

## Research Data Alliance Launch and First Plenary

March 18-20, 2013, Gothenburg, Sweden

*“Sharing and cooperation are essential to science – no wonder scientists have long sought out tools to help them do this better. Remember it was scientists at CERN who invented the World Wide Web. That was a great gift of science to society: now we can ensure that it helps the scientists back.” Statement by Neelie Kroes, Vice President of the European Commission responsible for the Digital Agenda*



Over the last decade, significant investments have been made all over the globe for developing scientific data infrastructures to support the work of research communities and improving shared access to data. There is a common understanding that solutions must be global and that the development of an integrated and interoperable data domain can only be achieved through increased global cooperation.

As “big data” emerges as an international priority, plenty of scientists have been campaigning for a shift to open science. The Research Data Alliance (RDA) a newly formed organization with the goal to accelerate international data-driven innovation and discovery by facilitating research, data sharing and exchange, use and re-use, standards harmonisation for specific communities and across scientific disciplines. These objectives are achieved through the development and adoption of infrastructures, policies, practices, standards and with the support of a structure that includes a council, plenary, secretariat, non-governmental structures (NGSs), and working groups.

The RDA Launch Event and its First Plenary took place 18-20 March 2013 in Gothenburg, Sweden, and it followed the First RDA Planning Meeting held in Washington DC, 1-3 October 2012. The event, attended by over 250 people from over 45 countries worldwide, was launched by sponsors from the European Commission, the U.S. Government and the Australian Government and leaders in the data community which included Vice-President European Commission Neelie Kroes; Carlos Morais-Pires, Scientific Officer, Excellence in Science DG CONNECT & coordinator, Scientific Data e-Infrastructures, DG CONNECT European Commission; Alan Blatecky, Director Office of Cyberinfrastructure (OCI), National



Science Foundation (NSF), US; Ross Wilkinson, Executive Director, Australian National Data Service, Australia; Peter Wittenburg, Head of the Language Archive Unit at Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics at Nijmegen, The Netherlands, and Leif Laaksonen, Collaboration Director at CSC, IT Center for Science, Finland, the latter two representing the RDA Europe community. The event was supported by City of Gothenburg, Stadsledningskontoret, Chalmers e-Science Centre and the IT-universitet, Chalmers University of Technology and Gothenburg University. The RDA First Plenary was a working meeting to accelerate discussion, working and interest group interaction, and data community development.

The programme and presentations are available at <https://rd-alliance.org/programme-presentations.html>

### Data Driven Experiences

*“How do we deal with climate adaptation in a country that is going to be subject to climate change? How do we deal with soil which is quite sparse, and with water that is rare and precious? We want to enable researchers from many disciplines to come together to tackle all these problems. Data has to be ecumenical and available in a more general way.”* Ross Wilkinson, Executive Director, Australian National Data Service, Australia

Whether they deal with marine biodiversity, addressing the impacts of natural and man-made phenomena on marine species distribution, or with urban data such as urbanization, traffic and congestion to plan urban development, there is substantial value to research data communities in establishing a common ground for interactions, data sharing and interoperability, and a powerful value add for researchers from diverse disciplines to work together.

Aspect such as “Data Sharing in the Humanities” and “Data Sharing in the Life Sciences” will be addressed at the RDA First Plenary, with spotlights on studies on a data driven research in different research fields, offering insights into the relevance of data sharing, data management and data interoperability. The RDA First Plenary programme highlighted the experience of cross-disciplinary data infrastructure as well as of delegates from specific data initiatives around the globe, to help boosting discussions on different areas of activities and understand potential ‘win-win’ synergies.

*"Enabling infrastructure provides the building blocks for data-driven innovation,"* Francine Berman, who chairs the Research Data Alliance/US, and is also Edward G. Hamilton Distinguished Professor in Computer Science at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. *"The tools, policy, and practice that make data usable and interoperable are critical for 21st century research. What we need is an alliance that facilitates the forming of the various bits of infrastructure – code, policy, harmonized standards, and practices – that allow data sharing and exchange in any sector, not just in computer science and not just in academic research, but also in private corporations, governments – anywhere there is interest in data-driven innovation, which is practically everywhere."*



## **Towards an Open Access Research Data without Barriers or Borders – the road to RDA**

Where did it all start? In Europe it all started from the work of a **High Level Expert Group on Scientific Data Infrastructures**, which published their final report called “Riding the Wave” in October 2010. The vision - *“Data e-infrastructure that supports seamless access, use, re-use, and trust of data. In a sense, the physical and technical infrastructure becomes invisible and the data becomes the infrastructure as a valuable asset on which science, technology, the economy and society can advance”* – still remains and is one shared across the globe. The European Commission through a series of events and international initiatives began discussions with the US & Australia to set up an international activity to make this vision a reality. The Research Data Alliance was brought into existence by three research funding organisations: (i) the Australian Commonwealth Government through the Australian National Data Service ([www.ands.org.au](http://www.ands.org.au)), supported by the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy Program and the Education Investment Fund (EIF) Super Science Initiative; (ii) the European Commission through the RDA Europe project ([europe.rd-alliance.org](http://europe.rd-alliance.org)) funded under the 7th Framework Program; (iii) the United States of America through the RDA/US activity funded by the National Science Foundation ([www.nsf.gov](http://www.nsf.gov)).

RDA activities began in earnest in August 2012 with the establishment of an international Steering Group, tasked with defining its charter and organisational structures, with promoting its aims and mustering support for its activities. RDA merges the work of global data initiatives such as DAITF and DWF with support and funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), the Australian government and the European Union. The initiative's efforts are focused on taking forward the establishing of an open global research infrastructure, on promoting and enabling the exchange of information, while also raising awareness on the need for data sharing across scientific disciplines and empowering connecting policies, practices and standards.

## **Making concrete steps with Working & Interest Groups**

The RDA Launch & Plenary meeting was the first physical meeting for RDA stakeholders which range from Data Generators, Data Managers, Data Technologists, Data Users, Data to Policy makers and Others from countries around the globe that are interested in getting involved and can contribute actively to the RDA goals and activities. A series of RDA Working & Interest groups (<https://www.rd-alliance.org/working-and-interest-groups.html>) were established submitting their intent and case statements to the RDA Council for endorsement.

Progress and results of these and other RDA activities will be the focus of the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDA Plenary Meeting scheduled to take place in Washington DC, US from 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> September 2013. <https://www.rd-alliance.org/future-events>