

# Advancing responsible research assessment for funders in the European digital space

## *A dialogue on ethics, integrity, and open infrastructure*

*organized by the*

Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)<sup>1</sup>  
European Commission  
European Network for Research Integrity Offices (ENRIO)  
Ethical Data Initiative (EDI)  
TUM Think Tank

*in cooperation with*

OpenAIRE, ALLEA, The Barcelona Declaration, UKRI, CODATA, Research Data Alliance (RDA), Ethical Data Initiative (EDI), Universidade Católica Portuguesa (UCP), FAIRsharing, TOBB University, Eurodoc

### [Research Assessment Conference Concept Note](#)

(open to contributions)

Hybrid: In-person and on Zoom

**Palais des Academies, Royal Stables, Salle Ilya Prigogine**

Hertogenstraat 1 Rue Ducale, 1000 Brussels

Monday 2 June 2025, 9:00 to 16:30 CEST (Brussels time)

[Register here](#)

for in-person or online participation

Research assessment has paramount significance in the realm of academia, research and innovation, and is instrumental in steering knowledge creation and identifying and acknowledging contributions thus fostering a culture of excellence. This topic is of shared concern, as it engages both researchers and researchers' employers and funders collectively.

*Marc Tachelet, Director, European Research Executive Agency*  
European Commission, [Report on Research Assessment](#), March 2024

## Description

This conference brings together key European stakeholders in research assessment, including representatives from the European Commission, research funders, infrastructure providers, policy experts, and organizations such as CoARA and ENRIO. It is organized in the context of the European Commission's Call for Evidence on [A European strategy for AI in science – paving the way for a European AI research council](#) (closing Wednesday 5 June), part of the broader [AI Continent Action Plan](#). The event explores how artificial intelligence can be responsibly integrated into scientific research and funding systems, with a focus on transparency, accountability, and alignment with international frameworks like the UNESCO [Recommendation on Open Science](#).

The programme emphasizes the development of credible, legally compliant, and methodologically sound research assessment practices, particularly for AI-driven and data-intensive proposals. It builds on the European Commission's 2024 Report on Research Assessment and addresses the evolving role of funders in supporting high-quality, reproducible science. Discussions will highlight the need for robust policies and infrastructures that accommodate algorithmic outputs and digital research methods, drawing on guidance from CoARA, Science Europe, SAPEA, and the ERA Forum.

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<sup>1</sup> This conference is organized on behalf of [CoARA](#) by its working group on Open Infrastructures for Responsible Research Assessment (OI4RRA) and its working group on Ethics and Research Integrity Policy for Responsible Research Assessment in Data and Artificial Intelligence ([ERIP](#)). The conference receives funding support from EU funding number (Grant Agreement ID) for the CoARA Boost project is 101131826 as well as individual travel support from the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, (DG-RTD), European Commission.

## Agenda

Time	Session
8:00	<b>Registration and coffee</b>
9:00	<p><b>Welcome and opening remarks</b>  <i>Research funding &amp; research assessment in a new era</i></p> <p><u>Mara de Sousa-Freitas</u>            Co-chair, CoARA-<a href="#">ERIP</a>            Universidade Católica Portuguesa</p> <p><u>Elisabeth Monard</u>            Past President, Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts (KVAB)            President, Standing Supervisory Committee            Flemish Committee for Research Integrity (VCWI)</p> <p><u>Gabi Lombardo</u>            CoARA Steering Board            European Alliance for Social Sciences and Humanities</p> <p><u>Ana Persic</u>            Chief of the Science Policy and Partnerships Section            Division of Science Policy and Capacity Building            UNESCO</p> <p><u>Iryna Kuchma</u>            Co-chair, CoARA-<a href="#">OI4RRA</a>            Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL)</p>
9:30	<p><b>Keynote: Ethics in action</b>  <b>From principles to practice</b>  <i>operationalising ethics for AI-ready research assessment</i></p> <p><u>Mihalis Kritikos</u>            Secretary, European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE)            Ethics and Integrity Sector, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG-RTD), European Commission</p>
	<p><b>Session 1</b>  <b>Responsible research assessment in the age of AI</b>  <i>integrating ethics and building trust in AI-enabled science</i></p>
9:50	<p><b>Identifying the research objects and methods for research assessment in the digital space</b></p> <p><u>Perihan Elif Ekmekçi</u>            Co-chair, CoARA-ERIP            Head, History of Medicine and Ethics Department &amp; Deputy Dean, TOBB ETÜ            Medical Faculty, the Head of the International Chair            in Bioethics/WMA Cooperation Center</p>

<b>Time</b>	<b>Session</b>
10:05	<p align="center"><b>Panel discussion</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Moderated by</b>  <u>Angeliki Tzouganatou</u>            Co-chair CoARA-OI4RRA &amp; OpenAIRE</p> <p align="center"><b>Panelists</b>  <u>Mihalis Kritikos</u>, EGE, European Commission  <u>Perihan Elif Ekmekçi</u>, Co-chair, CoARA-ERIP &amp; TOBB ETÜ  <u>Bert Seghers</u>, European Network of Research Integrity Offices (ENRIO)  <u>Giovanna Lima</u>, San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)  <u>Susanne van den Hooff</u>, CoARA-ERIP, University of Humanistic Studies  <u>Bianca Kramer</u>, Barcelona Declaration on Open Research Information</p>
10:45	<p align="center"><b>Interactive discussion</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What practical steps can funders and research institutions take today to align with CoARA’s ‘Principles for Responsible Assessment’ and the European AI Continent Action Plan?</li> <li>2. Considering the European Commission’s ‘Report on Research Assessment’ emphasis on integrating reliable science, ethics, and integrity into research assessment frameworks, how can funding organizations ensure that these principles are effectively operationalized in the evaluation of AI-driven research proposals?</li> <li>3. Considering the European Commission’s initiative to establish a European AI Research Council aimed at fostering foundational AI research and promoting its integration into scientific practices, how can research funders design assessment frameworks that effectively evaluate the interdisciplinary nature and long-term impact of AI-driven scientific proposals?</li> </ol>
11:15	<p align="center"><b>Coffee break</b></p>
	<p align="center"><b>Session 2</b>  <b>Responsible by design</b>  <i>open infrastructure and research assessment in the Age of AI</i></p>
11:30	<p align="center"><b>Open infrastructures as frameworks for ‘responsible by design’</b>  <i>avenues towards rigorous standards of validity, reliability, and public trust</i></p> <p align="center"><u>Natalia Manola</u>            Co-chair, CoARA-OI4RRA &amp; OpenAIRE</p>
11:45	<p align="center"><b>Panel discussion</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Moderated by</b>  <u>Iryna Kuchma</u>            CoARA-OI4RRA &amp; EIFL</p> <p align="center"><b>Panelists</b>  <u>Ludo Waltman</u>, Leiden University  <u>Ignasi Labastida</u>, University of Barcelona</p>

<b>Time</b>	<b>Session</b>
	<p align="center"><u>Javier López Albacete</u>, Open Science and Research Infrastructures Unit            Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD), European Commission  <u>Natalia Manola</u>, Co-chair, CoARA WG OI4RRA &amp; OpenAIRE</p>
12:20	<p align="center"><b>Audience interaction</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The expanding role of AI in research assessment</b>            How can automation and large-scale analytics reshape proposal evaluation, peer review, and monitoring?            What risks do proprietary AI tools pose for accountability and equity?</li> <li><b>Open infrastructures (OIs) as enablers of trust and reproducibility</b>            What constitutes full-stack infrastructure for assessment (PIDs, metadata, aggregators, indicators)?            How can we ensure legal compliance, auditability, and data sovereignty through open ecosystems?</li> <li><b>Sustainable investment and shared responsibility</b>            Why should funders invest beyond local tools into global, interoperable layers?            What co-financing and co-governance models are needed (e.g., coalitions, public procurement alignment)?</li> <li><b>From policy to practice: embedding OIs in funding processes</b>            How can funders align funding calls, application requirements, and evaluation frameworks with OI-based assessment?            How can funders enable narrative CVs, diverse indicators, and recognition of broad contributions?</li> </ol>
13:00	<p align="center"><b>Networking lunch</b></p>
	<p align="center"><b>Session 3</b>  <b>Aligning research assessment with Europe’s AI strategy</b>  <i>the role of funders in shaping a trustworthy research ecosystem</i></p>
14:00	<p align="center"><b>From innovation to evaluation</b>  <i>aligning research assessment with emerging tech governance</i>  <i>in Europe’s AI Agenda</i></p> <p align="center"><u>Philip Pfaller</u>            TUM Think Tank            Munich School of Politics and Public Policy, Technical University of Munich</p>
14:10	<p align="center"><b>Panel discussion</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Moderated by</b>  <u>Tom Lindemann</u>, Luxembourg Agency for Research Integrity (LARI)</p> <p align="center"><b>Panelists</b>  <u>Philip Pfaller</u>, TUM Think Tank  <u>Marieke van Duin</u>, Dutch Research Council (NWO)  <u>Kris Dierickx</u>, Co-chair, CoARA-ERIP &amp; KU Leuven  <u>Jonathan Starr</u>, CoARA-ERIP &amp; Scientific Coordination Infrastructure and Operating Systems (SciOS)</p>

<b>Time</b>	<b>Session</b>
	<p align="center"><u>Niina Zuber</u>, Bavarian Research Institute for Digital Transformation (BIDT)  <u>Elena Gaura</u>, Coventry University</p>
14:40	<p align="center"><b>Audience interaction</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How can research funders effectively support the establishment and operation of the proposed European AI Research Council (RAISE – Resource for AI Science in Europe) to ensure it complements existing national and EU research assessment frameworks?</li> <li>2. What strategies can funders employ to harmonize research assessment criteria across national and European levels, particularly in evaluating interdisciplinary AI research projects?</li> <li>3. In the context of the AI Continent Action Plan’s emphasis on large-scale AI infrastructure projects, how should research assessment frameworks evolve to adequately evaluate the long-term impact and foundational nature of such initiatives?</li> </ol>
15:10	<p align="center"><b>Symposium</b>  <b>Navigating the digital age</b>  <i>global perspectives on research assessment</i></p> <p align="center"><b>Moderated by</b>  <u>Kathryn Bailey &amp; Suchith Anand</u>  Ethical Data Initiative (EDI)</p> <p><u>Chiedozie Ike</u>, Co-chair, CoARA-ERIP, Ambrose Alli University (AAU), Nigeria  <u>Gitanjali Yadav</u>, Co-chair, CoARA-ERIP  Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), India  <u>Adriana Baravalle</u>, Universidad Austral, Argentina  <u>Iratxe Puebla</u>, CoARA-ERIP, DataCite, FORCE11, Germany</p>
15:50	<p align="center"><b>Critical reflections</b></p> <p align="center"><b>The evolving role of funders in reforming research assessment as contributors to the <a href="#">A European Strategy for AI in Science</a></b></p> <p align="center"><u>Mihalis Kritikos</u>, EGE, European Commission  <u>Nidhi Nagabhatla</u>, United Nations University, CRIS, Belgium</p>
16:05	<p align="center"><b>Looking ahead</b></p> <p align="center"><b><a href="#">High-Level Conference on Reforming Research Assessment</a></b>  <b><i>Re-thinking Research Assessment and Excellence</i></b>  <b>3 to 4 December 2025, Copenhagen, Denmark</b>  under the auspices of  <b>Denmark’s Presidency of the Council of the European Union</b>  <b>together with Aalborg University and international partners</b></p> <p align="center"><u>David Budtz Pedersen</u>  Chair of the Programme Committee  Aalborg University, Denmark</p>

Time	Session
16:15	<b>Outcomes and next steps</b> <u>Mihalis Kritikos</u> , EGE, European Commission <u>Megha Sud</u> , International Science Council (ISC) <u>Natalia Manola</u> , Co-chair, CoARA-OI4RRA <u>Francis P. Crawley</u> , Co-chair & Coordinator, CoARA-ERIP & CODATA IDPC
16:30	<b>Close of the conference</b>

### Conference objectives

The primary objective of this conference is to contribute to the development of a coherent and accountable European framework for responsible research assessment with a focus on research funding organisations (RFOs). This framework will support scientific quality, legal compliance, and methodological transparency in the context of artificial intelligence, data-intensive research, and open science infrastructures.

The conference will pursue the following five specific objectives:

1. **Clarify the evolving role of research assessment** considering AI technologies, large-scale data, and advanced computational methods, with particular attention to their impact on research funding models, proposal evaluation, and monitoring frameworks.
2. **Support the integration of ethics, legal standards, and research integrity** into the assessment of AI-driven and data-centric scientific proposals, with emphasis on transparency, reproducibility, and sound scientific methodology.
3. **Advance alignment with the European AI Continent Action Plan**, including the *European Strategy for AI in Science* and the *Apply AI Strategy*, ensuring that research assessment policies reflect current and emerging European strategic priorities.
4. **Promote the design and implementation of open and reliable infrastructures** to support transparent and technically robust research assessment, including platforms for data sharing, documentation, and evaluation across funding bodies.
5. **Facilitate coordination between European and national funding systems** by identifying shared principles, technical requirements, and governance mechanisms that ensure consistency and accountability in research assessment across institutional and policy contexts.

These objectives are designed to advance a European framework for responsible research assessment that upholds scientific rigour, legal compliance, and methodological transparency in the context of AI, data-intensive science, and open research infrastructure. It will explore coordinated approaches to policy alignment, ethical oversight, and infrastructure development to support robust and accountable evaluation practices.

### Conference format

The conference is structured to support focused dialogue, expert-led discussion, and practical engagement with the challenges of research assessment in the context of artificial intelligence, data-driven methods, and open infrastructure. The format includes keynote presentations, thematic panels, targeted workshops, and moderated roundtable sessions designed to facilitate critical analysis, knowledge exchange, and policy coordination.

## **Advancing responsible research assessment for funders in the European digital space A dialogue on ethics, integrity, and open infrastructure**

Participants will engage with current European data and AI strategies and frameworks as well as innovation in European and international research assessment guidance and practices through collaborative sessions aimed at refining assessment practices, addressing ethical and legal considerations, and identifying actionable steps to strengthen transparency, methodological integrity, and alignment across funding systems.

### **Participants**

The audience for this conference includes representatives from the European Commission, along with European and national research funding agencies as well as other research-funding organisations (RFOs), research-performing organisations (RPOs), and those with an interest in the advancement of science and higher education. Also participating are members of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA), academic leaders, infrastructure providers, and experts in digital ethics, research governance, and policy development.

The conference also welcomes members of science academies, experts from universities and scientific institutions, and other research bodies engaged in the development and implementation of responsible, transparent, and methodologically sound research assessment practices across the European digital research ecosystem.

### **Background documents**

1. European Research Executive Agency (REA). 'Report on Research Assessment.' March 2024. [Report on research assessment-March 2024.pdf](#)
2. European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. Call for Evidence (due Thursday 5 June 2025). 'A European strategy for AI in science – paving the way for a European AI research council.' 10 April 2025. [A European Strategy for AI in science – paving the way for a European AI research council](#)
3. European Commission, Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology. 'Apply AI Strategy.' 9 April 2025. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/apply-ai>
4. European Commission, ERA Forum. 'Living guidelines on the responsible use of generative AI in research.' April 2025. <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/AInScience>
5. SAPEA. 'Successful and timely uptake of artificial intelligence in science in the EU: Evidence review report.' April 2024. <https://scientificadvice.eu/advice/artificial-intelligence-in-science/>
6. European Data Protection Supervisor. 'EDPS Orientations on Generative AI and Data Protection.' 3 June 2024. [https://edps.europa.eu/data-protection/our-work/publications/edps-orientations-generative-ai\\_en](https://edps.europa.eu/data-protection/our-work/publications/edps-orientations-generative-ai_en)
7. Science Europe. 'Position Statement and Recommendations on Research Assessment Processes.' July 2020. <https://www.scienceurope.org/media/hh4nkvkf/se-position-statement-research-assessment-processes.pdf>
8. Commission Recommendation (EU) 2018/790 of 25 April 2018 on access to and preservation of scientific information C/2018/2375. [EUR-Lex - 32018H0790 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)
9. European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. *Towards a reform of the research assessment system – Scoping report*. Publications Office, November 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/707440>
10. European Council's Conclusions on the Assessment of Research and the Implementation of Open Science of 10 June 2022. [st10126-en22.pdf](#)
11. Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA). 20 July 2022. *Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment*. [2022\\_07\\_19\\_rra\\_agreement\\_final.pdf](#)

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12. AI Office, European Commission. 2025. Draft of the General-Purpose AI Code of Practice. [Third Draft of the General-Purpose AI Code of Practice published, written by independent experts | Shaping Europe's digital future](#)
13. European Commission. European Charter for Researchers. Annex II of Council Recommendation of 18 December 2023 on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe. ST/15135/2023/ADD/1. [EUR-Lex - 32023H01640 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)
14. UNESCO 2021. Recommendation on Open Science.
15. ERA Forum's living guidelines on GenAI use in research [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/2b6cf7e5-36ac-41cb-aab5-0d32050143dc\\_en?filename=ec\\_rtd\\_ai-guidelines.pdf](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/2b6cf7e5-36ac-41cb-aab5-0d32050143dc_en?filename=ec_rtd_ai-guidelines.pdf)
16. UNESCO guidance on GenAI use in education and research <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/guidance-generative-ai-education-and-research>
17. European Commission. (2018). *Commission Recommendation (EU) 2018/790 on access to and preservation of scientific information*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2018/790/oj/eng/pdf>