

## EURASHE – CoARA Action Plan

### Background

EURASHE signed the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment in January 2023, as part of its commitment to advancing the research landscape. As a member of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA), EURASHE is actively dedicated to participating in discussions on reforming the research assessment system and fully supports this important initiative. Aligned with CoARA's vision, EURASHE endorses the recognition of diverse research outputs, practices, and activities in the evaluation of research, researchers, and research units. This commitment reflects EURASHE's understanding of the need for a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to research assessment. Specifically, EURASHE strongly supports the recognition of the diverse outputs of applied research.

### General reflections

EURASHE is a European Association that represents Applied Universities<sup>1</sup>, and is not in itself a research-performing organisation (although the Secretariat is involved in policy analysis). Nonetheless, EURASHE plays a crucial role in moving towards better forms of research assessment by raising awareness and contributing to the discussions on the societal, economic and regional implications of applied research. Since there is no one-size-fits-all action plan for the diversity of its membership, the main role of EURASHE is to guide the discussion and make observations or recommendations. This includes creating action plans at individual member institutions.

Given its mission, EURASHE argues for recognizing the diversity of research outputs, particularly those arising from applied research and its contributions to innovation and research ecosystems. The influence of the applied sciences extends well beyond conventional scientific boundaries. Often overlooked are the regional, economic and societal implications of applied research. EURASHE actively participates in discussions concerning the diverse implications of applied research.

EURASHE recognises that a strict separation of basic research and applied research is artificial; both are interconnected. Nevertheless, these two scientific domains have several fundamental differences. The main aim of basic or fundamental research is to enhance the existing body of knowledge, while applied sciences focus on developing practical solutions to societal challenges. Given their distinct nature and objectives, different strategies are needed to evaluate the quality and impact of research in each domain. EURASHE is firmly dedicated to reforming research assessment to ensure that various valuable contributions to science, particularly in applied sciences, are recognised accordingly.

The following table shows EURASHE's guiding principles and position, as well as some actions that the association will pursue. It is important to underline that each individual EURASHE member must

develop their own action plan according to their specific mission, context, and available resources. Nonetheless, EURASHE plays an important role in outlining several guiding principles.

## EURASHE's CoARA Commitments

CoARA commitments	EURASHE actions
1. Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in, research in accordance with the needs and nature of the research.	<p>EURASHE represents Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) and other similar institutions with different names. As explained above, the specific mission of these institution is excellent, applied education and research. They are deeply connected to the regional needs of communities, private companies and the labour market, finding practical solutions to societal problems.</p> <p>Therefore, EURASHE highly recognises the diverse contributions of applied science that go beyond the traditional scientific realm.</p> <p>For example, the theme of <b>EURASHE's 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference</b> in May 2025 is on the regional dimension of applied research and innovation. Assessment of applied research should incorporate implications for regional development, skills, entrepreneurship, and much more.</p> <p>Furthermore, EURASHE is a part of <b>CoARA's Working Group "Towards Transformations: Transdisciplinarity, Applied/Practice-Based Research, and Impacts"</b>. The working group addresses real-world challenges by fostering collaborations and developing new assessment approaches to enhance the transformative role of research in society. Comprising three interrelated subgroups, it aims to advance transdisciplinary research, evaluate the quality and impact of applied research, and enhance the understanding and measurement of societal impacts, ultimately providing guidelines and standards for research and funding organizations.</p> <p>EURASHE will continue to be active in raising awareness of the important contribution of applied sciences and the need for an appropriate and equitable assessment. Pro-actively participating in CoARA's WG on Applied research will remain an essential part</p>

	<p>of the activities. Furthermore, EURASHE will be initiating discussions on CoARA commitments within its Research Community of Practice (CoP) in order to allow for peer-learning and sharing of good practice.</p>
<p><b>2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators</b></p>	<p>EURASHE highly welcomes the focus of research assessment based on qualitative evaluations. Peer review that considers the societal, economic, regional, or practical impacts of applied research provides a better mechanism to assess the quality and relevance of applied research.</p> <p>Applied research often produces outputs beyond traditional academic papers. These outputs may not be adequately captured by metrics like JIF or h-index. Hence, using these indicators does not align with the mission of Applied Science Universities as they do not reflect practical solutions stemming from applied research.</p> <p>EURASHE will continue to support member institutions in developing evaluation tools that assess factors such as societal impact, stakeholder engagement and alignment with regional, national, and European priorities. EURASHE commits to create platforms for knowledge sharing, and to steer the debate among its members on how to adequately assess the results of applied research, for example within the Research CoP.</p>
<p><b>3. Abandon inappropriate uses in research assessment of journal- and publication-based metrics, in particular inappropriate uses of Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and h-index</b></p>	<p>Applied research often produces outputs beyond traditional academic papers. These outputs may not be adequately captured by metrics like JIF or h-index. Hence, using these indicators does not align with the mission of Applied Science Universities as they do not reflect practical solutions stemming from applied research.</p> <p>EURASHE will continue to support member institutions in developing evaluation tools that assess factors such as societal impact, stakeholder engagement and alignment with regional, national, and European priorities. EURASHE commits to create platforms for knowledge sharing, and to steer the debate among its members on how to adequately assess the results of applied research, for example within the Research CoP.</p>

<p>4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment</p>	<p>Each EURASHE member is embedded in a different geographical and societal context. Additionally, the size of EURASHE member institutions is also rather smaller than traditional universities. Rankings often emphasize traditional academic outputs, such as the number of publications and citations in high-impact journals. This undervalues the practical, societal, or economic impacts of applied research.</p> <p>EURASHE does not value university rankings, but does support appropriate systems of labels and benchmarking. These should address all mission of universities in an integrated manner.</p>
<p>5. Commit resources to reforming research assessment as is needed to achieve the commitments.</p>	<p>Given its small secretariat, EURASHE cannot allocate significant resources to reforming research assessment. Furthermore, such initiatives fall under the purview of the Association's members, as EURASHE does not perform any type of research. However, the association will continue to monitor developments at member institutions and facilitate relevant events.</p>
<p>6. Review and develop research assessment criteria, tools and processes</p>	<p>EURASHE will continue its effort in developing research assessment criteria, tools and processes that specifically recognise the diverse contributions of applied research.</p> <p>EURASHE is currently involved in a <b>CoARA Subgroup</b> which aims to develop indicators that assess the impact of <b>applied research on regional development</b>. These indicators will serve as an orientation for Applied Higher Education Institutions to assess the effects of applied research on regional development, and as such, serve as an important contribution towards assessing often neglected assessment methods.</p>
<p>7. Raise awareness of research assessment reform and provide transparent communication, guidance, and training on assessment criteria and processes as well as their use.</p>	<p>As an association, EURASHE plays an important role in raising awareness of CoARA. Therefore, major news related to CoARA are mentioned in the association's weekly "Brussels Dispatch", an email to members containing information on events, calls and latest policy news from Brussels and Europe. In addition, EURASHE publishes a monthly newsletter that is distributed to over 10,000 people. EURASHE commits to monitor all relevant</p>

	news related to CoARA and disseminate relevant developments.
<b>8. Exchange practices and experiences to enable mutual learning within and beyond the Coalition</b>	EURASHE formed several Communities of Practice (CoPs) among which is the Research Community of Practice, which serves as a platform for exchanging best practices and experiences with colleagues from all over Europe and beyond. As part of this CoP, EURASHE co-organised a Staff Training Week in Vilnius, Lithuania in May 2024, which also addressed issues around Open Science and research assessment.
<b>9. Communicate progress made on adherence to the Principles and implementation of the Commitments</b>	EURASHE commits to regularly disseminate progress made by its member institutions among other members. This will be done through mentioning milestones of members in its media campaigns and at high profile events such as its Annual Conference.
<b>10. Evaluate practices, criteria and tools based on solid evidence and the state-of-the-art in research on research, and make data openly available for evidence gathering and research</b>	EURASHE highly supports the European Commission's strategy of Strategic Autonomy indicated by the statement "As Open as possible, as closed as necessary". EURASHE acknowledges the importance of Open Science for research itself as well as for society. In order to raise awareness of this important topic, EURASHE published a <a href="#">Statement</a> on Open Science from the perspective of Applied Higher Education Institutions in May 2024. In this statement, EURASHE outlines the benefits of Open Science as well as challenges for Applied Higher Education institutions.