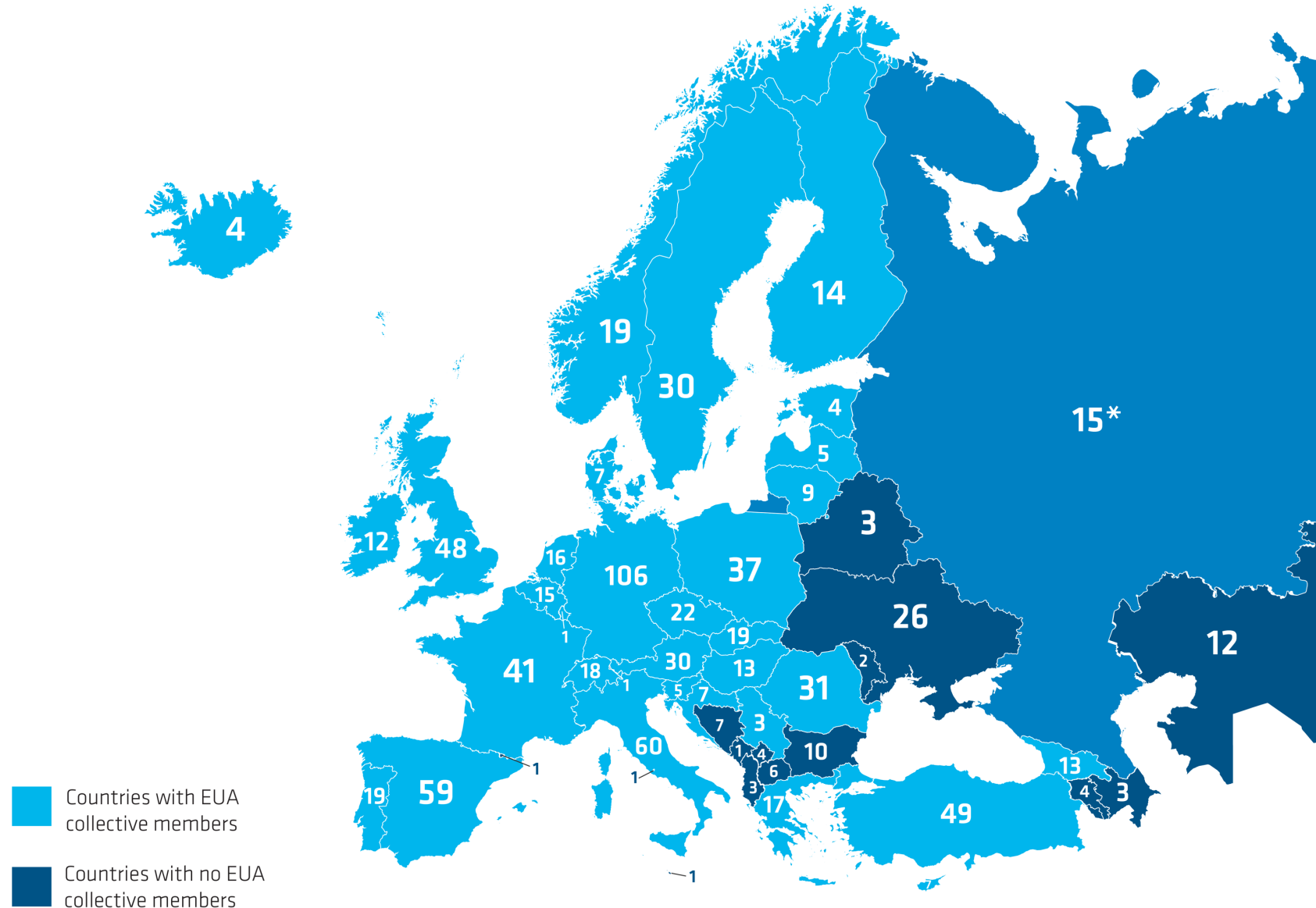# The role of higher education institutions in (reforming) a regional research area:

EUA and the European Research Area

Thérèse Zhang, Deputy Director for Higher Education Policy

With Stephane Berghmans, Director for Reseach & Innovation

ASEM ISOM
Malta, 24-25 November 2022

- 800+ higher education institutions

- 34 National Rectors' Conferences

- 48 countries

- Established in 2001

- Non-governmental membership organisation

- Independent voice of the university sector

- Forum for exchange, peer learning for members

- Advocacy for the university sector at European levels

Countries with EUA collective members

Countries with no EUA collective members

Outline

1. The European Research Area: what is it, how does it work?

2. An EUA perspective on the new ERA: the stakeholders' involvement

3. A concrete example: reforming research assessment

The European Research Area:

What is it? How does it work?

The new European Research Area

What is ERA?

The European Research Area (ERA) is the ambition to create a single, borderless market for research, innovation and technology across the EU.

It helps countries be more effective together, by strongly aligning their research policies and programmes. The free circulation of researchers and knowledge enables

➢ better cross-border cooperation

➢ building of critical mass

➢ continent-wide competition

ERA was launched in 2000 and a process to revitalise it began in 2018.

The new European Research Area

Links between ERA and the EHEA

➢ Human resources at universities and research organisations (e.g. recognition and rewards systems, evaluation guidelines, Charter & Code, doctoral studies, research careers)

➢ Research intensive universities and research organisations in the EU that carry an important responsibility for research and innovation, researchers' education (doctoral studies) and training of undergraduate and master students

➢ The student force that is educated through research experiences at different levels of their career.

➢ Virtual, blended and geographical mobility, mainly within Europe, but also beyond

➢ Favourable framework conditions

➢ European University alliances

Source: era.gv.at/era/era-and-ehea/

Universities without walls
A vision for 2030

A vision by the sector and for the sector about what Europe's universities should be like in 2030

In service of society and grounded in academic core values…

Learning & Teaching

Research

Culture

Innovation

→ uniquely combined in universities

→ equally important

→ intertwinned and mutually enhancing

eua EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION

At universities

TPG « Links research-teaching »
8 universities

Report:

https://bit.ly/3GmMDFQ, 4-8

Different aspects of linkage research-teaching:

How research contributes to learning and teaching	• New insights, theories, methods • Learning experiences from research outputs or embedded in a research culture
How research can be influenced by teaching	• Through student engagement in research questions • Teachers enhance own research skills with enquiry-based teaching approaches
Students as researchers	• Research-based learning • Engagement in research projects • Citizen science, research addressing societal issues
Research into teaching	• How research on teaching approaches and student learning influences practices in higher education • Incl. Scholarship of teaching and learning

An EUA perspective on the new ERA:

The stakeholders' involvement

The New European Research Area 2020 - 2021

2020

Commission Communication "A new ERA for Research and Innovation", September

Council Conclusions on the new ERA , December

January 2021

Establishment of the **ERA Forum for Transition**

- Meetings and **three workshops and R&I Days side event with ERA stakeholder umbrella organisations**
- Some covered topics: ERA governance framework, ERA policy agenda, four ERA pilot actions - green hydrogen, plastic pirates, EOSC, and the talent platform

16 July 2021

Commission adopts proposal for a **"Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe"**

1) Principles for R&I in Europe
2) Priority areas for ERA joint actions
3) Investments and reforms
4) Simplified policy coordination

26 November 2021

- **Council conclusions on the new ERA governance & the first ERA policy Agenda (2022-2024)**

European Commission

![eua EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION]

From the EUA side:

- Formal partner in shaping the ERA since 2012
- Input on the new ERA
  - ➢ Welcomed the renewed process
    (position, Mar 2020)
  - ➢ Responded to the Commission communications
    (ERA position and EEA position, Oct 2020)
  - Provided POLICY INPUT
    (report, Dec 2020)

POLICY INPUT

Perspectives on the new
European Research Area
from the university sector

December 2020

EUA thematic calls for action

eua EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION

POLICY INPUT

Perspectives on the new European Research Area from the university sector

December 2020

Setting the right conditions

- Build an inclusive **governance** system

- Provide sustainable **funding**

Investing in the "two sides of the ERA coin"

- Co-create a broad and forward-looking definition of **excellence**

- Fully embrace **inclusiveness** with a view to closing R&I gaps in Europe

Strengthening the role of universities

- Emphasise **academic freedom** and **institutional autonomy**

- Invest in both **investigator-driven and mission-oriented** R&I

- Strengthen the connection between ERA and the **European Education Area**

EUA thematic calls for action

POLICY INPUT

Perspectives on the new European Research Area from the university sector

December 2020

Transitioning to Open Science

- Boost incentives and facilitate conditions for mainstreaming **Open Access**
- Build a **FAIR** research data culture
- Support, incentivise and reward **citizen science**

Engaging universities in the twin transition

- Engage with universities at the forefront of the **digital transition**
- Engage with universities in accelerating the **green transition**

Cross-cutting recommendations

- Invest in training and sustainable career paths for **early-career researchers**
- Adopt a positive and holistic approach to **diversity, equity and inclusion**
- Strengthen **innovation ecosystems** for knowledge circulation and valorisation
- Invest in an open and world-class **research infrastructure** landscape
- Support **openness** as a cornerstone of an attractive and performant R&I system

The Pact for R&I in Europe (July 2021)

A - Principles for R&I in Europe

Upholding values

Working better

B - Priority areas for joint action

    Deepening ERA
    Amplifying access to excellence
    Broadening ERA and relevance – twin transition and society's participation
    Advancing R&I investments and reforms

Working together

C - Prioritising investments and reforms

D - Monitoring and Coordination

ERA Stakeholders Consultations
→ Only ad-hoc non structural workshops
    April 2021 on ERA Principles & values
    May 2021 on Priority areas
    June 2021 on Prioritising investments & reform
→ Very short feedback timeline

Stakeholders demands to Member States
(with start of stakeholders coordination)
→ Investments commitments (3% GDP)
→ Structural inclusion of stakeholders in ERA Governance
→ Input on ERA Policy Agenda (Actions)

European Commission

ERA Governance

➔ **Slovenian Presidency**
        Stakeholders Workshop (2 Sept 2021)

Open letter on ERA governance

Honourable Minister Simona Kustec and Commissioner Mariya Gabriel,

With this letter, the undersigned representatives of research and innovation (R&I) organisations

Open letter on ERA governance

Support to the Slovenian Council Conclusions proposal

- appropriate **representation** at its meetings of the following **sectors...**
- open online voluntary **stakeholder register**

➔ **ERA Conference** (25 Oct 21)
➔ **Council Conclusions**
        (26 Nov 21)

Council Conclusions (Nov. 2021) - ERA Governance
Representative involvement of Stakeholders at the ERA Forum meetings

- **Stakeholders** should be more systematically involved in the **delivery of the ERA at Union and national levels;** National stakeholder participation should be ensured at national level

- The **Commission should foresee that the ERA Forum** will ensure representative involvement at its relevant meetings of **EU-level umbrella organisations or other appropriate representative organisations** relevant at EU level of the following **seven types of stakeholders:**

1. universities and other higher education institutions

2. research and technology performing organisations

3. R&I-intensive businesses, including SMEs,

4. individual researchers and innovators, including at early and middle stages of their carriers

5. research infrastructures

6. R&I-funding organisations

7. academies of sciences

ERA university sectorial coordination group

What has happened in 2022?

- **ERA Forum Meetings 4-11**

  - 1 per month: 6 online, 2 onsite

  - Discussed ERA actions and planning for implementation

- Fortnightly **ERA University Sector Group** meetings

  - Sharing of information and intelligence

  - Coordination of input, feedback and approach

  - Debrief of all meetings

- Informal meetings and workshops on various actions

→ **Sectorial coordination**
→ **Sectorial representation**
→ **Most active and contributing stakeholder group**
→ **Commitments to ERA Actions**
→ **Involvement in implementation**
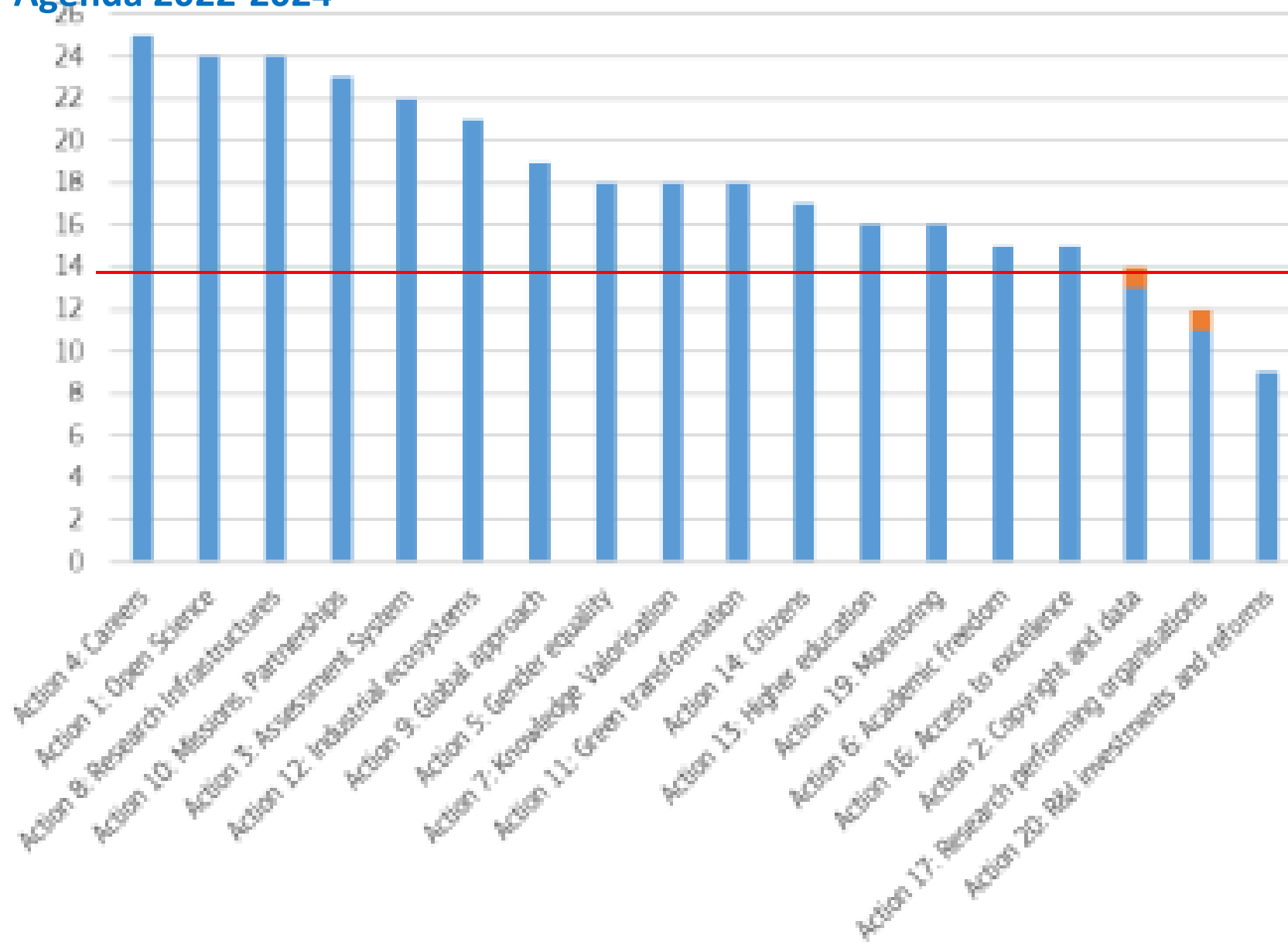
European Commission

Council Conclusions- ERA Policy Agenda: Actions (1)

1. Enable the open sharing of knowledge and the re-use of research outputs, including through the development of the European **Open Science** Cloud (**EOSC**)

2. Propose a EU copyright and data **legislative and regulatory framework** fit for research

3. Advance towards the **reform of the Assessment System for research**, researchers and institutions to improve their quality, performance and impact

4. Promote attractive and sustainable **research careers**, balanced talent circulation and international, transdisciplinary and inter-sectoral mobility across the ERA

5. Promote **gender equality** and foster inclusiveness, taking note of the Ljubljana declaration

6. Deepening the ERA through protecting **academic freedom** in Europe

7. Upgrade EU guidance for a better **knowledge valorisation**

8. Strengthen sustainability, accessibility and resilience of **research infrastructures** in the ERA

9. Promote a positive environment and level playing field for **international cooperation** based on reciprocity

10. Make EU R&I **missions and partnerships** key contributors to the ERA

Council Conclusions - ERA Policy Agenda: Actions (2)

11. An ERA for **green transformation**

12. Accelerate the green/digital transition of Europe's key **industrial ecosystems**

13. Empower **Higher Education Institutions** to develop in line with the ERA, and in synergy with the European Education Area

14. Bring Science closer to **Citizens**

15. ~~Build-up regional and national R&I ecosystems to improve regional/national excellence and competitiveness~~

16. Improve EU-wide access to **excellence**

17. Enhance the strategic capacity of Europe's **public research performing organisations**

18. ~~Facilitate a national process or ERA policy vehicle preparation for identification of running or planned measures contributing to the implementation of ERA~~

19. Establish an efficient and effective **ERA monitoring mechanism**

20. Support to the prioritisation, coordination and direction of **R&I investments and reforms**

ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024

Implementation modalities by action

How about Action 3 ?

Workshops

- **Action 2** - Data legislation fit for research
- **Action 4** - Strengthen research careers
- **Action 6** - Protect academic freedom
- **Action 7** - Better knowledge valorisation

Sub-groups

- **Action 5** - Gender equality and inclusiveness
- **Action 7** – Knowledge Valorisation
- **Action 12** - Transition of industrial ecosystems
- **Action 13** - Empower higher education institutions
- **Action 16** - EU-wide access to excellence

- Existing standing sub-group: **Action 9** – Global Approach

'Sponsors'

- **Action 4** - Strengthen research careers
- **Action 5** - Gender equality and inclusiveness
- **Action 6** - Protect academic freedom
- **Action 10** - Missions & Partnerships

- **Action 11.3** - ERA4FutureWork
- **Action 16** - EU-wide access to excellence
- (**Action 17** - Strategic capacity of public RPOs)

Existing governance structures

- **Action 1** – Open Science (EOSC Steering Committee)
- **Action 8** – Research Infrastructures (ESFRI)
- **Action 10.1** – Partnerships (EU Partnership Knowledge Hub)

European Commission

A concrete example:

Reforming research assessment

EU policy context

Council Conclusions on the new ERA (Dec 2020) and on research careers (May 2021)

Invited MS, RFOs, RPOs and the EC to work together towards a revised system for research assessment and strengthen European coordination.

December 2020

Paris Call on Research Assessment

Calls for the creation of a coalition if RFOs, RPOs and assessment authorities

February 2022

Council Conclusions on research assessment and implementation of Open Science

Highlights the need to advance in a concerted effort towards reforming the various research assessment systems and practices for research, researchers, research teams and institutions to improve their quality, openness, performance and impact.

June 2022

November 2021

Council Conclusions on "Future governance of the European Research Area (ERA)" incl. ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024

Include an action to advance towards the reform of the assessment system for research, researchers and institutions to improve their quality, performance and impact.

2022

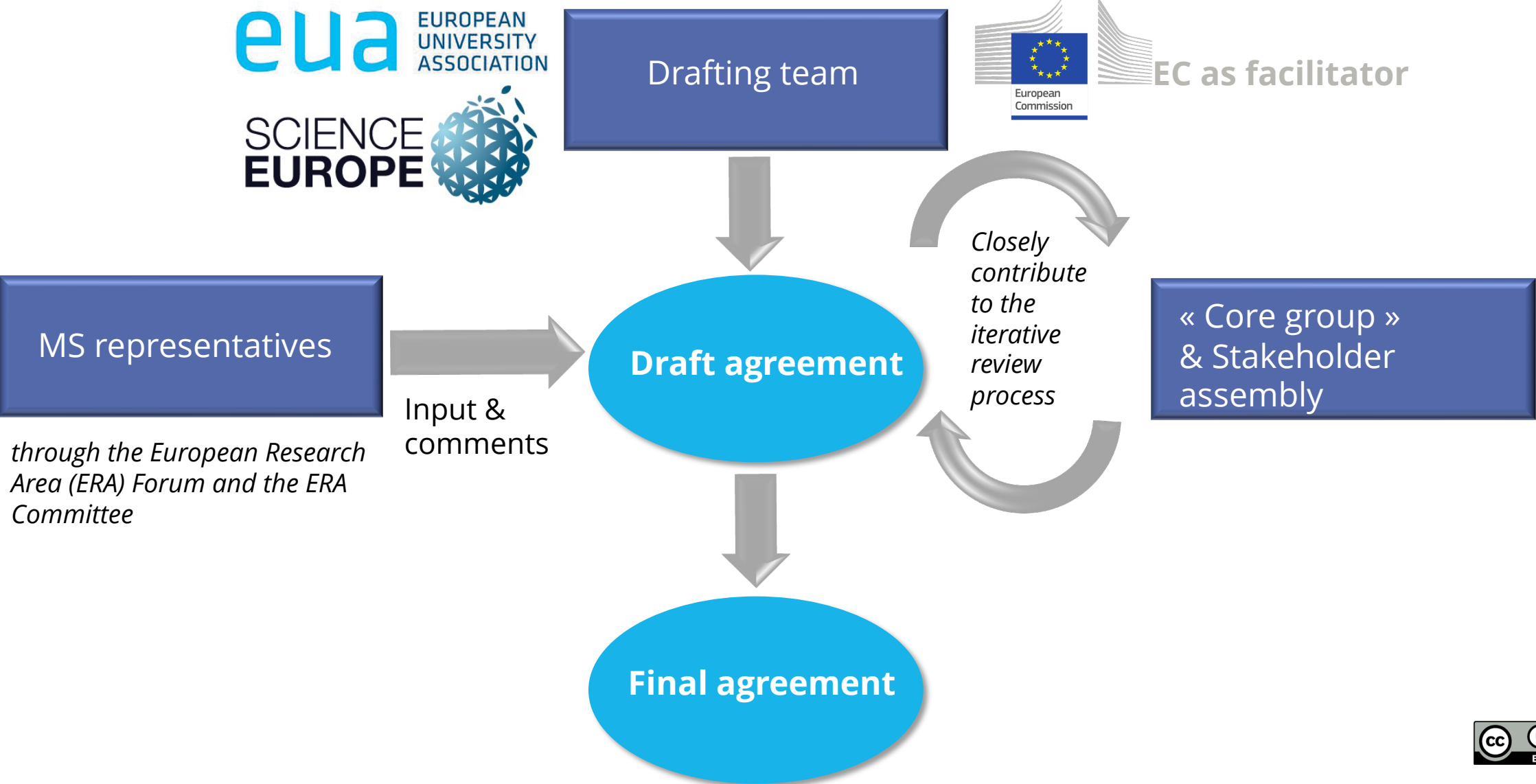**ERA Forum for Transition**

Broad commitment from MS to include ERA Action 3 "Advance towards the reform of the Assessment System for research, researchers and institutions to improve their quality, performance and impact" in the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024.

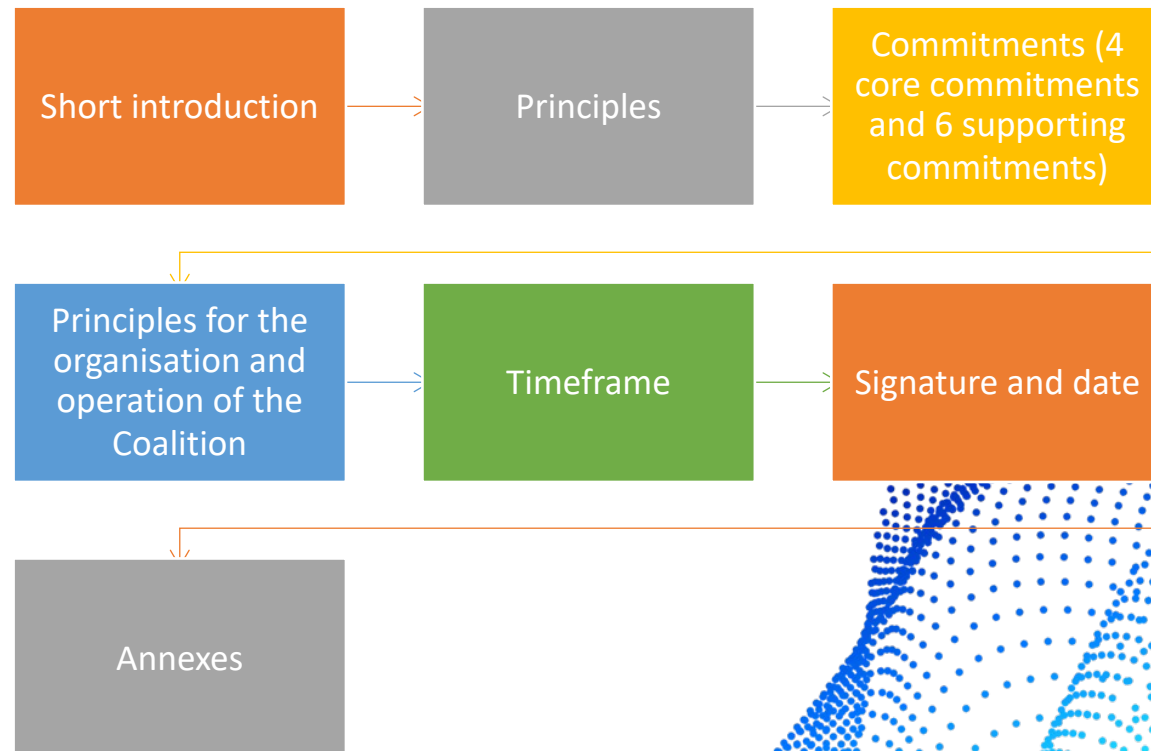# Drafting an Agreement, a co-creation exercise

PUBLICATION OF THE AGREEMENT ON 20 JULY

AGREEMENT ON REFORMING RESEARCH ASSESSMENT

20 July 2022

https://coara.eu/agreement/the-agreement-full-text/

Since the release of the Agreement on 20 July, discussions have focussed on the governance and operation of the coalition of organisations willing to enact the reform.

The 'Drafting Team' has taken on the role of 'Interim Secretariat'

```
Short introduction → Principles → Commitments (4 core commitments and 6 supporting commitments)
                                          ↓
Principles for the organisation and operation of the Coalition → Timeframe → Signature and date
          ↓
Annexes
```

CoARA

Introduction

As signatories of this Agreement, we agree on the need for reform of research assessment practices.

Vision: The assessment of research, researchers and research organisations recognises the diverse outputs, practices and activities that maximise the quality and impact of research. [...]

Scope: RPOs and research units, research projects, individual researchers and research teams. [...]

This Agreement establishes a **common direction** for research assessment reform practices, while respecting organisations' **autonomy**.

We commit to realise reform through a **coalition** of RFOs, RPOs, national/regional assessment authorities and agencies, as well as associations of the above organisations, learned societies and other relevant organisations, that is **global in scope**.

We will **work together** to enable **systemic reform** on the basis of **common principles** within an **agreed timeframe**, and to facilitate **exchanges of information and mutual learning** between all those willing to improve research assessment practices.
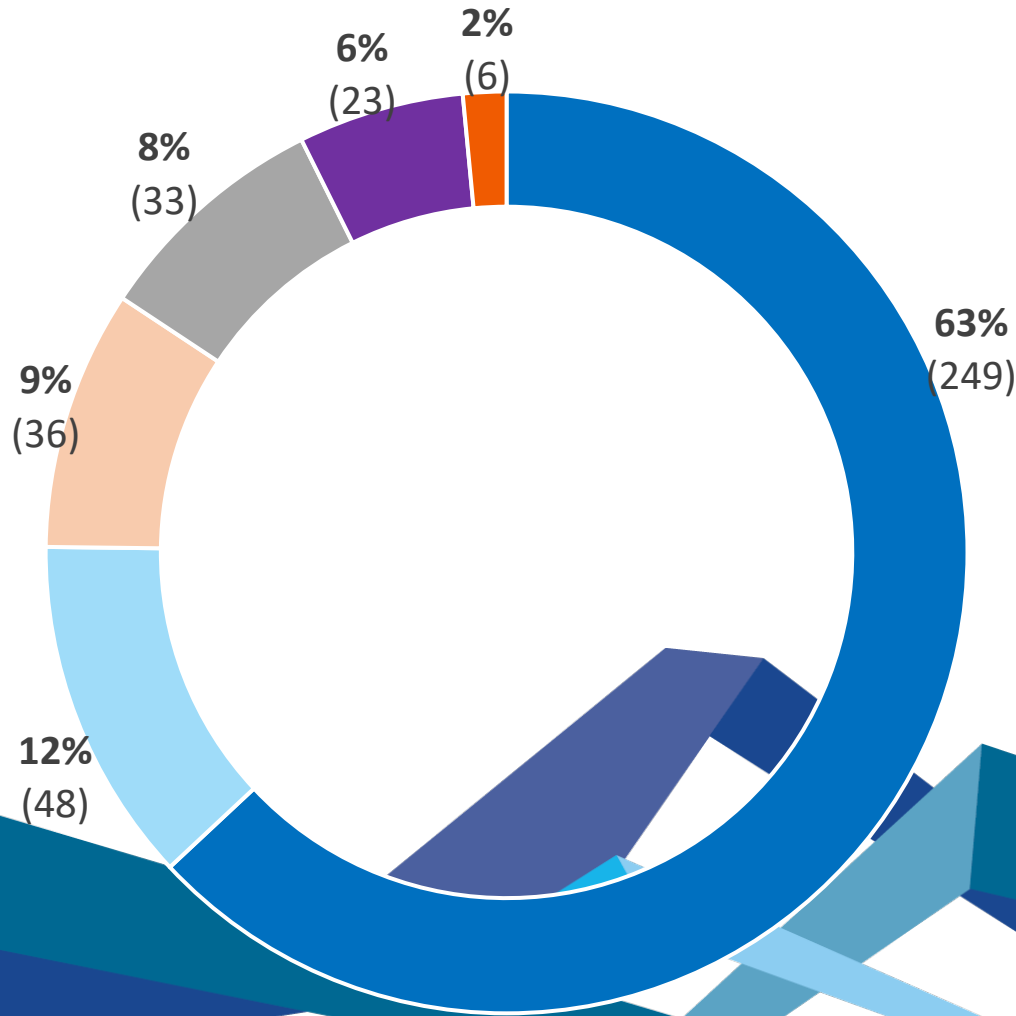
Opening of the Agreement for signatures

Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment

Our vision is that the assessment of research, researchers and research organisations recognises the diverse outputs, practices and activities that maximise the quality and impact of research. This requires basing assessment primarily on qualitative judgement, for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators.
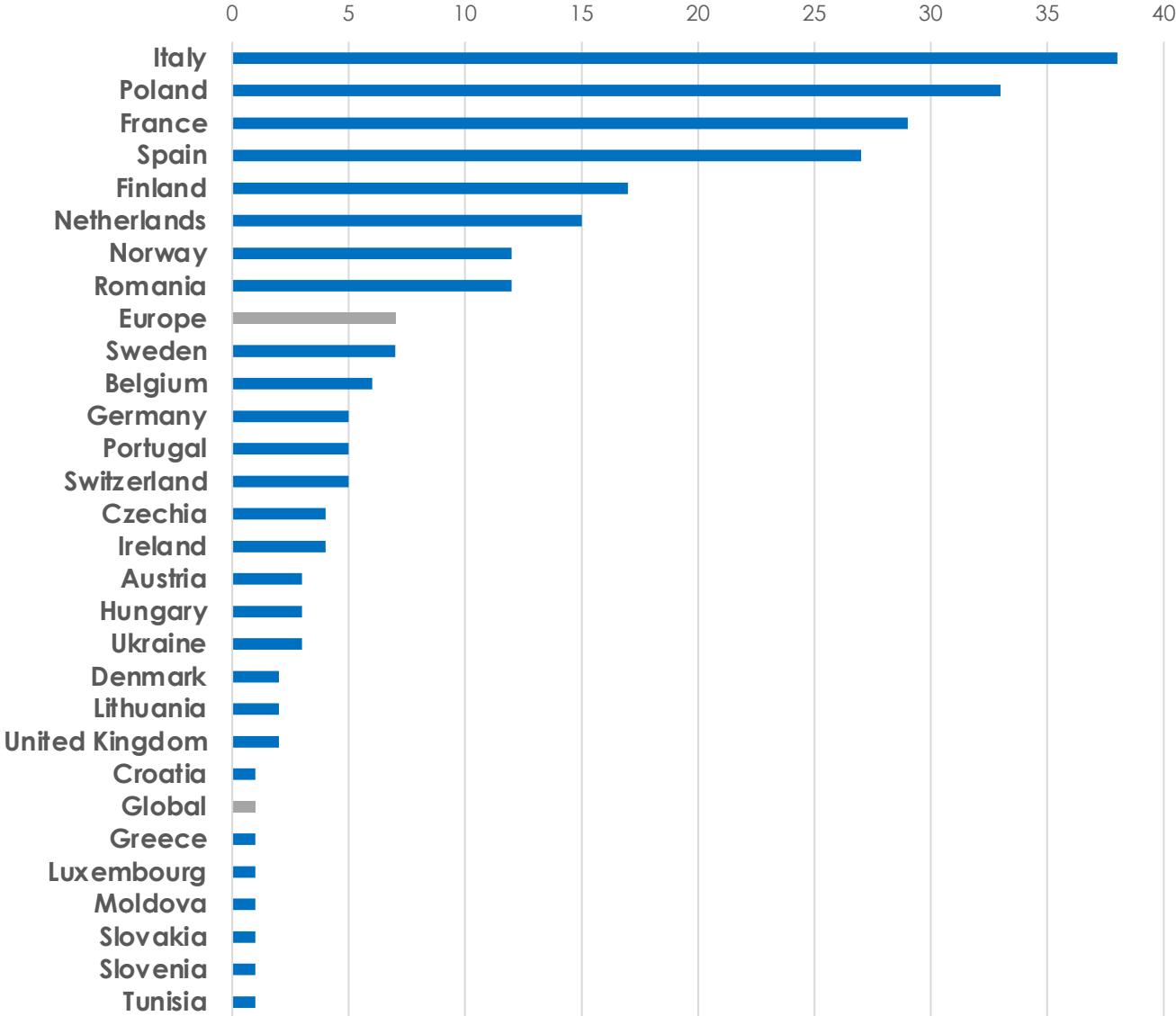
CO

Signatories update
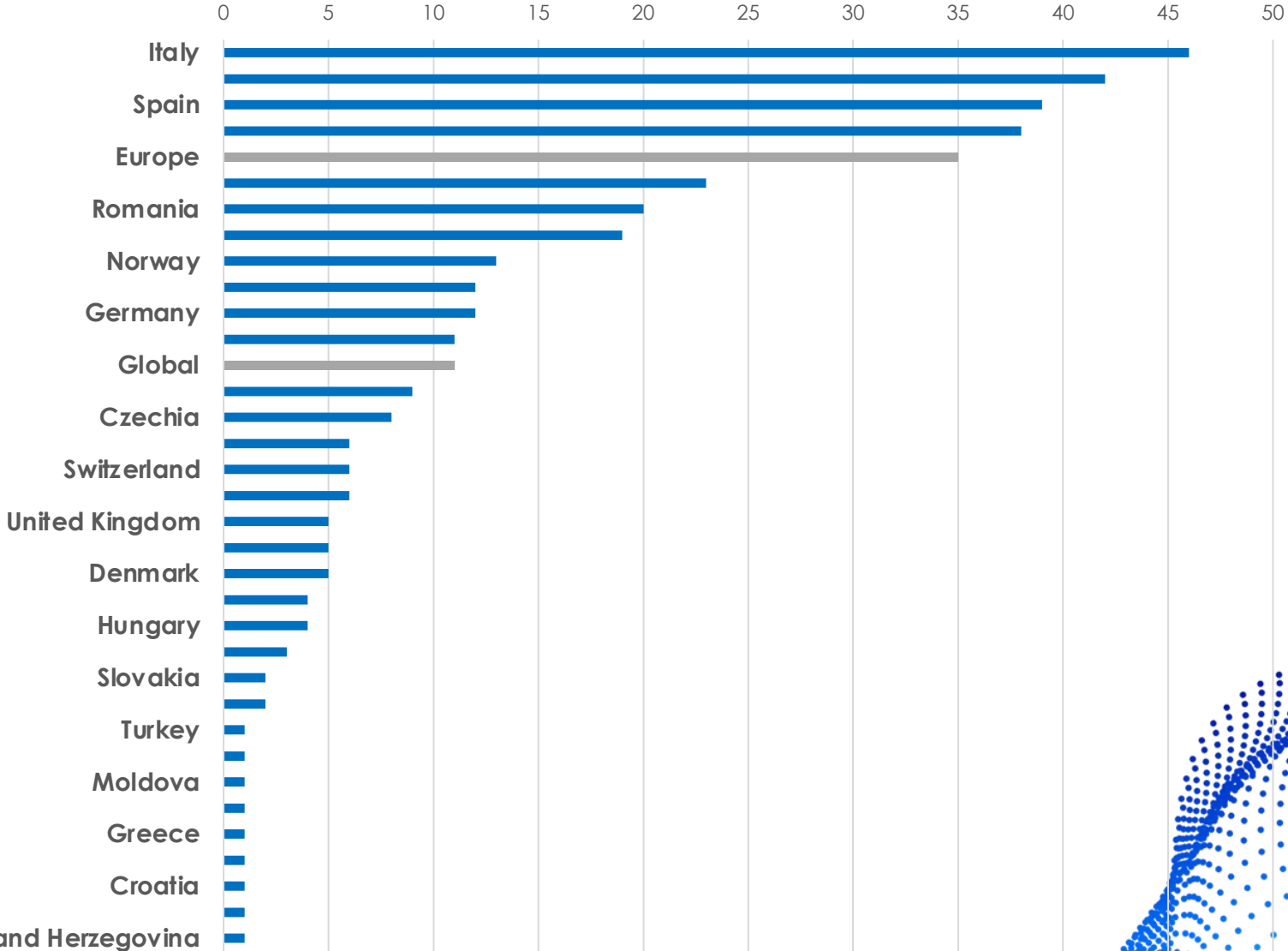

395 validated signatories until 17 November

- **Universities and their associations** — 63% (249)
- **Research centres, research infrastructures, and their associations** — 12% (48)
- **Public or private research funding organisations and their associations** — 9% (36)
- **Academies, learned societies, and their associations, and associations of researchers** — 8% (33)
- **Other relevant non-for-profit organisations involved with research assessment, and their associations** — 6% (23)
- **National/regional authorities or agencies that implement some form of research assessment and their associations** — 2% (6)

SIGNATORIES – UNIVERSITIES AND THEIR ASSOCIATIONS

**230 universities
9 NRCs
10 other univ networks
(249 in total)**

CoARA

SIGNATORIES – COUNTRY DISTRIBUTION

Horizontal bar chart showing signatories by country, with x-axis scale from 0 to 50.

- Italy: ~46
- (unlabeled): ~42
- Spain: ~39
- (unlabeled): ~38
- Europe: ~35
- (unlabeled): ~23
- Romania: ~20
- (unlabeled): ~19
- Norway: ~13
- (unlabeled): ~12
- Germany: ~12
- (unlabeled): ~11
- Global: ~11
- (unlabeled): ~9
- Czechia: ~8
- (unlabeled): ~6
- Switzerland: ~6
- (unlabeled): ~6
- United Kingdom: ~5
- (unlabeled): ~5
- Denmark: ~5
- (unlabeled): ~4
- Hungary: ~4
- (unlabeled): ~3
- Slovakia: ~2
- (unlabeled): ~2
- Turkey: ~1
- (unlabeled): ~1
- Moldova: ~1
- (unlabeled): ~1
- Greece: ~1
- (unlabeled): ~1
- Croatia: ~1
- (unlabeled): ~1
- Bosnia and Herzegovina

CoARA

31

WORK OF THE COALITION

- **Working Groups** operating as **'communities of practice'** and offering space for mutual learning and collaboration. Examples:

  o **"Interest communities"**, on ad-hoc horizontal topics

  o **"Discipline communities"**, on approaches to tailor criteria and processes by discipline, inter-disciplinary field, thematic area

  o **"Institution communities"**, on topics specific to a given type of organisation

  o **"National communities"**, on issues specific to different types of organisations of a given country or group of countries

- **Other complementary means** like workshops, webinars, (annual) conferences, seminars, trainings, etc.

CoARA

Universities needed to bring about change

It is crucial that universities are actively involved in the reform of research assessment

Universities should make an informed decision on this process

Universities should be properly represented in the future coalition and its governing bodies

Only a substantial number of universities joining the coalition will guarantee that the interests of the sector are taken into account in the reform process

Conclusions and lessons learnt from policy work with ERA

- **Positive outcomes from ERA involvement**
  - Direct dialogue with Member States, Associated Countries and European Commission
  - Direct access to information and intelligence
  - Possibility to influence process through co-design and co-implementation

- **Positive outcomes from ERA sectorial coordination**
  - Building trust between university associations
  - Stronger impact as a sector rather than as single associations
  - Has allowed start of sectorial coordination beyond ERA

- **Next steps: ERA implemenation (of 16 actions)**
  - Positive about the process so far which has raised ERA profile in EU and nationally
  - But… the jury is still out about the possible success and impact of the new ERA
  - This will depend on the successful of implementation phase
  - Including actual commitment levels of Member States (incl. financial)
  - Including acceptance of co-creation of European Commission

Thank you for your attention

More questions?

researchassessment@eua.eu

Stephane.Berghmans@eua.eu
Vinciane.Gaillard@eua.eu