

EU-LIFE signs agreement on Reforming Research Assessment and shares views for the future

EU-LIFE signed today the [agreement on Reforming Research Assessment](#) and is committed to be an active member of the new **Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)**. In view of the next phase of the process – the entering into force of CoARA -, EU-LIFE presents here its views on key aspects regarding the next steps.

As leading research institutes in Europe committed to improve research, EU-LIFE partner institutes have since long been strong advocates of developing and implementing good assessment processes; the core principles of which we see reflected in the agreement on Reforming Research Assessment. Our institutes have since long strongly supported peer review, coupled with responsible use of metrics, as the core of research assessment; and have been working towards actual implementation of assessment processes that recognise diversity of people and contributions, collaboration and open science, among others.

As a key stakeholder, the EU-LIFE alliance has been actively involved in the co-creation of the current research assessment reform by contributing to the European Commission's consultations that gave rise to the [EC Scoping paper "Towards a reform of the research assessment system"](#) (2021) and by organising community engagement with policy makers such as the [EU-LIFE webinar on Research Assessment. EU-LIFE was deeply involved](#) in the drafting of the Reforming Research Assessment agreement as member of the [core group](#) as well as in the building of CoARA through the [Implementation group](#) (2022).

The next step in the way forward

The real work starts now: willing organisations will walk the talk from the published agreement to real implementation of improved assessment systems. In this next step of the process, where CoARA will be at the centre, we highlight the following recommendations.

- 1) **Keep focus on community engagement.** A systemic change means that a significant part of the relevant communities (research, R&I funding, legislative) is on-board, in particular those who will be mostly impacted, i.e. researchers at all stages of their career.
- 2) **Find a good pace for the reform.** The building of the agreement as well as the launching of CoARA occurred extremely fast, roughly within one year. This was important to keep the momentum, but now we need to ensure that the pace of the reform allows the relevant communities to be on board. If we go too fast, there is a risk of detachment; if we go too slow, there is a risk of losing interest.

- 3) **Strive for light structures.** CoARA has the potential to become an organisation of a multitude of organizations with a complex administration and using many resources. It is important to direct the resources as much as possible to implementing the core principles of the research assessment agreement within the relevant communities, rather than on managing a heavy administration. Likewise, the Steering Board, governance and decision making process should continue open and transparent, close to the communities their members represent.
- 4) **Bottom-up and top-down commitment.** CoARA is led and owned by relevant stakeholders and this should stay so but it should be complemented with a genuine top-down commitment to the overall reform of research assessment and to national and local initiatives. It is therefore important to promote and develop intense dialogue with national governments and (inter)national agencies, in order to move forward.
- 5) **Go global.** Progress in improving research assessment systems can only be implemented at a global scale, so that researchers and research organizations can keep a global competitiveness.
- 6) **A reform needs sustainable support.** There is a risk the reform comes as an additional burden on already stretched institutions across all countries, which would hinder progress on reforming research assessment. Therefore, commensurate resources and funding must be allocated by national and regional governments, the European Commission and other funding agencies to support the reform beyond CoARA. In addition, we support a pivotal role of the European Commission for the reform of research assessment, meaning funding allocation with the right tools and policy involvement.

Barcelona, 15th November 2022