implementation of commitments and mutual learning.</p> <p>Monitoring strategies and arrangements will be agreed upon among the signatories of the agreement. The consultation of stakeholders underlined that monitoring should be limited to the elements strictly necessary for providing a measure of the progress made and be based on bottom-up contributions by the individual research organisations rather than any top-down scrutiny and attribution of labels or awards.</p> <p>Progress made by the coalition as a whole will be reviewed periodically, and results will be used to improve the functioning of the coalition.</p>
<p>7. Communication</p>	<p>Outreach to individual research organisations will be essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Done by the Commission in 2021 through broad consultation of stakeholders, the publication of a consultation report, and with the call for expressions of interest to participate in the coalition; • Ongoing communication by associations of stakeholders to their members; • Role of ERA Forum members to mobilise national constituencies; • Planned series of stakeholder assembly meetings in 2022, to be organised by the drafting team, for collecting input to the drafting of the agreement, for launching the coalition, and for rolling out its work. The first stakeholder assembly took place on 3 March 2022, and at least two more assemblies will be organised on 19 May and early July 2022. A constitutive assembly is expected to take place in autumn 2022 with the rolling in of signatures to the agreement; • Participation of the Commission in global fora in 2022-2023 (co-chairing the G7 sub-group on research assessment and broader incentives for open science; participation in the

	<p>Global Research Council working group on research assessment).</p> <p>Outreach to individual researchers will also be very important:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Open Science European Conference organised in Paris in February 2022, under the French Presidency of the EU, was mostly dedicated to research assessment and featured as an outcome the “Paris Call on Research Assessment”; • Other dedicated events and communication means should consider outreach to individual researchers. <p>Transparency about the process and steps in implementing changes is essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles on the Commission website and other means should communicate on the process, and update on its progress; • Members of the coalition should commit to broadly sharing knowledge acquired on changes tested, piloted or implemented, and to ensuring transparency on the criteria and processes in place in their organisations.
<p>8. Additional information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping Report “<i>Towards a reform of the research assessment system</i>” : https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/707440 • Ongoing call for interest “<i>Towards an agreement on reforming research assessment</i>”: https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/6d55d745-201f-a85d-a3c2-e15f05b7b20a • Article explaining the process of drafting an agreement on reforming research assessment and main actors involved: https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/process-towards-agreement-reforming-research-assessment-2022-jan-18_en