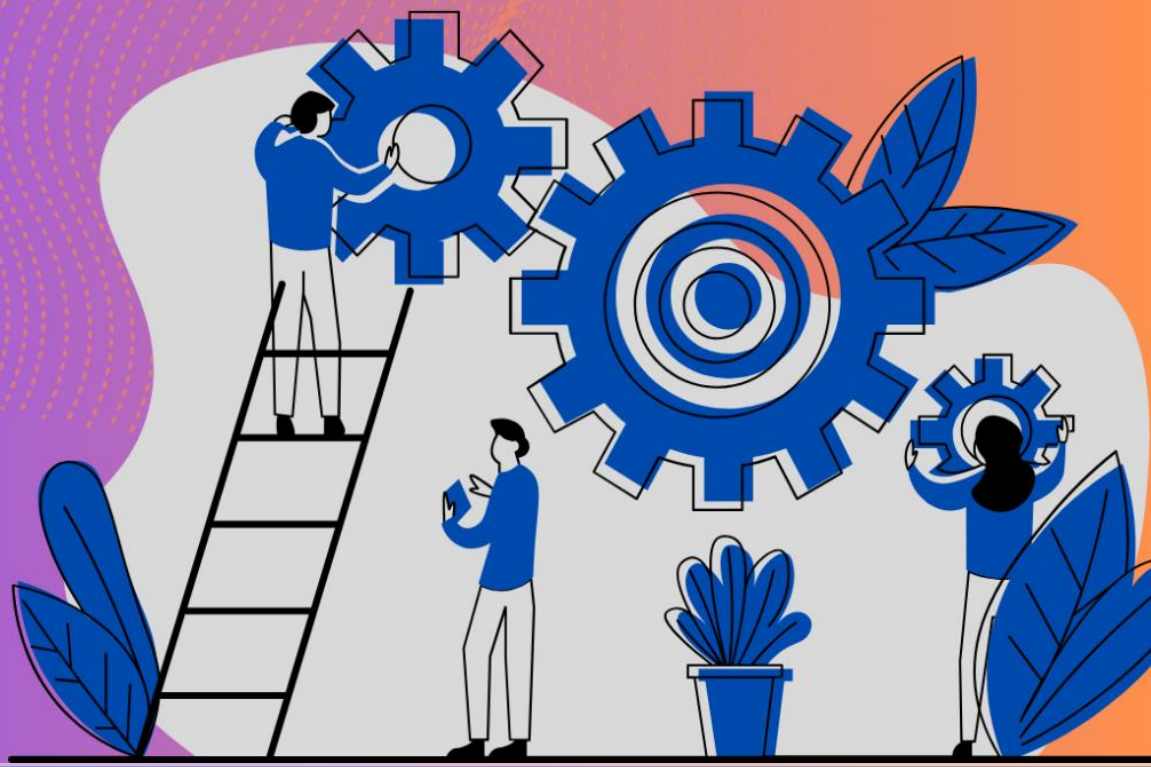




## EVENT REPORT

# Rebuild, Reshape, Revitalise Accelerating the Research Assessment Reform



12 June 2024

On 12 June 2024, we were delighted to welcome over 100 participants to our biennial Croissant Event with a focus on the ongoing research assessment reform in the context of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA).

The start was made by **Patrick Brenier**, Adviser for ERA and Open Science in DG RTD, who summarised the European Research Area's (ERA) development since 2000 in three phases: (1) Project-based initiatives such as ESFRI or the European Charter for Researchers, (2) Consolidation with first discussions on the fifth freedom and programme-level collaboration and (3) reinforcing partnerships and effective use of national resources. This two-decade-long work has led the ERA to focus on the following three dimensions:

1. ERA is the Single Market for European researchers,
2. ERA is the place where R&I policies are coordinated,
3. ERA is the forum where new initiatives are created and monitored.

With the relaunch of ERA in 2020 and the creation of the Pact for R&I, a long-term vision has been compiled and is implemented via the 18 actions of the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-24. Huge progress has been made in the area of research assessment reform with the creation of CoARA. The new agenda ranging from 2025-27 will keep a focus on our science system with proposed actions on research assessment and careers. Furthermore, the coming years will see a stronger emphasis on dimensions such as the use of AI in science or increased research security. Patrick Brenier outlined that the target now is to go beyond the traditional research area and support better integration of research, innovation and industrial policies to improve the translation of research results into market applications and increased competitiveness.

To contribute to the discussions on how to successfully reform research assessment practices, **Frank van der Zwan-Scholtz** from Vereniging Hogescholen outlined how Dutch UAS are shaping their research capacities through professional doctorates. As regionally-rooted higher education institutions, UAS closely work with the surrounding industry, public authorities and civil society, which is what the professional doctorates aim to foster. In essence, PD candidates need to develop four dimensions: (1) evolve as professionals, (2) broaden and deepen their research skills, (3) develop as innovators and thus (4) become change agents.

Drawing parallels to the discussions surrounding CoARA, Frank van der Zwan-Scholtz highlights the “one-size-does-not-fit-all” approach, whereby UAS need to define their own quality and impact and communicate this to the entire science system, including policymakers. For this, CoARA provides a suitable framework to account for all types of research and their impacts.

Following up on these two inputs, a panel of seasoned experts in research assessment discussed how to turn CoARA into an impactful reform:

- Michael Arentoft, Head of Unit for Open Science and Research Infrastructures, DG RTD, European Commission
- Stephane Berghmans, Director of Research & Innovation, European University Association
- Thomas Brunotte, Managing Director, German Association of UAS Professors (HLB)
- Isabelle Halleux, Advisor to the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Government of the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles
- Heimo Sandtner, Rector, FH Campus Wien

**Michael Arentoft** and **Stephane Berghmans** have been involved in CoARA since the movement started in 2020. While the European Commission acted as a facilitator, the drafting of the agreement on reforming research assessment has been a stakeholder-driven process with EUA as one of the penholders. Both

Michael Arentoft and Stephane Berghmans outlined the vision of CoARA as recognising the full diversity of research activities and giving more credit to those that increase the impact of research. At the core of the problem lies the missing recognition of the full range of academics in the system, which leads to a lack of incentives for innovation. This is particularly true for applied research. **Thomas Brunotte** and **Heimo Sandtner** outlined that UAS all address concrete challenges in their local communities, interconnect applied research with practice-based training and thus lead to regional impact. However, none of those elements are sufficiently reflected in the current research assessment practices.

With almost 700 participants (predominantly from the university sector) and 13 working groups, CoARA already led to the first improvements at a European level. Starting with Calls in 2024, the ERC changed the way it assesses its proposals to account for a wider diversity of research career paths and contributions. Going forward, the European Commission will look into developing new evaluation templates across the entirety of the Horizon Europe programme.

A dedicated Working Group on practice-based/applied research, co-led by Thomas Brunotte, aims at better integrating characteristics of UAS into research evaluation schemes. Against this background, it will develop recommendations for research performing and funding organisations with a focus on societal, economic and regional impact of applied research via two dedicated workshops in 2024.

Next to the stakeholders, the involvement of authorities is equally important to change research assessment for the better. The regional government of Wallonie-Bruxelles in Belgium, represented by **Isabelle Halleux**, is leading by example by allocating dedicated funding of 725.000 euros to support the five universities in the region in building an inter-university platform for the development of good practices in research management and assessment.

The panel agreed on the relevance of reforming research assessment. However, to make CoARA as impactful as possible, the speakers underlined the necessity for all types of research organisations to sign the agreement and join the coalition. This is of particular relevance for Universities of Applied Sciences!

#### Useful links:

- The Commission webpage on ERA: [European research area - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/era/)
- The public registry of Commission expert groups, including agendas and minutes of all meetings: [Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/expert-groups/)
- The ex post evaluation of Horizon 2020: [eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52024DC0049](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52024DC0049)
- The recent report of Enrico Letta: [Enrico Letta - Much more than a market \(April 2024\) \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/era/)
- The CoARA website: <https://coara.eu/>
- Article on CoARA and its implications on UAS: [UASJournal – The state of the art in CoARA and the implications on UAS](https://uasjournal.eu/)
- [Frank van der Zwan-Scholtz' presentation on professional doctorates in the Netherlands: Professional Doctorates @ UAS4EUROPE](https://uasjournal.eu/)

#### Something to look out for:

- The forthcoming report of Mr Draghi on European competitiveness
- The forthcoming report of the High-Level Group on Horizon Europe and FP10, chaired by Mr Heitor and which should be presented in October this year

## UAS4EUROPE – Who we are

Founded in 2016, UAS4EUROPE is an informal network representing 150 Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) in the European Research Area (ERA). The network aims to strengthen the visibility and inclusion of UAS in ERA-related R&I policies and programmes by providing a platform for knowledge exchange and policy advocacy.

More about UAS4EUROPE: [www.uas4europe.eu](http://www.uas4europe.eu)  
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