



Webinar Report

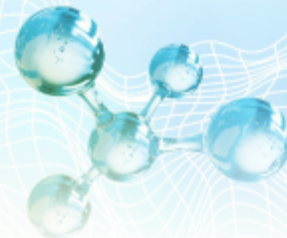
Building Capacity in the Ukrainian R&I Ecosystem
Transforming Research Assessment
Systems: Criteria, Quality,
and Societal Impact

26 June 2026



NATIONAL RESEARCH
FOUNDATION OF
UKRAINE





Colophon

August 2026

Report of the 4th Webinar on Building Capacity in the Ukrainian R&I Ecosystem: ‘Transforming Research Assessment Systems: Criteria, Quality, and Societal Impact’

Date of event: 26 June 2026

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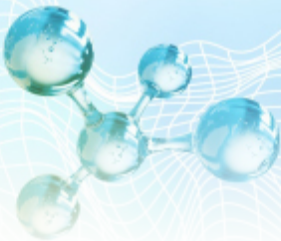
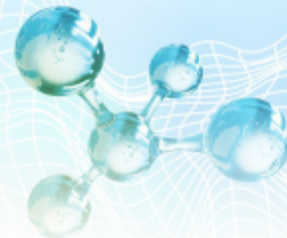


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Context

Following three successful webinars in its series on Building Capacity in the Ukrainian R&I Ecosystem, organised by the [National Research Foundation of Ukraine](#) (NRFU) and Science Europe, the fourth webinar focused on one of the most significant transformations currently taking place within the global research area: the reform of research assessment systems. This reform reflects a growing recognition that research assessment practices influence research cultures, researcher behaviour, and the recognition of diverse research contributions and career paths.

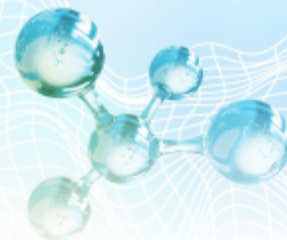
The fourth NRFU-SE webinar took place at a time when responsible research assessment has become a key priority across the European Research Area (ERA). In recent years, research funding organisations (RFOs) and research performing organisations (RPOs) have increasingly acknowledged the limitations of predominantly metric-based approaches that rely heavily on indicators such as publication counts, journal impact factors, and citation metrics. While quantitative indicators may provide useful information in certain contexts, concerns have been raised regarding their potential to create unintended incentives, reinforce biases, and provide an incomplete picture of research quality, excellence, and broader contributions.

In response to these challenges, a growing number of national and international initiatives have emerged to promote more responsible, inclusive and comprehensive approaches to research assessment. These efforts aim to better recognise the diversity of research outputs, practices and career paths; strengthen research integrity; promote open science;

encourage collaboration; and better acknowledge the societal value and impact of research alongside scientific excellence. Among the most influential developments is the work of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA), which brings together funding organisations, research institutions, policy makers and stakeholders committed to advancing reform and supporting a more holistic approach to research assessment.

The reform of research assessment does not imply abandoning the principles of research excellence or quality, but rather seeks to broaden the understanding of these concepts by recognising diverse forms of contribution, disciplinary differences, and the wider societal value of research.

For Ukraine, which continues to advance its integration into the European Research Area (ERA) and align its research and innovation system with European standards, these developments are particularly relevant. Amid the challenges posed by Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, the establishment of fair, transparent, and effective research assessment systems can contribute to strengthening research quality, fostering innovation, enhancing international collaboration, and increasing the resilience of the national research and innovation ecosystem. The experiences shared by European organisations provide valuable insights for Ukrainian research funders, policy makers, and institutions as they continue to develop assessment approaches aligned with evolving European practices and responsible research principles.



Introduction

The fourth webinar in the Science Europe-NRFU series Building Capacity in the Ukrainian Research and Innovation Ecosystem, entitled '**Transforming Research Assessment Systems: Criteria, Quality, and Societal Impact**,' took place on 26 June 2026.

The session explored ongoing developments in responsible research assessment and examined how evolving approaches to assessment can contribute to improving research quality, fostering positive research cultures, and recognising a broader range of research contributions and impacts.

The webinar contributed to ongoing discussions on strengthening research and innovation systems through the development of responsible, transparent, and effective assessment approaches aligned with European principles.

Objectives of the Webinar

The webinar aimed to explore the inter-connection between open science and responsible research assessment reform, and how these interconnected agendas contribute to the transformation of research cultures. Specific objectives included presenting institutional and national experiences in implementing assessment reforms, discussing the transition from predominantly metric-based approaches towards more comprehensive and qualitative assessment practices, and identifying key challenges, good practices, and supporting policy frameworks, including CoARA and related initiatives.

By bringing together experts from RFOs and RPOs from across Europe, the webinar provided a platform for exchanging perspectives, sharing practical experiences, and discussing emerging approaches to research assessment reform. It facilitated dialogue on how research quality, excellence, and societal impact can be considered within assessment processes, as well as on the practical challenges of implementing fair, transparent, and sustainable assessment systems across diverse institutional and national contexts.

The panel discussion addressed several key questions, including how RFOs and RPOs can move from principles to practice in assessment reform; how research quality, excellence, and societal impact can be balanced within assessment processes; and how international initiatives can support implementation across different research environments.

Through the exchange of experiences and perspectives from across Europe, participants explored both the opportunities and challenges associated with transforming research assessment systems. The discussion highlighted that assessment reform is not merely a technical adjustment of evaluation criteria, but a broader cultural shift with the potential to influence researcher behaviour, institutional priorities, and the overall quality and societal relevance of research.

The full recording is available on YouTube:

[View the recording](#)

Panel Discussion

Lisbet Crone, Special Advisor at the Independent Research Fund Denmark (DFF), presented the DFF's ongoing efforts to reform research assessment practices and shared early lessons from the implementation process. She emphasised that assessment systems play a key role in shaping research cultures, as researchers often respond to the incentives embedded within evaluation frameworks. While recognising that metrics can provide useful information, she highlighted that their use should be carefully considered and complemented by broader approaches that capture the diversity of research contributions, outputs, and career paths. Participation in initiatives

such as CoARA and the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) were presented as an important opportunity for reflecting on existing practices and ensuring that assessment approaches remain aligned with the goal of supporting high-quality research.

Crone outlined several measures introduced by DFF, including the use of a semi-narrative CV format, broader recognition of different research outputs, and revised assessment criteria that place greater emphasis on the originality of research ideas, the collective expertise of research teams, and the context



in which contributions are made. She noted that one of the main challenges of reform is not the development of new procedures, but achieving cultural change across disciplines and research communities. In her view, successful implementation requires transparency, continuous dialogue, and gradual steps that allow institutions to learn and adapt. She encouraged organisations beginning their reform journey to focus on practical improvements, align assessment criteria with institutional objectives, and involve the research community throughout the process.

Josefin Thoresson, Senior Research Officer at the Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development (FORMAS), presented the approach of FORMAS to integrating societal relevance and impact into research assessment processes. She highlighted that societal impact is systematically embedded across FORMAS' funding instruments, although the specific requirements vary, depending on the objectives and scope of individual calls. In particular, targeted calls addressing societal challenges encourage collaboration with external stakeholders from the early stages of project development, involving partners from the public, private, and non-profit sectors. Thoresson emphasised that assessment frameworks increasingly seek to recognise a broader range of contributions beyond traditional academic outputs, with project roles, expertise, collaboration, outreach activities, and open science practices taken into account. She also outlined FORMAS' efforts to adapt assessment tools, including the introduction of tailored CV formats and reduced reliance on publication-based indicators. Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how their research may contribute to societal benefits through clear pathways from research outputs to outcomes and impacts, including communication, knowledge exchange, and stakeholder engagement.

Thoresson noted that implementing these approaches requires continuous refinement and learning, as assessment systems must remain responsive to different disciplines and societal needs. Recent developments, such as policy labs and challenge-driven calls based on regional and local needs, demonstrate FORMAS' efforts to strengthen the connection between funded research and its wider societal relevance.

Matthias Kiesselbach, Programme Director, German Research Foundation (DFG) discussed the rationale behind research assessment reform and shared lessons from both DFG's experience and the CoARA Working Group on Improving Proposal Assessment Practices. He argued that excessive reliance on journal-based metrics can distort evaluation outcomes by overlooking valuable contributions such as datasets,

software, research infrastructure, and other forms of scholarly output. Beyond affecting individual researchers, such practices may also encourage narrow research agendas, reduce diversity and creativity, and reinforce a "publish or perish" culture. In response, reform initiatives increasingly emphasise the recognition of diverse research contributions and the use of predominantly qualitative assessment approaches, with quantitative indicators serving only a limited supporting role.

Drawing on DFG's long-standing commitment to peer review, Kiesselbach outlined measures aimed at strengthening quality-focused assessment, including revised CV formats, greater opportunities for applicants to contextualise their achievements, and clearer guidance for reviewers to evaluate the full range of research contributions. He also highlighted key recommendations emerging from the CoARA Working Group, including the need for transparent assessment processes, flexible criteria that accommodate different research profiles and career paths, and application formats that recognise diverse outputs and experiences. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of well-trained and diverse reviewer communities, constructive feedback practices, and strong panel leadership to ensure fair and responsible assessment.

Laurence El Khouri, Deputy Head of the Open Research Data Department at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), presented the organisation's experience in advancing open science and research assessment reform. She emphasised that responsible research assessment and open science are closely inter-connected, as both seek to broaden the recognition of research contributions beyond traditional publication-based indicators. According to El Khouri, effective reform benefits from co-ordinated action at institutional, national, and international levels, supported by shared principles and frameworks such as DORA, CoARA, and the UNESCO Recommendation on open science. She stressed that open science encompasses not only open access to publications and data, but also transparency across the entire research process, including methodologies, software, and other research outputs.

Drawing on the CNRS experience, El Khouri outlined assessment principles that prioritise the quality and significance of research outputs over journal prestige, encourage researchers to contextualise their contributions, and recognise a broad range of outputs, including datasets, software, and other non-traditional research products. She also highlighted efforts to expand assessment beyond scientific publications by recognising activities related to teaching, training,



knowledge dissemination, research management, and collective responsibilities. Reflecting on implementation challenges, she noted that meaningful reform requires continuous engagement with assessment committees and gradual cultural change across disciplines. Early results suggest that these measures are contributing to a broader and more balanced recognition of researchers' contributions, supporting a more inclusive and responsible assessment system.

James Morris, Senior Policy Officer at Science Europe, presented the association's perspective on the relationship between research assessment reform and open science. Drawing on Science Europe's recent work in these areas, he argued that both agendas pursue common objectives and should be addressed through a co-ordinated and systemic approach. According to Morris, research assessment systems play a crucial role in shaping research culture and therefore need to recognise and reward practices that promote openness, transparency, quality, and

collaboration. He emphasised that sustainable reform requires a shared vision in which assessment frameworks and open science principles reinforce one another rather than operate as separate policy initiatives.

Morris then highlighted a range of actions that can support this transition, including investment in open and community-governed research infrastructures, capacity building through guidance and training, and the recognition of open science practices within funding and career assessment processes. He stressed that meaningful change depends not only on new policies but also on effective communication, continuous monitoring, and engagement with the research community. In conclusion, he underlined the importance of international collaboration and knowledge exchange through initiatives such as CoARA, encouraging organisations to adopt a holistic approach to research culture and align reform efforts with shared values from the outset.

Conclusions from the Discussion

The discussion that followed the presentations highlighted a broad consensus that research assessment reform is not primarily a technical exercise, but a long-term process of cultural change.

While many organisations have already introduced new assessment criteria, narrative elements, and broader recognition of research contributions, participants emphasised that the greatest challenge lies in transforming established assessment practices and expectations within research communities. Successful implementation therefore requires sustained dialogue, transparency, capacity building and active engagement with both researchers and reviewers.

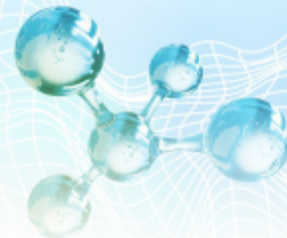
A recurring theme throughout the discussion was the need to move beyond narrow publication-based indicators towards more holistic and context-sensitive approaches to assessment. Participants stressed that research quality and excellence cannot be fully captured through quantitative metrics alone and that assessment systems should recognise a wider range of contributions, including research data, software, open science practices, collaboration, knowledge exchange, teaching, and societal engagement.

At the same time, reform was not viewed as lowering standards, but rather as improving the ability of assessment processes to identify and reward high-quality research in its diverse forms.

The discussion also highlighted the close relationship between research assessment reform and broader efforts to strengthen open science and research culture. Participants noted that assessment systems shape researcher behaviour and institutional priorities, making them a powerful mechanism for encouraging openness, transparency, collaboration, and responsible research practices. Aligning incentives with these values was considered essential for creating research environments that support both scientific excellence and societal relevance.

Finally, speakers emphasised the importance of international co-operation and mutual learning. Initiatives such as CoARA, DORA, and Science Europe's policy work were recognised as valuable platforms for sharing experiences, testing new approaches, and supporting organisations at different stages of reform.

Participants agreed that there is no single model applicable to all disciplines, institutions, or national systems; however, common principles of fairness, transparency, inclusiveness, and responsible assessment can provide a strong foundation for continued progress.



Across the Q&A session and panel exchange, speakers and participants highlighted several key insights:

- Research assessment reform is fundamentally a process of cultural change, requiring shifts in incentives, assessment practices, and research culture.
- Responsible assessment relies on holistic and context-sensitive assessment, recognising diverse research outputs, contributions, and career pathways beyond traditional metrics.
- High-quality peer review remains essential, supported by transparency, clear criteria, reviewer training, and appropriate quality assurance mechanisms.
- Research assessment and open science are closely interconnected, as both seek to promote openness, transparency, collaboration, and broader recognition of research contributions.
- International co-operation and shared frameworks, including CoARA, are key enablers of reform, facilitating mutual learning and the exchange of good practices across research systems.



Since the outbreak of the war in February 2022, Science Europe and its Member Organisations have undertaken a range of initiatives to support the National Research Foundation of Ukraine (NRFU) and the broader Ukrainian research ecosystem. As part of these efforts, NRFU and Science Europe jointly organised a series of three online workshops between September 2025 and February 2026, focusing on key priority areas relevant to the development and resilience of the Ukrainian research system.

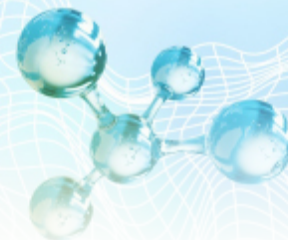
The primary objective of the webinar series was to contribute to the capacity-building of the Ukrainian research ecosystem by facilitating knowledge exchange, sharing European experience, and discussing practical approaches to policy development and implementation.



The workshops addressed priority areas identified by the National Research Foundation of Ukraine, bringing together representatives of research funding organisations, research institutions, and policy experts to exchange insights and best practices.

Reports From Previous Webinars

- 19 September 2025 – [Balancing bottom-up and top-down research funding](#)
- 25 November 2025 – [Developing and implementing monitoring tools for R&D projects](#)
- 20 February 2026 – [Open Science Policies and Practices of Research Funding Organisations](#)



26 June 2026

Transforming Research Assessment Systems: Criteria, Quality, and Societal Impact

Programme

10.00–11.30 CEST (11.00–12.30 EET)

10.00–10.10 Welcome and introductory remarks

- **Andrii Kuznetsov**, First Deputy Executive Director for Grant Support of the National Research Foundation of Ukraine (NRFU)

10.10–11.20 Panel discussion

- **Lisbet Crone**, Special Advisor at the Independent Research Fund Denmark (DFF)
- **Josefin Thoreson**, Senior Research Officer at the Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development (FORMAS)
- **Laurence El Khouri**, Deputy Head of the Open Research Data Department at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS)
- **Matthias Kiesselbach**, Director at the German Research Foundation (DFG)
- **James Morris**, Senior Policy Officer, Science Europe

Moderators:

- **Oleksandra Kyselova**, Head of the Legal and Regulatory Affairs Department of the National Research Foundation of Ukraine (NRFU)
- **Lidia Borrell-Damián**, Secretary General, Science Europe

11.20–11.30 Conclusions and next steps

- **Andrii Kuznetsov**, First Deputy Executive Director for Grant Support of the National Research Foundation of Ukraine (NRFU)
- **Lidia Borrell-Damián**, Secretary General, Science Europe

Rapporteurs:

- **Svitlana Baran**, Chief Expert, Department of Communications and International Cooperation of the National Research Foundation of Ukraine (NRFU)
- **Adrien Braem**, Senior Policy Officer, Science Europe

Science Europe AISBL

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Science Europe is the association of major research funding and research performing organisations in Europe. Our vision is for the European Research Area to have the optimal conditions to support robust education and research & innovation systems.

We define long-term perspectives for European research and champion best-practice approaches that enable high-quality research for knowledge advancement and the needs of society.

We are uniquely placed to lead advancements to the European Research Area and inform global developments through participation in research initiatives where science is a strong and trusted component of sustainable economic, environmental, and societal development.

National Research Foundation of Ukraine (NRFU)

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The National Research Foundation of Ukraine is the central organisation supporting competitive research and development projects across all fields of science in Ukraine.

Our mission is to strengthen the country's scientific potential, foster innovation, and enable researchers – especially early-career scientists – to contribute to knowledge advancement and societal development.

The NRFU promotes national and international research collaboration, invests in research infrastructure, and champions best practices to ensure high-quality scientific outcomes.