

Alternative Career Assessment

What can you learn from others?

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Andreas Raggautz (University of Graz, AT)
Eglė Butkevičienė (Kaunas University of Technology, LT)

Outline

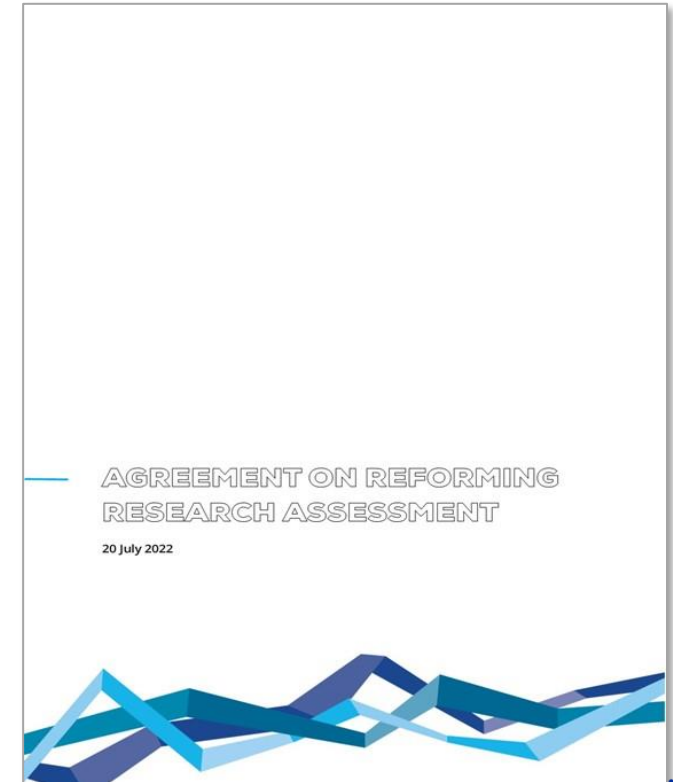
- Welcome and introduction

“Academic career assessment should reflect the different tasks, functions and roles academics fulfil over the course of their career.”

- CoARA Working Group on Reforming Academic Career Assessment
 - Survey results
 - Case Studies
 - Lessons learned
- Discussion in breakout groups
- World Café
- Wrap up

Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment – CoARA

- Building on progress made so far (DORA, Leiden Manifesto, Hong Kong Principles), the Agreement establishes a **common direction for research assessment reform**, while respecting organisations' autonomy. It is based on **shared principles, 10 commitments, and a timeframe** (1 & 5 years) for reforms.
- Overarching goal to **maximise the quality and impact of research**, basing assessment primarily on qualitative judgement, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators.
- The Agreement was **published on 20 July 2022**



Working Group on Reforming Academic Career Assessment

- The **academic community** should **drive reforms** in evaluating the quality and impact of academic activities and careers.
- **ACA systems** should adequately **reflect** the different **tasks, functions and roles** academics fulfil over the course of their career.
- Aim is to **broaden the reflection** on research assessment to ACA, supporting models that take into account the full range of work conducted by academics in research, teaching and learning, innovation, management/leadership and service to society.

General Objectives

- Defining the **principles of reforming ACA**, from the perspectives of institutions and academic staff being assessed.
 - Identification of the requirements, potential benefits and challenges
 - The lessons learned from institutions that have initiated reforms will be considered.
- Developing an **adaptable toolbox for ACA**, considering all university missions and the broad scope of activities, skills and competences of academic staff at different stages of their career.
 - The toolbox will be flexible, sustainable and cater for different institutional profiles and national contexts. It will also provide room for a diversity of career focuses and trajectories.

Survey results

Background information

Aim of the survey: gather institutional/organisational level initiatives that aim to broaden the criteria and methods for evaluating the outputs and impacts of academic activities for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation and career progression of academic staff.

Target group: Higher education institutions and research organisations worldwide

Scope: organisations that are **planning, initiating or implementing** a reform process on academic career assessment – either at departmental/unit level or organisational level.

Final survey: data collection between February – April 2024

236 valid responses, from **41 countries**

Survey respondents

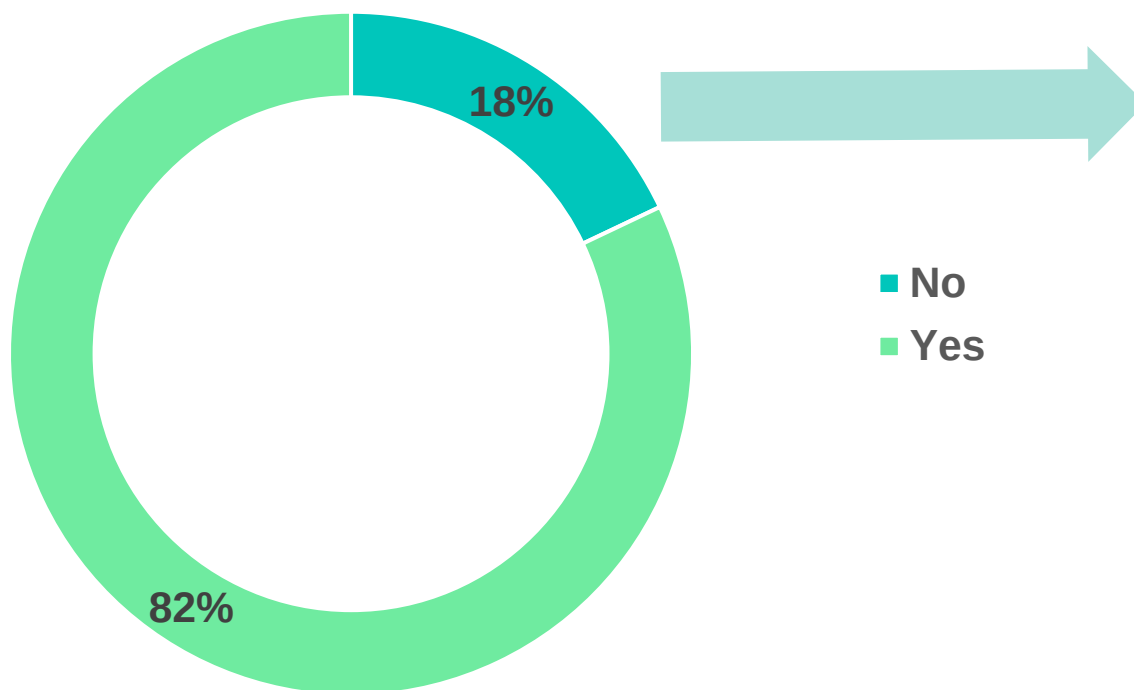
- **236** valid responses, from **41 countries**

Countries (number of respondents):

- Spain (29)
- France (23)
- Georgia (23)
- Germany (20)
- Serbia (16)
- Netherlands (14)
- Slovakia (8)
- Finland (8)
- Italy (8)
- Sweden (8)
- Poland (7)
- Belgium (6)
- Portugal (6)
- Norway (6)
- Austria (5)
- Switzerland (4)
- Ukraine (4)
- Romania (4)
- Czechia (4)
- United Kingdom (3)
- Croatia (3)
- Turkey (3)
- Ireland (2)
- North Macedonia (2)
- Slovenia (2)
- Lithuania (2)
- Other (2)
- Iceland (1)
- Republic of Moldova (1)
- Andorra (1)
- Bosnia and Herzegovina (1)
- Cyprus (1)
- **Uzbekistan (1)**
- **Tunisia (1)**
- Albania (1)
- Denmark (1)
- **Costa Rica (1)**
- **Azerbaijan (1)**
- **China (1)**
- **Malaysia (1)**
- Malta (1)

Involvement in reforms

Has your organisation planned, initiated or implemented a reform process on academic career assessment?

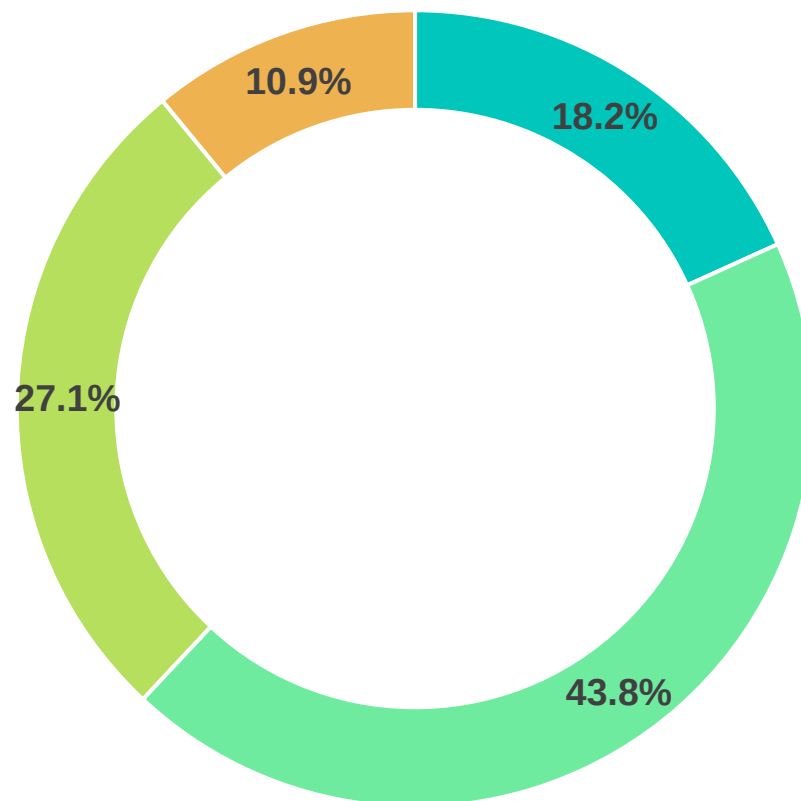


Reasons for not engaging in reform processes:

- **National regulations** (institutions have limited autonomy in the definition of ACA reforms)
- **Unclear why the organisation does not engage** (respondent not aware of the reasons accounting for the lack of organisational engagement in ACA reforms)
- **Resource and capacity constraints** (e.g. limited time, staff, and resources and organisational capacity to implement reforms)
- **Recent reforms implemented** (organisations prefer to evaluate the current system's effectiveness before considering further reforms)
- **Current system is satisfactory**
- **Resistance to change**
- **Other** (e.g. merger processes ongoing, following rules of parent organisation)

Number of respondents: 233/236

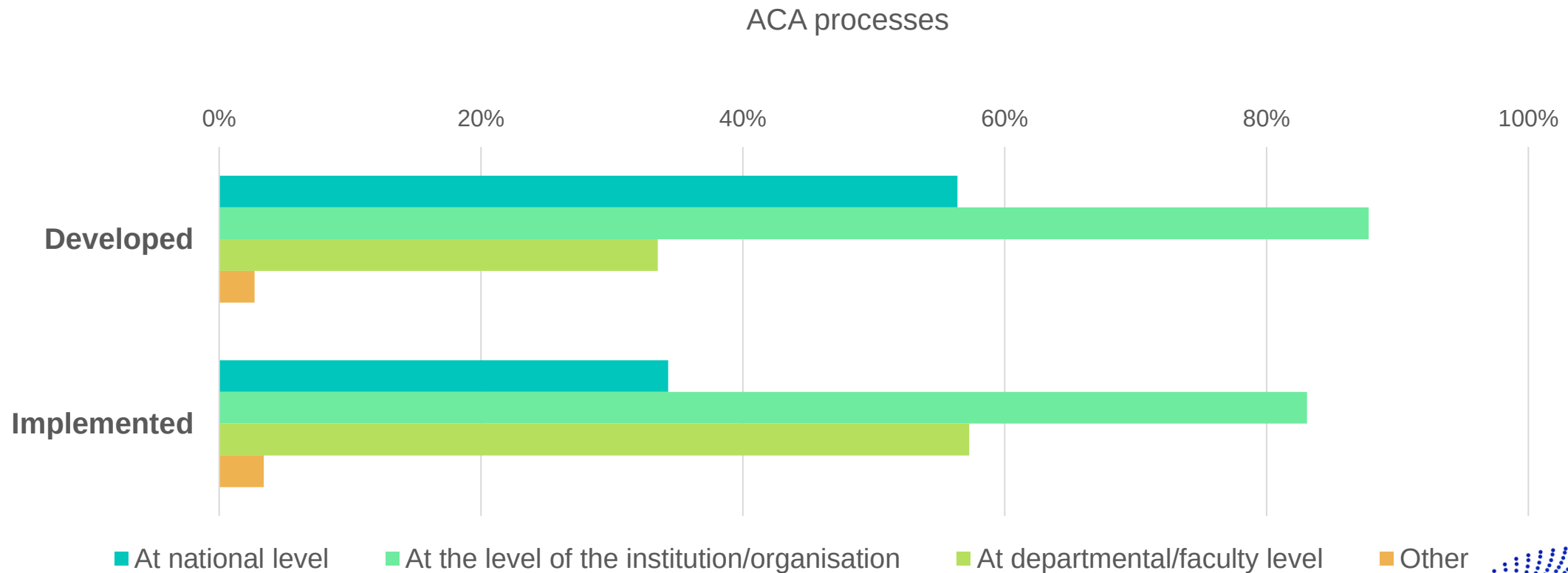
Stage in ACA reform processes



- Reform is being considered, but no decision yet
- Reform processes are foreseen and are being planned (implementation not started yet)
- Reform is being implemented (pilot or full implementation ongoing)
- Reform processes are well established and have been fully implemented

Number of respondents: 192/192

At which level are the processes for ACA developed / performed ?



Challenges in current ACA systems

1. Assessment scope

- Incomplete evaluation scope
- Over-reliance on quantitative assessment/metrics
- Teaching vs Research Recognition

"culture leaning on old school metrics"

"highly quantitative-based system"

"There is a need for better ways to assess soft skills like pedagogy, good leadership and the ability to contribute to a good work environment."

2. Complexity of the assessment process

- Transition to new assessment systems
- Evaluation complexity
- Balancing qualitative and quantitative assessment
- Teaching evaluation
- Unclear definitions of impact, excellence and quality
- Discipline-specific indicators
- Peer-review challenges
- Interdisciplinary challenges
- Transparency concerns

"knowing what you have, unsure what you will get in a new system"

"difficulty in having common rules to deal with different individual paths and disciplines"

"to get quality of performance back in the process without creating a too heavy burden on the assessors"

Challenges in current ACA systems

3. Resource and regulatory constraints

- Centralised systems and other regulatory constraints
- Accreditation process
- Resource and funding constraints
- Technical constraints

"Qualitative assessment of outputs is challenging, both in terms of time commitment and expertise"

"less flexibility in assessment due to regulatory restrictions"

"we lack digital platform for self-evaluation reports"

4. Alignment of assessment procedures

- Alignment of criteria and procedures in the organisation and at national level

"Alignment of assessment methods with others (funders, RPO...)"

5. Career paths, recruitment and progression

- Recruitment and career progression challenges
- Diversification of career-paths and recognition of career-stages
- Internationalisation hurdles
- Mobility constraints

"attract and retain international talent"

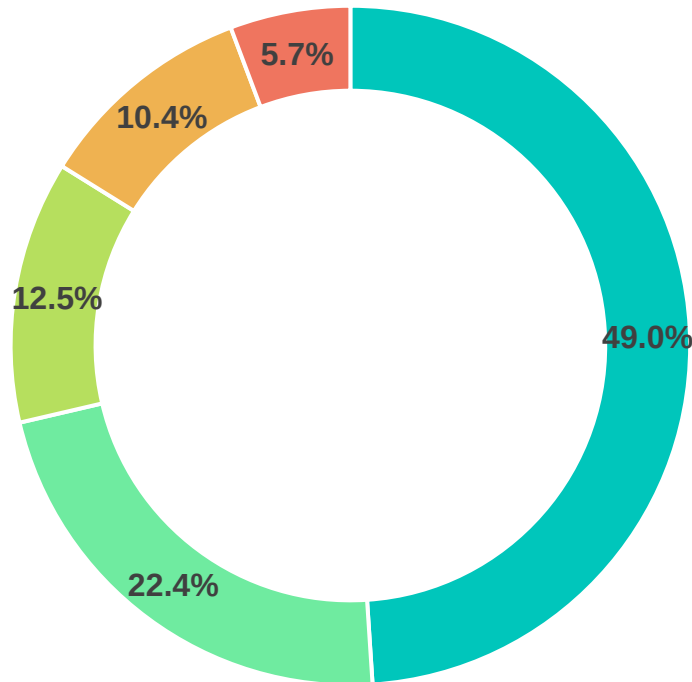
"not enough career advance paths available"

"how to improve assessment of mixed profiles eg clinician/researcher; policy/research..."

"how to keep our scientists' mobility to other countries".

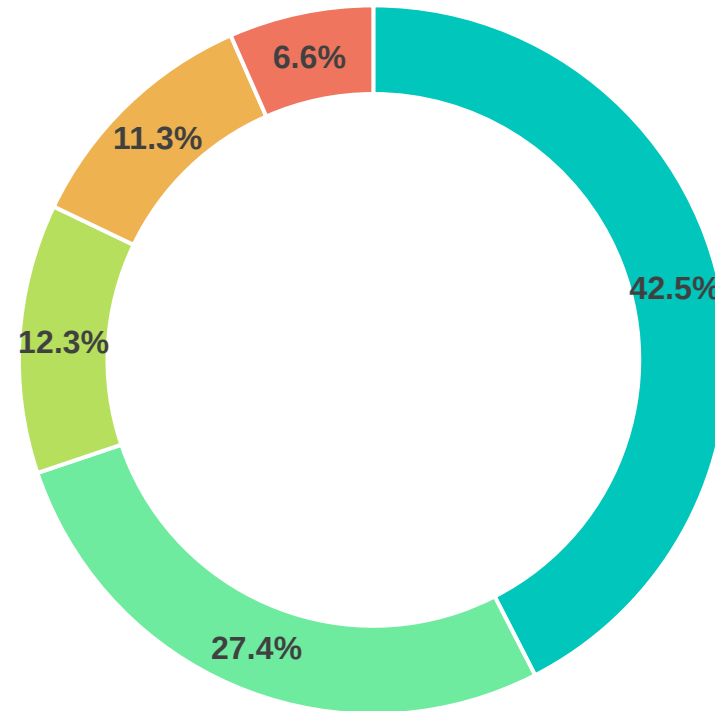
Reform drivers

All organisations



Number of respondents: 192/192

Reform drivers in organisations in which ACA processes are developed at the national level



Number of respondents: 106/192

- The reform was initiated within the organisation
- The reform was driven by regulatory reforms at regional or national level
- The reform was inspired by best practices in other organisations or countries
- The reform was initiated together with other organisations (e.g. with similar profile, geographical proximity)
- Other

Motivations for engaging in ACA reform

1. Offering a more diversified, fair set of evaluation criteria, encompassing multifaceted academic work

- Assessment
- Evaluation

2. Establishing transparent practices of assessment and career progression

- Career

3. Guaranteeing high research quality

- Quality

4. Embedding open science principles

- Open Science

5. Considering staff wellbeing

- Well-being/development
- Diversity

6. Making the organisation an attractive employer

- Recruitment

7. Alignment with National/International regulations

- National/International standards, regulations, norms, rules, agreement

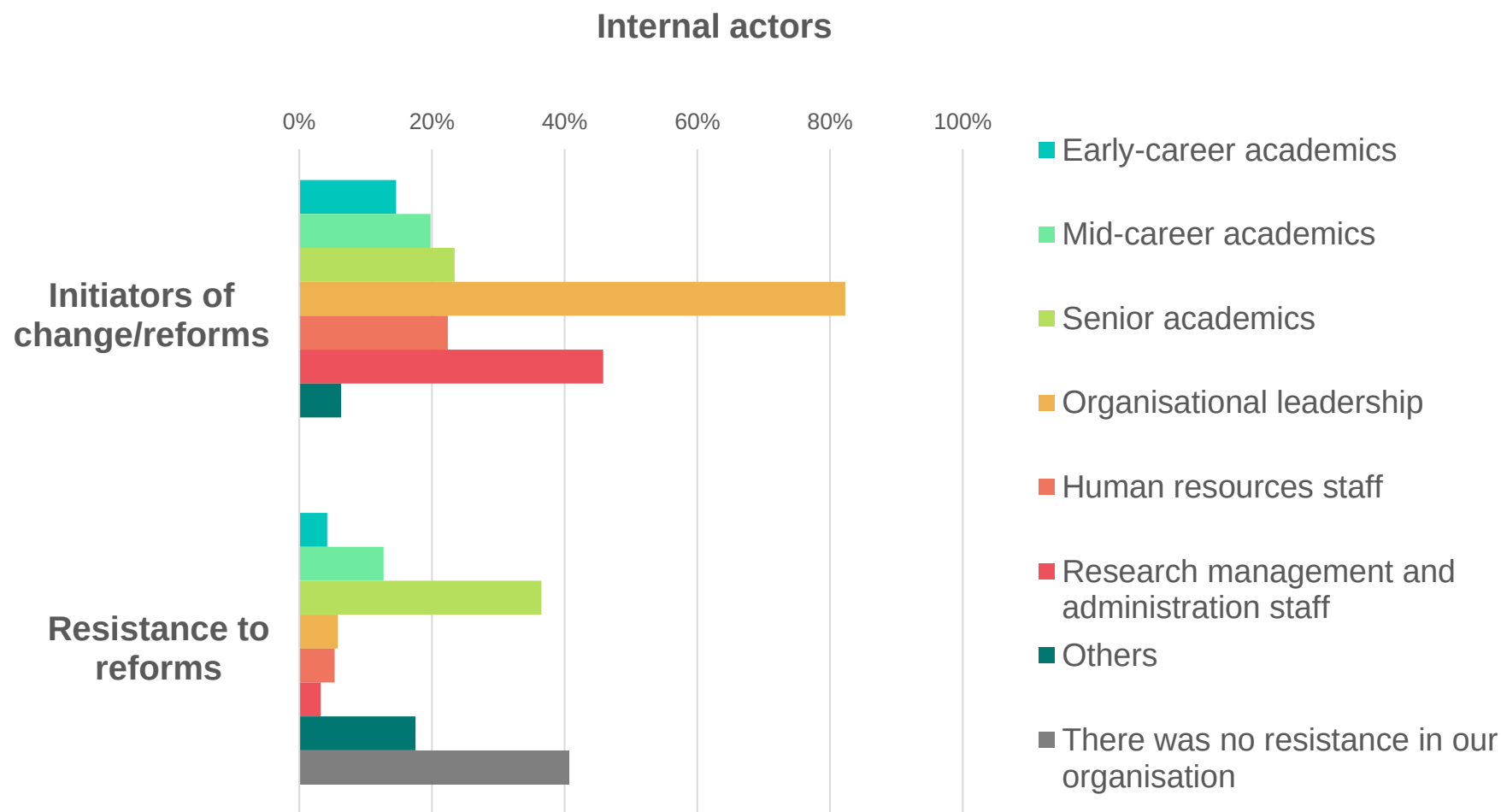
"Considering a wider range of scientific contributions and activity types when evaluating the performance of academic staff (...) Encouraging more diversity amongst scientists to create a more inclusive and equitable environment."

"Recruitment procedures must be more transparent to avoid mistrust"

"Different academic disciplines as well as different levels of career stages require a more customized career assessment procedure"

"be an attractive employer offering modern career opportunities".

Development of the reform process



Number of respondents 189-192/192. Multiple-choice question.

"Others" in initiators of reform refer to library and quality assurance.

"Others" in resistance to reform refer to more lack of interest than resistance itself. Also refers to academics depending on disciplinary area.

Resistance to reforms

Senior academics

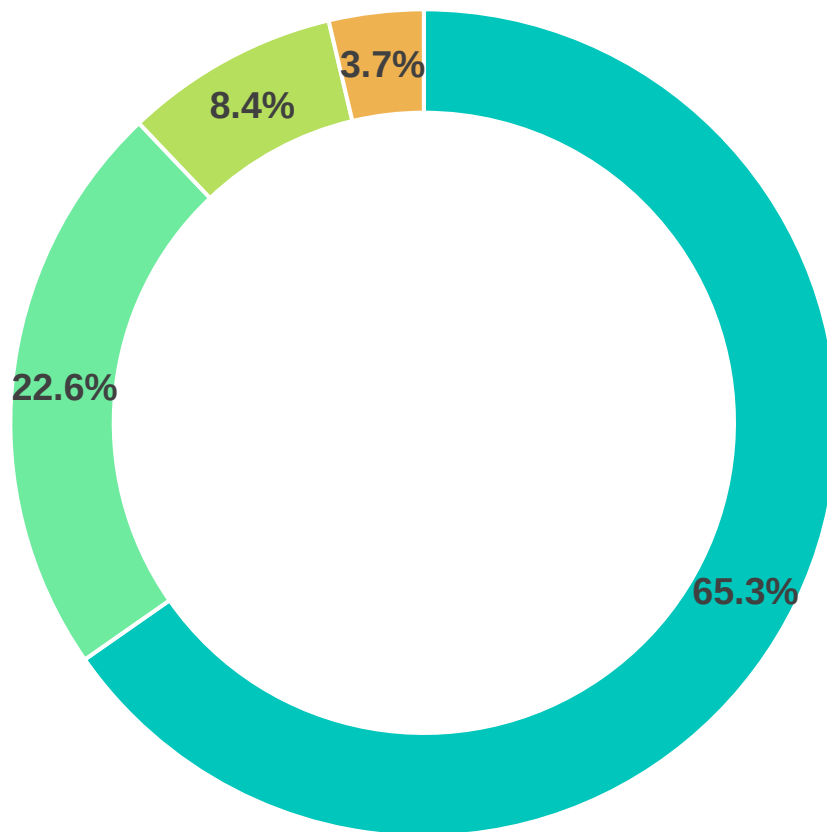
- **Resistance to change and fear of the unknown**
- **Uncertainty about qualitative methods**
- **'Metrics tradition' and preference for quantitative measures**
- **Lack of understanding of change**
- **Increased workload concerns**

"General resistance to change. Keeping bad habits is easier than changing to new ways of working you don't know the benefits of."

"Feeling that subjective assessment took over the objective assessment and that research assessment would no longer be based on quality but on whoever is more proficient in telling a good story."

"Belief that there are no problems with the current system. Researchers (especially those coming from fields where it is easy to publish many papers, publish in high impact factor journals or getting a lot of citations purely because of the field) are not always aware of how the system works against researchers coming from smaller fields or different type of research with fewer papers, which are no less impactful. There is a sort of willful tunnel vision."

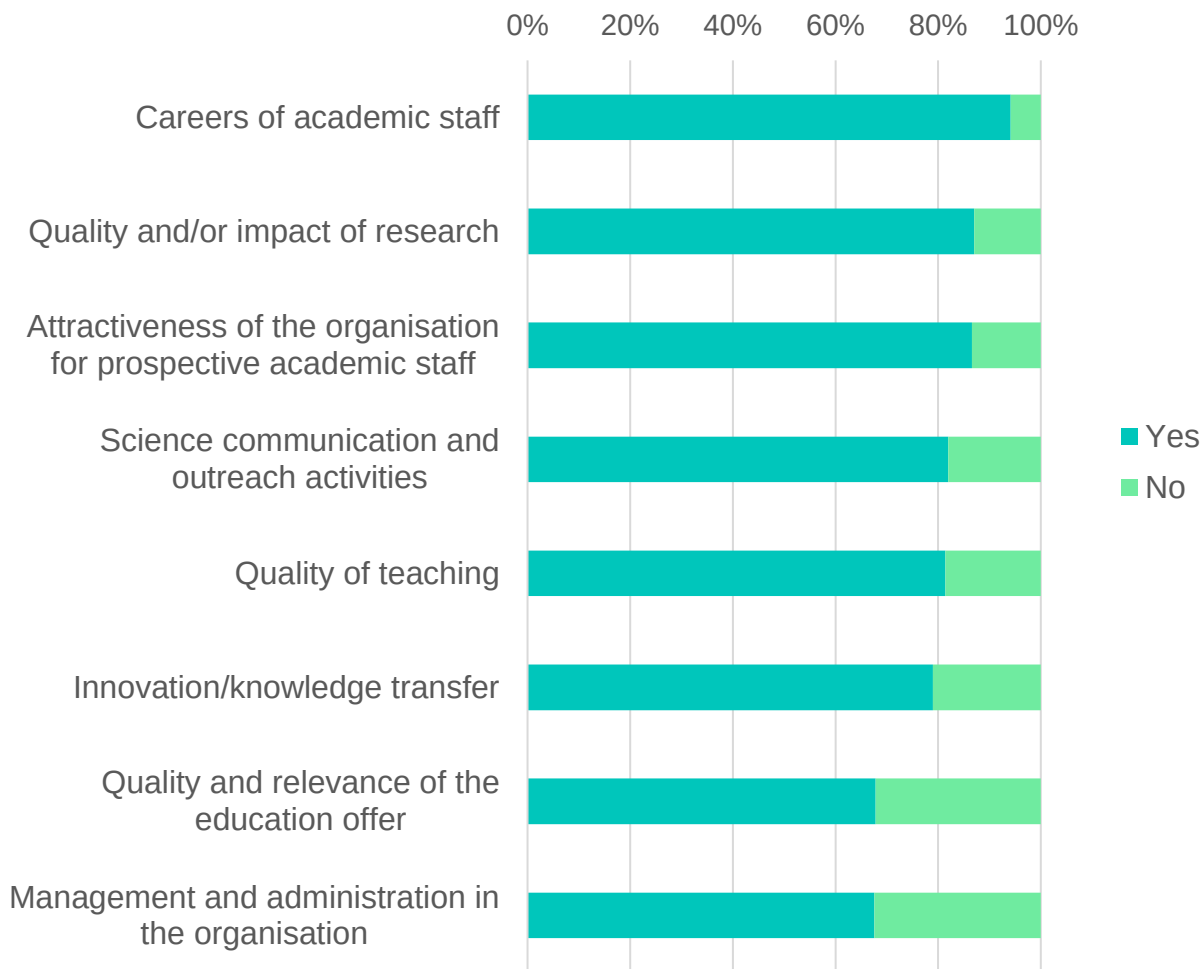
Role of academic staff in the reform process



- Academic staff (or their representatives) are actively participating in discussions on reform and in developing new processes for academic career assessment
- Academic staff (or their representatives) are consulted on the reform principles and/or steps, but are not actively involved in developing new processes for academic career assessment
- Academic staff (or their representatives) are kept informed of the reform process, but do not have an active role in the reform discussions processes or in the development of new processes for academic career assessment
- Other

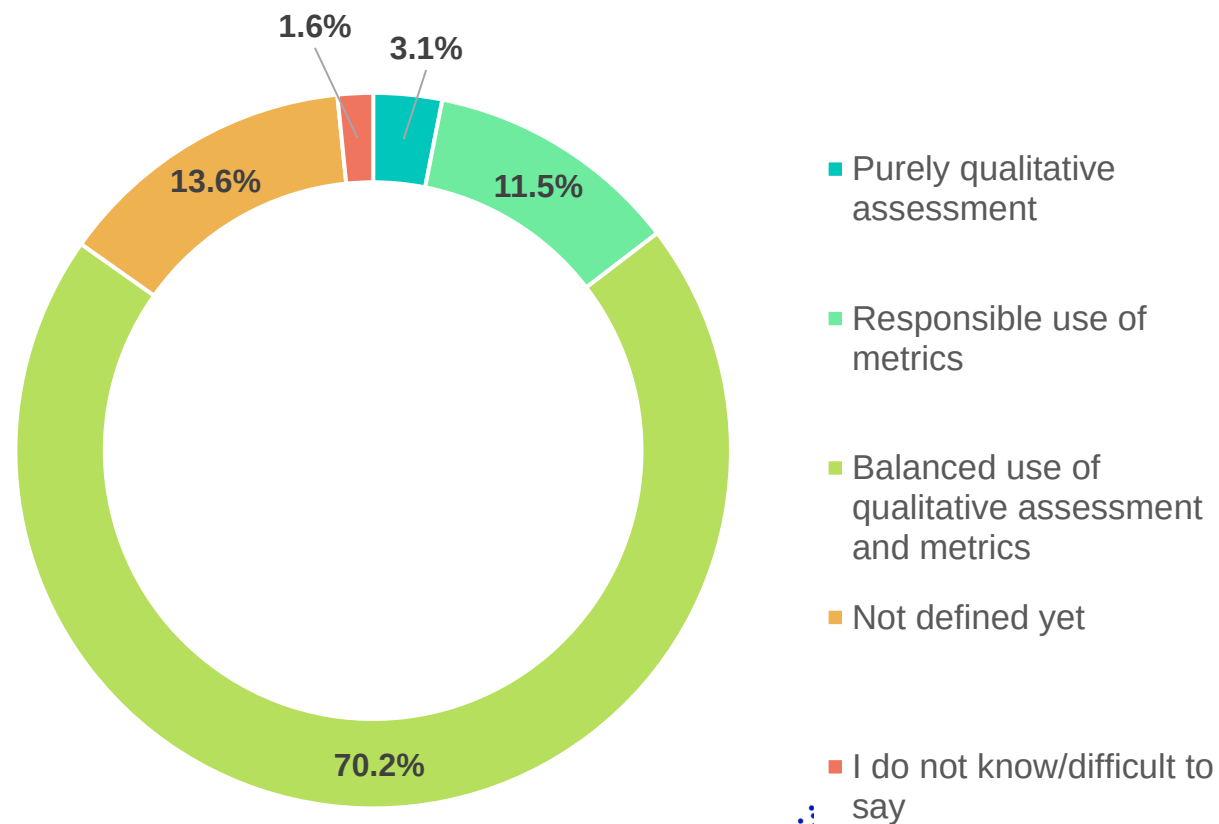
Reform expectations

Expected positive results after reform

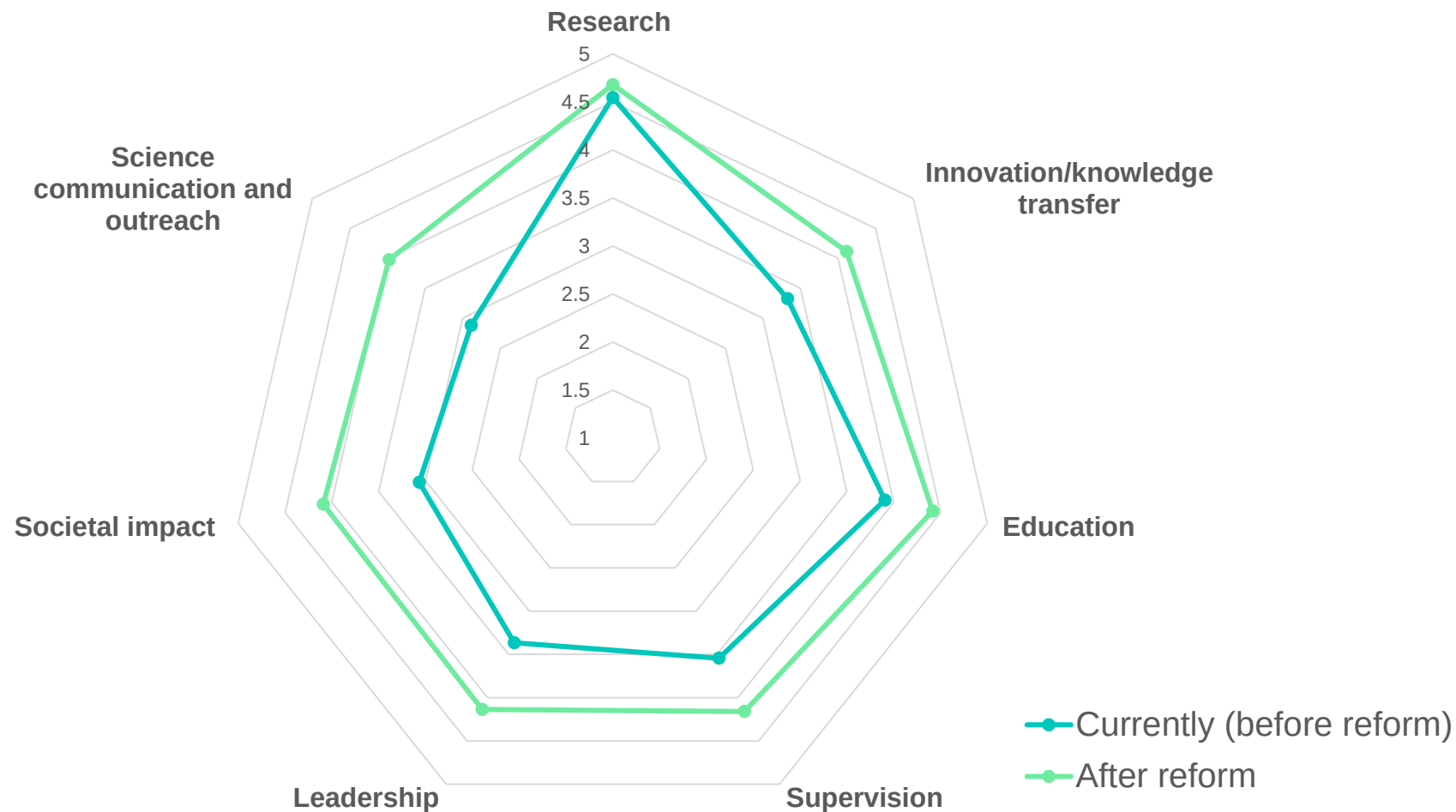


Number of respondents 179-184/192

Focus of ACA after the reform



Activities considered in ACA



Main achievements

1. Awareness and initial engagement in reform

- Early-stage planning and discussion
- Stakeholder involvement and consensus-building
- Awareness-raising and mindset shift

2. Alignment with reform initiatives

- Alignment with reform initiatives at national and international level

3. Transparency and clarity

- Transparency and fairness in criteria
- Clear assessment guidelines

4. Career support and recognition of diverse career paths

- Enhanced career support and career development initiatives
- Recognition of diverse academic careers and contributions

"The initiation of discussions and the spreading of awareness on the subject within our institution have been significant achievements. This early stage of engagement has laid a valuable foundation for implementation of reforms."

5. Improving assessment practices

- Development of discipline-specific assessment criteria
- Shift towards more qualitative assessment
- Open Science adoption
- Standardization of processes
- Implementation of innovative assessment schemes and career models

6. Organisational advancement

- Reflection on change process
- Improvement in academic activities (e.g. research, education, attracting staff)

"Introducing a pilot scheme for peer-review based research assessment at unit level, in form of a learning agreement with critical friends. Introducing a new and more comprehensive career model for academic staff, better combining education, R&I and practical field/experiences."

"Proceedings have been professionalized with visible improvement in the qualifications of incomings, in particular postdocs."

Case studies

Case studies

- While the survey focuses on institutional/organizational level initiatives, the case-studies describe well-established international and national level initiatives for reforming research assessment.
- Initiatives to be included in the case studies collection must have
 - implementation plan targeted to all organisations conducting academic career assessments (recruitment, performance evaluation and/or career progression) within a country (national level) or irrespective of country (international)
 - public documentation of the initiatives, which can be in any language, however in the case-study they need to be described in English
- A case-study template was used for describing the initiatives in a structured and comparable way
- 11 case-study drafts (7 selected by the team and 4 suggested by WG partners)

INITIATIVES

Initiative	Name	Year	Geographical Scope	Author(s)
ANECA	Reforming research and academic careers assessment in Spain	2023	Spain	Pilar Paneque
CLACSO-FOLEC	Declaration of principles: a new research assessment towards a socially relevant science in Latin America and the Caribbean	2022	Latin America & Caribbean	Laura Rovelli
CoARA	Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)	2022	Global	Rita Morais & Vinciane Gaillard
DORA	The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)	2013	Global	Haley Hazlett
Eu Charter	The European Charter for Researchers	2005	Europe	Sanja Terlević
Finland	Good practice in researcher evaluation	2020	Finland	Janne Pölönen & Mira Söderman
Netherlands	Recognition & Rewards Programme	2020	The Netherlands	Kim Huijpen
Norway	NOR-CAM – A toolbox for recognition and rewards in academic careers	2021	Norway	Ragnar Lie
OR4	Open and Responsible Researcher Reward and Recognition (OR4)	2021	United Kingdom	Grace Murkett & Robert Darby
UKRI	UKRI People and Teams Action Plan	2023	United Kingdom	Grace Murkett & Sharon Coen
YUFE4Postdocs	YUFE4Postdocs evaluation & selection procedure	2023	Europe	Anne Adams

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE CASE STUDIES

1/3

Prioritize qualitative and unbiased peer and expert assessment	• Qualitative information • Researcher's self-evaluation • Assessment portfolios • Structured CV • Short narratives • Narrative CV
Qualitative assessment can be supported with responsible use of quantitative indicators	• Narrative bibliometrics • Relevant and inclusive indicators • Indicators and metrics for open research • List of accepted indicators • Recommendations for responsible use of metrics • Abandon journal/publication-based metrics

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE CASE STUDIES

2/3

- **Intersectorality** (how initiative recognizes and supports the consideration of intersectorality)
 - e.g. from academia to industry, private sector, public institutions and vice versa
- Practically all initiatives recognized the value of intersectorality
 - identified benefits included e.g. knowledge transfer, valorization, recognition of the often-unacknowledged roles and contributions, influence on policy and practice, diversification of career paths
- Ways to support intersectoral mobility:
 - collaborative research projects
 - secondment in other sectors
 - stakeholder engagement trainings
 - initiatives to promote better recognition of the often-unacknowledged roles and contributions in research

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE CASE STUDIES

3/3

- **Challenges:**
 - Culture change related to academic assessment (both senior and early-career researchers have to adapt to the new system)
 - Variation in implementation policies
 - Lack of established models and standards
 - Documentation and resources (time, costs, availability of reviewers)
- **Benefits:**
 - Initiatives form the groundwork for RA reform
 - Wider recognition of contributions and roles
 - Movement between disciplines and sectors
 - The improvement of academic culture (inclusiveness, diversity, transparency) and the quality of research

Rethinking Academic Career Assessment

The lessons learned

LESSONS LEARNED 1/3

preliminary

- **Academic organisations across the world are moving towards reform**
 - Academic organisations **across the world are looking to reform their career assessment** procedures.
 - There are **similar concerns** regarding current career evaluation practices.
 - Although there is considerable variation in the approach and progress towards reforms, organisations are **moving in a similar direction**.
 - The global reform movement is **stimulated by international initiatives**, such as [DORA](#), [CoARA](#) and [CLACSO-FOLEC](#).
Together, we can make change a reality.
- **Reform is possible**
 - **Many academic organisations have initiated reforms**, varying in size and profile.
 - **Successful reforms hinges on a variety of factors** (e.g. time, engagement, resources, supportive framework conditions) and **reforms can be either facilitated or hindered by the surrounding environment**.
 - However, the **motivation to change**, one incremental step at a time, **remains fundamental** to reform progress.
 - **There is no longer a first mover disadvantage**, as organisations can learn from a wide range of reform experiences.

LESSONS LEARNED 2/3

preliminary

- **Academics are the key to success**
 - Current career **assessment practices negatively impact academics.**
 - The **importance of involving academic staff** in reform is widely affirmed. Yet some academics are hesitant, **unsure how reform will impact them.**
 - Although they are often consulted, **academics are rarely in charge of reform efforts.**
 - To ensure the acceptance of and support for reform, **academics from all disciplines and all levels of seniority need to be directly involved** from the outset.
- **The scope of academic career assessment is expanding**
 - There is a **growing awareness** that focusing assessment predominantly on research is a limiting and **biased approach** that does not do justice to the manifold talents and responsibilities of the average academic.
 - Organisations are **looking for new ways to incorporate teaching, leadership, teamwork, open science, knowledge valorisation, societal outreach, engagement with other sectors,** and other activities into their assessment procedures.
 - **Shared aim of systematically meriting academic staff for a broader scope of academic activities beyond just publications.**

LESSONS LEARNED 3/3

preliminary

- **Bibliometrics tell a story, but not the whole story**
 - Publication-based metrics have formed the **gold standard** for assessing academic careers in many disciplines, but this **only gives limited perspective on academic achievements**.
 - A new approach to academic career assessment is called for, in which the responsible use of bibliometric data is coupled with more qualitative assessment criteria and methods. This in turn will require **careful consideration and documentation**.
- **Reform requires an open conversation on the nature of quality and excellence**
 - Reform brings with it a **period of uncertainty**.
 - Different parties hold **diverging views on what 'excellent research' or 'outstanding teaching' means**.
 - What is needed is an inclusive conversation on what excellence entails, and how it can best be evaluated and measured.

Breakout groups

World Café

Contact

Andreas Raggautz

University of Graz

Director Performance and Quality Management

Andreas.raggautz@uni-graz.at

Egle Butkeviciene, PhD

Kaunas University of Technology

Full professor of sociology

Head of Committee for Political Science, Sociology and Public
Governance Study Programs

egle.butkeviciene@ktu.lt

Relevant information



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- coara.wg.aca@gmail.com