



# **Action Plan by the Commission to implement the ten commitments of the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA)**

*April - 2024*

The implementation of the ten commitments in the [Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment](#) (ARRA) will be guided by the ten principles also included in the Agreement.

**Commitment 1** of the *Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA): Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and the nature of the research*

The Commission already:

- ✓ Integrated the recognition of a more diverse set of research contributions and careers as part of the award criteria of the Horizon Europe main Work Programme:
  - The quality and appropriateness of open science practices, including engagement of citizens and civil society, and the appropriate consideration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content, are assessed as part of the project methodology, itself part of the "excellence" award criterion (note that this is not explicit under the criteria used by the European Research Council).
  - When the capacity of the individual participants and consortium is assessed, under the "*quality and efficiency of the implementation*" award criterion, the diversity of research results from previous work must be taken into account, not just publications, and applicants must demonstrate their expertise to practice open science.
- ✓ Integrated the recognition of a more diverse set of research contributions and careers in the application and reporting forms for the Horizon Europe main Work Programme:
  - Each applicant organisation is asked to list up to 5 relevant achievements including others than publications, like datasets, software, goods, services, etc., in the proposals.
  - They are asked to indicate their various expected contributions to the projects, and also for gender equality plans.
  - They are asked to report on publications from the projects but also a broad spectrum of other research results like datasets, software, workflows, protocols, prototypes, intellectual property rights, standards, etc.
  - They are asked to deliver Data Management Plans and to describe their open science practices.
- ✓ Established under Horizon Europe the obligation for public bodies, research organisations, or higher education institutions established in Member States or in an Associated Country, to adopt a Gender Equality Plan. The Gender Equality Plan includes awareness-raising and training actions on gender equality and unconscious gender biases.
- ✓ Set up the Open Research Europe (ORE) publishing service for the grantees of its R&I framework programmes. The open access publishing platform allows research articles and 13 other types of publications (including methods, software tools, study protocols, and case reports). All reports of the open peer review are citable and allow reviewers to receive credit for them.

The Commission will:

- Identify potential improvements to the award criteria applied to research proposals in the perspective of the tenth EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP10), to recognise a diversity of contributions that contribute to quality and impact.

- Identify potential improvements to the information requested from applicants to the Framework Programme in order to best recognise the diversity of earlier contributions, and a diversity of talents and careers.
- Identify potential improvements to the reporting forms and Key Impact Pathways of the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, especially with a view to the development of FP10 so as to consider a diverse set of research outputs.
- Continue developing ORE, and transition into an open-source infrastructure and service supported by additional research funders and other stakeholders across Europe, with the objective to make it accessible to a wider range of researchers.

**ARRA Commitment 2:** *Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer-review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators*

The Commission already:

- ✓ Put in place robust peer-review of research proposals, based on well-defined award criteria. Under the Horizon Europe main Work Programme, proposals are assessed against criteria for “*Excellence*”, “*Impact*” and “*Quality and efficiency of the implementation*”.
- ✓ Has processes in place to ensure a balanced composition of peer-reviewers in terms of various skills and experience, knowledge and disciplines, geographical diversity, and gender.

The Commission will:

- Identify potential improvements in the selection of peer-reviewers in the frame of the evaluation of research proposals under FP10 - as well as the ongoing Horizon Europe Programme.
- Consider piloting innovative assessment processes of research proposals.

**ARRA Commitment 3:** *Abandon inappropriate uses in research assessment of journal- and publication-based metrics, in particular inappropriate uses of Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index*

The Commission already:

- ✓ Endorsed the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), in November 2022.
- ✓ Moved away from asking applicants to Horizon Europe information relating to Journal Impact Factors, and journal prestige. Under the Horizon Europe main Work Programme, when the capacity of the individual participants and consortium is assessed, under the “*quality and efficiency of the implementation*” award criterion, the Journal Impact Factor should not be used to assess past publications;
- ✓ Provided guidance to peer-reviewers, instructing them to disregard the Journal Impact Factor of publications listed by applicants as major achievements.
- ✓ Set up Open Research Europe where each article has a dedicated page of article-level metrics.

The Commission will:

- Identify potential improvements to the Key Impact Pathways of the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, especially with a view to the development of FP10 in order to ensure that quantitative indicators are used responsibly and are not based on JIF and the h-index.

**ARRA Commitment 4:** *Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment*

The Commission does not make use of rankings of research organisations in the assessment of research proposals under the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

**ARRA Commitment 5:** *Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the organisational changes committed to*

The Commission already:

- ✓ Contributed in-kind to facilitate the preparation of the Agreement and of the CoARA coalition.
- ✓ Contributed in-kind to the extended CoARA secretariat during the first 9 months of operation of the coalition (December 2022 – September 2023).

The Commission will:

- Continue contributing in-kind to the functioning of CoARA, by acting as Observer to its Steering Board and by participating in CoARA Working Group activities.
- Dedicate in-kind resources for the internal work needed to review and develop improved research assessment criteria, tools and processes under the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, and other EU funding programmes.
- Support financially the operation of CoARA through the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (Horizon Europe Widening and ERA Work Programme call topic HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ERA-01-07 - Support to reforms of research assessment in the European Research Area).
- Support institutional changes related to research assessment (Horizon Europe Widening and ERA Work Programme call topics HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ERA-01-07 - Support to reforms of research assessment in the European Research Area; HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-03-01 - European Excellence Initiative; and HORIZON-WIDERA-2024-ERA-01-06 - European Excellence Initiative: Acceleration services in support of universities).
- Consider supporting further projects as appear necessary and valuable.

**ARRA Commitment 6:** *Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes*

The Commission will:

- Review the criteria, tools and processes for FP10 (starting in 2028) and ensure that these are in line with the principles and commitments of the ARRA.

**ARRA Commitment 7:** *Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use*

The Commission already:

- ✓ Widely communicated about the award criteria under Horizon Europe, and in particular novelties related to the evaluation of open science practices.
- ✓ Provided guidance to applicants (see [Horizon Europe Programme Guide](#)) and peer-reviewers (see relevant video [here](#)) about the evaluation of open science in Horizon Europe.

The Commission will:

- Identify potential improvements in the guidance and training (notably on gender equality and on unconscious biases) provided to peer-reviewers in the frame of the evaluation of research proposals under FP10 - as well as the ongoing Horizon Europe Programme.

**ARRA Commitment 8:** *Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition*

The Commission already:

- ✓ Submitted a proposal for a CoARA Working Group on "*Improving practices in the assessment of research proposals*", together with 32 other research organisations, and proposed to co-chair this Working Group.
- ✓ Initiated a Multilateral Dialogue on Values and Principles for Research and Innovation (R&I) with the aim to work towards a common understanding of principles and values that underpin international R&I cooperation. Thematic dialogues on "*open science*" and on "*research excellence*" have already been organised in Q2 2023.
- ✓ Co-chaired a sub-Working Group of the G7 Open Science Working Group, focused on Research assessment and broader issues of incentives for open science.
- ✓ Joined the Global Research Council Working Group on Responsible Research Assessment.

The Commission will:

- Contribute to the work of CoARA Working Groups, notably Co-Chair the Working Group on "*Improving practices in the assessment of research proposals*".
- Contribute to the Research Data Alliance (RDA) Interest Group (IG) on evaluation of research.
- Continue implementing the Multilateral Dialogue on Values and Principles for R&I.
- Continue co-chairing the G7 Open Science Working Group including in particular exchanges on incentives and rewards of open science practice, and reform of research assessment.
- Continue contributing to the Global Research Council Working Group on Responsible Research Assessment.
- Work with the European Open Science Cloud on the provision of data, indicators and infrastructural elements underlying research assessment.
- Work with the Public Engagement/Citizen Science community to promote and recognize Citizen Science as a valuable research approach within Research Performing Organizations (RPOs) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and rewarded within the career trajectories.

**ARRA Commitment 9:** *Communicate progress made on adherence to the principles and implementation of the Commitments*

The Commission will:

- Report on the progress made with this Action Plan within the timeline established in the ARRA.

**ARRA Commitment 10:** *Evaluate practices, criteria and tools based on solid evidence and the state-of-the-art in research on research, and make data openly available for evidence gathering and research*

The Commission already:

- ✓ Initiated the funding of projects that contribute to research assessment reforms, by evaluating and piloting practices, gathering new evidence, and supporting data sharing and indicators development. The following Horizon Europe running projects are of particular relevance:
  - [PathOS](#) - Open Science Impact Pathways (Research and Innovation action; €1.999.990 EU contribution)
  - [OPUS](#) - Open Universal Science (Coordination and Support action; €1.726.898 EU contribution)
  - [GraspOS](#) - Next Generation Research Assessment to Promote Open Science (Research and Innovation action; €2.985.441 EU contribution)
  - [SciLake](#) - Democratising and making sense out of heterogeneous scholarly content (Research and Innovation action; €4,809,450.00 EU contribution).

The Commission will:

- Map the research and innovation projects and other coordination and support actions already funded through the Horizon Framework Programme, that contribute to reform of research assessment.
- Identify the main contributions and recommendations from these projects for research assessment reforms and CoARA work.
- Identify potential new research and innovation actions needed.