WEBINAR REPORT

Building Capacity in the Ukrainian R&I Ecosystem

Developing and Implementing Monitoring Tools for R&D Projects

25 November 2025

NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION OF UKRAINE

SCIENCE EUROPE
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'Report of 2nd Webinar on Building Capacity in the Ukrainian R&I Ecosystem: Developing and Implementing Monitoring Tools for R&D Projects'

Date of event: 25 November 2025

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Table of Contents

Context

Science Europe and the National Research Foundation of Ukraine (NRFU) are jointly organising a webinar series on building capacity in the Ukrainian R&I ecosystem. The second webinar, entitled 'Developing and Implementing Monitoring Tools for R&D Projects', took place on 25 November 2025.

The webinar took place in the framework of ongoing partnership efforts between the NRFU and Science Europe. Just days before the event, the NRFU participated in the Science Europe Autumn General Assembly and the 17th High Level Workshop on the European Research Area (ERA) in Oslo, where Science Europe and its Member Organisations reaffirmed their commitment to supporting Ukraine and advancing its integration into the ERA.

They endorsed strategic decisions for the coming years, including continued dedicated support for NRFU – a demonstration of solidarity that helps Ukrainian researchers to remain active despite the challenges of the ongoing war.

Introduction

The 2nd NRFU–Science Europe webinar was organised to explore ways to set up effective, reliable, and compatible systems for monitoring R&D projects. Given the ongoing challenges in Ukraine (damaged infrastructure, displaced researchers, financial instability, fragmented donor requirements, limited capacity, and data quality issues), modern monitoring and evaluation tools are essential for improving R&D management and aligning reporting with European standards.

Against this backdrop, the webinar brought together leading experts from across Europe to exchange institutional experiences, discuss best practices, and explore practical solutions for strengthening Ukraine's monitoring capacity. Participants examined approaches for assessing project progress and impact, harmonising reporting formats, and developing interoperable systems that support modern research governance. Their discussions underscored that improved monitoring is a strategic necessity for Ukraine: it directly influences the efficient use of resources, the credibility of Ukrainian institutions internationally, and the overall resilience of the national research ecosystem.

This report summarises the key insights and recommendations from the webinar, reflecting the shared commitment of Science Europe and the NRFU to building a more transparent, efficient, and future-oriented system for research and innovation in Ukraine.

The full recording is available on YouTube:

View the recording

Panel Discussion

Hansfrieder Vogel, Directorate of International Relations, Fellowships and Awards, Austrian Academy of Sciences, opened the webinar with an overview of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and its dual role as a major research performing and research funding institution. He explained that the Academy, which is also Austria's learned society, runs 26 institutes covering a broad disciplinary spectrum and allocates significant resources to both project funding and individual fellowships. He highlighted thematic calls, multi-year projects, and key programmes such as doctoral fellowships and the APART postdoctoral scheme, which together contribute to the Academy's unique impact on Austria's research landscape.

Vogel then turned to the core topic of the webinar – monitoring research projects – and outlined the Academy's practical approach. Monitoring, he stressed, means maintaining regular communication with grantees to ensure progress, identify challenges, and verify that funds are spent as planned. Payments are released in stages based on annual or mid-term reports, and unused funds must be returned. He underlined that monitoring requirements are built

into the programme design from the outset and communicated transparently in the call text to help researchers understand expectations in advance.

Finally, Vogel emphasised the importance of a clear legal and administrative framework, including three-party financing agreements, centralised correspondence through a one-stop administrative office, and meticulous documentation. He noted that monitoring should be seen as a supportive rather than a restrictive tool, especially for early-career researchers, helping them structure their work and manage their projects effectively.

Alice Vajda, Scientific Programme Manager at Research Ireland, introduced Research Ireland as the country's largest competitive research and innovation funding agency, with an annual budget of approximately €300 million and a staff of around 145 people, spread across 18 teams. She explained that the agency supports projects of varying scales, from small individual grants to large research centres, and covers the full career spectrum, from early-career researchers to experienced senior ones. Vajda also highlighted the expansion of Research Ireland's remit to include humanities and social sciences, noting that this required adapting monitoring approaches to reflect the diversity of disciplines.

She then focused on the monitoring tools used by the agency, particularly their online grants management system, SESAME. Vajda explained that researchers maintain profiles in SESAME to submit proposals, track outputs, and provide annual progress and financial reports. These reports collect both quantitative data, such as publications and patents, and qualitative narratives describing research progress, impact, and outreach activities. Programme managers review these reports, assign a red/amber/green status to highlight any areas of concern, and use the information to assess performance at the project, programme, and agency levels. She also described in-person site visits for larger projects, where experts review progress, budgets, and team performance, providing feedback and recommendations for improvement.

Finally, Vajda shared key lessons learned from Research Ireland's experience in monitoring. She emphasised the importance of communicating clearly to researchers why reporting matters, ensuring that only necessary information is requested, and maintaining a balance between support and accountability. This includes establishing consequences for non-compliance, such as penalties for late submissions or withholding payments, which have proven effective in encouraging co-operation. Overall, her presentation illustrated how thoughtful monitoring tools and practices can enhance transparency, project management, and strategic oversight while supporting the research community.

Falk Reckling, Head of Department, and Martina Kunzmann, Analysis Administrator, Department Strategy – Policy, Evaluation, Analysis, Austrian Science Fund (FWF), provided insight into project monitoring and reviewing evaluation and research policy studies. Kunzmann presented FWF's approach to project monitoring, highlighting it as a continuous process focused on collecting comprehensive and high-quality data. She emphasised the importance of clear guidelines for reporting, structured collection of outcomes, and the use of persistent identifiers for publications, researchers, and grants. Monitoring extends beyond the project's end, including five-year post-project updates, and a specific process for open access compliance covering both publications and research data. Principal Investigators are responsible for submitting project reports, and minor programme monitoring is conducted regularly at FWF, including monitoring of final project reports and feedback throughout the project lifecycle. These processes allow FWF to respond quickly to deviations, improve operational procedures, and ensure that outcomes are accurately documented and shared.

Kunzmann also introduced FWF's Research Radar, which provides publicly accessible insights into project inputs and outputs, helping track whether projects meet their objectives and enabling evaluation of both medium- and short-term impacts of research. Smaller programmes undergo regular monitoring, and the information collected informs adjustments in processes and helps maintain alignment with the funder's strategic goals.

Reckling provided an overview of programme evaluation and research policy studies. He explained that all funding programmes and policies undergo regular external reviews, with results being made publicly available. Evaluations include single-programme assessments, portfolio-wide analyses, ongoing evaluations for short-term programmes, and key performance indicator monitoring. Research policy studies examine broader framework conditions such as open science, research integrity, gender equality, and diversity. FWF is also a member of the Research on Research Institute (RoRI), an international platform of more than twenty public and private funding organisations, including researchers. The platform uses data- and experiment-based studies to examine how research policies are implemented, conducted, evaluated, and communicated, to optimise these processes.

Estefanía Freitas Alves, Deputy Head of the Scientific-Technical Thematic Programmes Subdivision, Spanish State Research Agency, presented how the agency manages and monitors its R&D projects. She explained that projects typically last three to four years and can be either individual or co-ordinated, with one or two Principal Investigators (PIs) contributing to common objectives. Her presentation focused on the research monitoring procedures that start after the grant decision, which include submitting interim, midterm, and final research reports. These reports are submitted through dedicated IT applications and are essential for tracking project progress and for authorising subsequent grant payments.

Alves detailed that each report must cover the achievement of project objectives, activities performed, major results, publications acknowledging the grant, dissemination efforts, collaborations, training activities, research impact, integration of gender analysis, team changes, and a summary of main expenses. In addition to reporting, the agency also conducts in-person research follow-up sessions, particularly in the final year of project implementation. These visits allow project managers and expert reviewers to assess progress, clarify aspects not fully captured in the reports, and provide feedback to the beneficiaries.

Finally, she explained that failure to meet reporting obligations may have serious consequences for both the project and the grant. If PIs do not submit the midterm report, the agency may suspend the project, request reimbursement, or withhold the final payment. When submitting the final report, PIs are also required to provide the project's data management plan. She added that during the project, amendments to the grant conditions can be requested, such as extending the project duration (without additional funding), transferring the project to another institution, replacing the PI (due to retirement or relocation), or updating the PI's affiliation, if justified by unforeseen circumstances and submitted at least two months before the end of the implementation period.

Dr Roberto Tenchini, Former President of the CSN1, INFN National Committee 1, National Institute for Nuclear Physics (INFN), described the structure and monitoring of projects within his committee at the agency, focusing on particle physics. The committee oversees multinational projects lasting many years, with typical annual budgets between €20–27 million. It consists of 21 co-ordinators, several observers, and over 50 external referees, monitoring projects that involve hundreds to thousands of full-time equivalents (FTEs) worldwide, including collaborations with Ukraine.

He emphasised the importance of professional project monitoring using management tools, such as project schedules, Gantt charts, dashboards, and commercial software, to track both progress and budget usage in real time. It is important to set regular milestones, hold five plenary meetings per year, and ensure continuous oversight by referees for each project to guarantee adherence to timelines and objectives. Monitoring also involves reviewing extra costs and ensuring sufficient contingency for commissioning phases.

As an example, Tenchini described the upgrades of two major physics experiments at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) – ATLAS and CMS – involving 660 physicists from 255 institutes across 57 countries. Due to the scale of these projects, they require careful monitoring at every stage, which is consistently implemented.

He also mentioned that another significant project is currently in preparation and will similarly demand rigorous oversight. This upcoming endeavour concerns an even larger accelerator, with a planned operational timeline exceeding 50 years. He emphasised that such long-term projects require continuous and attentive monitoring to ensure effective resource management and achievement of project objectives.

Conclusions from the Discussion

The discussion that followed the presentations offered valuable perspectives from the panellists and helped identify key conclusions regarding reporting, monitoring, and project management in research funding. Panellists shared experiences from different countries and organisations, highlighting both common approaches and context-specific variations.

Key conclusions include:

- **Importance of reporting:** Reporting is a critical tool for both accountability and improvement in research. It enables evaluation of outcomes, supports researchers in enhancing their work, facilitates evidence-based communication with stakeholders, and promotes technology transfer and practical application of results. Additionally, it provides researchers with insights into project progress and management, while supplying data to demonstrate the impact of research to the public and policy makers.
- **The allocation of reporting responsibilities is adaptive:** The allocation of reporting responsibilities depends on the type, scale, and organisational structure of the project. This highlights that effective project management requires flexible reporting mechanisms.
- **Monitoring project outcomes and societal impact:** Tracking publications is straightforward, but assessing broader societal and economic impacts requires structured reporting frameworks. Reporting templates and structured categories help capture socio-economic outcomes, and communication with policy makers and the public is essential for demonstrating the value of research. Collaboration with the research community helps define and categorise impact, enhancing communication to government, stakeholders, and the public.
- **Grant flexibility varies:** It is essential to carefully review the rules of each specific programme, as the extent to which a project can adapt to personnel or institutional changes largely depends on the structure and requirements of the respective funding scheme. Large collaborative grants generally provide greater flexibility in managing such changes.
- **Role of external experts:** Involving external experts during midterm assessments or site visits, especially for international evaluations, enhances evaluation quality, provides valuable feedback, and fosters potential collaborations.

The outcomes of the first webinar (**'Balancing bottom-up and top-down research funding'**) in the joint series 'Building Capacity in the Ukrainian R&I Ecosystem' are presented in a dedicated Webinar Report that outlines the key challenges and opportunities for strengthening national research systems. The event focused on ensuring a good balance between bottom-up calls, mainly for fundamental research projects, and top-down programmes that address applied research projects. Both approaches were recognised as essential to a coherent and sustainable research system.

On **20 February 2026,** the third and final webinar in the series is scheduled, which will address the issue of **'Open science policies and practices of research funding organisations'.**

25 NOVEMBER 2025 | DEVELOPING & IMPLEMENTING MONITORING TOOLS FOR R&D PROJECTS

Programme

10.00–11.30 CET *(11.00–12.30 EET)*

Welcome and Introductory Remarks

- **Lidia Borrell-Damián**, Secretary General, Science Europe

- **Olga Polotska**, Executive Director of the National Research Foundation of Ukraine (NRFU)

Panel discussion

Moderator: **Helena Burg**, Head of International Relations, Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR)

- **Hansfrieder Vogel,** International Relations, Fellowships & Awards, Austrian Academy of Sciences (OeAW)

- **Alice Vajda**, Scientific Programme Manager, Research Ireland (RI)

- **Falk Reckling**, Head of Department, and **Martina Kunzmann**, Analysis Administrator, Department Strategy – Policy, Evaluation, Analysis, Austrian Science Fund (FWF)

- **Estefanía Freitas Alves**, Deputy Head of the Scientific-Technical Thematic Programs Subdivision, Spanish State Research Agency (AEI)

- **Roberto Tenchini**, Former President of the CSN1, INFN National Committee 1, National Institute for Nuclear Physics (INFN)

Conclusions and next steps

- **Olga Polotska**, Executive Director of the National Research Foundation of Ukraine (NRFU)

Science Europe-NRFU webinar: 'Balancing bottom-up and top-down research funding'

Science Europe and the National Research Foundation of Ukraine (NRFU) are holding a series of joint webinars dedicated to relevant issues of supporting the scientific community, the research ecosystem of Ukraine, and strengthening the capacity for managing scientific projects in the context of post-war recovery. The initiative aims to increase opportunities for Ukrainian researchers in the international scientific arena and facilitate the exchange of experience with European colleagues.

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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.

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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.