



M6.2 New Professional Networks

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Abstract

This report documents the creation and development of professional networks under Task 6.3 of the Skills4EOSC project. The sub-task supported the establishment of national data stewardship networks in Italy, Portugal, Hungary, and the Nordic region, each tailored to local needs but harmonised through international collaboration. This collaboration is formalised through the creation of a global forum—Task Group 7 within the RDA Professionalising Data Stewardship Interest Group—ensuring continued knowledge exchange and sustainability beyond the project's lifespan. The report also highlights the success of the Open Science Community Incubator Program and efforts in establishing two thematic networks: a FAIR Data in Health Technology Network and a Museum Curator Network for FAIR Data, which aim to foster domain-specific engagement with FAIR and Open Science practices. All efforts were underpinned by Skills4EOSC's strategic guidance, resource sharing, and coordination.



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TERMINOLOGY

<https://eosc-portal.eu/glossary>

<i>Terminology/Acronym</i>	<i>Definition</i>
BoF	Birds of a Feather
CC	Competence Centre
CETAF	Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities
CIDS	Comunita Italiana dei Data Stewards (Italian Data Stewardship Community)
COST	European Cooperation in Science and Technology
CSC	IT Center for Science
D6.1	Delivery Task 6.1
D6.2	Delivery Task 6.2
D6.3	Delivery Task 6.3
DANS	Data Archiving and Networked Services.
DATICE	Icelandic social science data service
DH LAB	Digitális Örökség Nemzeti Laboratórium / National Laboratory for Digital Heritage

DS	Data Steward
DSIG	Data Stewards Interest Group
DSN	Data Stewardship Network
DTU	Technical University of Denmark
DiSSCo	Distributed System of Scientific Collections
EHRI	European Holocaust Research Infrastructure
ELTE,	Eötvös Loránd University Budapest
FAIR	Findable Accessible Interoperable Reusable
FCCN	Fundação para a Computação Científica Nacional
FCT	Foundation for Science and Technology
FORUM GDI	Portuguese Forum on Research Data Management
GARR	Italian National Computer Network for Universities and Research
HEAnet	Ireland's National Research and Education Network
HI	University of Iceland
HKDIR	Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills
HUN-REN,	Hungarian Research Network
ICDI	Italian Computing and Data Infrastructure
ICOM	International Council of Museums
IIT	Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia
INOSC	International Network of Open Science and Open Scholarship Communities
INRAE	Institut national de recherche pour l'agriculture, l'alimentation et l'environnement
Iscte	University Institute of Lisbon
KBD	Royal Danish Library
KIFU	Kormányzati Informatikai Fejlesztési Ügynökség
MAH	Magyar Adatgazdász Hálózat (Hungarian Data Stewardship Network)
NDSN	Nordic Data Stewardship Network
NHMW	Natural History Museum Vienna
NeIC	Nordic e-Infrastructure Collaboration
OS	Open Science
OSC	Open Science Community
OSCA	Open Scientific Collections Austria
PDS IG	Professionalising Data Stewardship Interest Group

PoliTo	Politecnico di Torino
Pro-M	Professional Mobile and Network Service Provider
RDA	Research Data Alliance
RPDS	Rede Portuguesa de Data Stewards (Portuguese National Data Stewardship Network)
RPO	Research Performing Organisation
RU	Radboud University
Re.Data	Portuguese Network for RDM Support
SDU	University of Southern Denmark
SG	Steering Group
SciLifeLab	Science for Life Laboratory
Sonrai	Irish Data Stewardship Network
TG7	Task Group 7
TU Delft	Delft University of Technology, Netherlands
ToR	Terms of Reference
TtT	Train the Trainer
UB	Universita di Bologna
UC	University of Coimbra
UM	University of Minho
UU	Umeå University, Sweden
UiB	University of Bergen, Norway
UiT	University of Tromsø, Norway
WG	Working Group

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1 Executive Summary

This report presents the outcomes of Task 6.3 under Work Package 6 of the Skills4EOSC project, focusing on the creation, development, and harmonisation of professional networks to support lifelong learning in Open Science and FAIR data practices. The initiative has been instrumental in catalysing the formation of national and thematic networks across Europe, fostering collaboration, professionalisation, and sustainability in data stewardship and Open Science. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for WP6 were:

- Seven networks created in
- Seven different countries
- 300 participants engaged in peer networks.

Table 1 below shows the achievements of WP6 in reference to these KPIs

Table 1 KPIs achieved in WP6

Type of Network	Number of Networks	Number of Countries	Number of Participants
Data Stewardship Network	4	8	580
Open Science Community	37	27	192
Thematic Community	1	1	65
Totals	42	34	837

1.1 Data Stewardship Networks (DSNs)

Four national DSNs were established with strategic support from Skills4EOSC. CIDS, the Italian DSN is a bottom-up initiative supported by ICDI and Skills4EOSC. Skills4EOSC contributed resources, international connections, and mentorship. CIDS has become a model for peer-led knowledge exchange and professional development. The Portuguese DSN, RPDS, was co-developed by Skills4EOSC through Task 6.3.1 lead Curtis Sharma and a core group of stakeholders in Portugal. Skills4EOSC convened and facilitated monthly coordination meetings, stakeholder engagement, and alignment with national strategies. The network is now embedded in the Re.Data initiative and supported

by FCT FCCN. Collaboration with MAH the Hungarian DSN, was initiated through discussions between Dr. Sharma and Hungarian stakeholders. MAH emerged as a collaborative platform for data stewards across institutions. Skills4EOSC provided mentorship, international cross-pollination of ideas, and strategic guidance. MAH is now exploring formalisation and sustainability pathways. The Nordic DS Network (NDSN) is a supranational network involving all Nordic countries, NDSN was conceptualised and developed by members of the Task 6.3.1 team. The network's governance, structure, and sustainability were shaped through Skills4EOSC support, culminating in a formal handover to a regional Steering Group in May 2025.

1.2 Harmonisation through RDA PDS IG Task Group 7 (TG7)

To ensure alignment and cross-network collaboration and support for sustainability, Task 6.3.1 members collaborated with other initiatives through the RDA to establish and launch Task Group 7: Networking and Knowledge Exchange, within the RDA Professionalising Data Stewardship Interest Group. TG7 now serves as a global forum for DSN leaders to share strategies, tools, and experiences. It has grown to include networks from Europe, North America, and Latin America, and will continue to support the networks beyond the Skills4EOSC project.

1.3 Open Science Communities (OSCs)

Led by Anita Eerland and Loek Brinkman, the OSC Incubator Program—supported by Skills4EOSC—ran four successful iterations in Task 6.3.2, resulting in the creation of over 37 OSCs globally. These communities promote grassroots engagement with Open Science practices and are now part of the International Network of Open Science and Scholarship Communities (INOSC).

1.4 Thematic Networks

Two thematic networks were initiated: FAIR Data in Health Technology (HT): Coordinated by Task 6.3.3b. While uptake was limited, the groundwork has been laid for future collaboration and community building. Museum Curator Network for FAIR Data (Task 6.3.3c): Led by the Natural History Museum Vienna, this network connects professionals working with digitized collections. It has established a Steering Board and communication channels, with future development tied to the emergence of thematic competence centres.

1.5 Conclusion

The Skills4EOSC project, through Task 6.3, has significantly advanced the professionalisation of data stewardship and Open Science across Europe. By fostering national and thematic networks, supporting international harmonisation, and enabling community-driven initiatives, the project has laid a robust foundation for sustainable, collaborative, and impactful professional networks. These efforts will continue to evolve through TG7 and other aligned initiatives, ensuring long-term integration into the European Open Science ecosystem.

2 Data Stewardship Networks

Data stewards are research data professionals who support researchers in the careful and responsible management of data (and, more generally, all research products) throughout their life cycle, i.e., from planning to public sharing, with a view to achieving an increasingly open and transparent science. Data Stewardship Networks (DSNs), as will be seen in the sections below can support data stewards and data stewardship in several ways. Data stewardship as a professional profile, at least in publicly funded RPOs, is still a novel concept, and In the evolving landscape of data-intensive research, professional networks play a pivotal role in enhancing the effectiveness and impact of data stewards. These networks facilitate the exchange of best practices, foster collaboration across institutional and disciplinary boundaries, and support the continuous development of data governance standards. For data stewards operating within RPOs, engagement in professional communities not only strengthens their capacity to manage complex data ecosystems (including researchers, infrastructure, standards and protocols, governance frameworks, tools and services) but also ensures alignment with emerging policies, technologies, and ethical frameworks. By participating in such networks, data professionals can contribute to and benefit from collective expertise, ultimately advancing the quality, reproducibility, and FAIRness (Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reusability) of research data.

Following from Task 6.1 Mapping of Existing Professional Networks (see [D6.1](#)), Members of Task 6.3.1 commenced reaching out to potential stakeholders in areas of Europe in which there appeared to be no data stewardship networks (DSNs). As noted in section 1 above four new networks were developed and launched with varying levels of involvement and support from Skills4EOSC. Following are accounts of the conception, development, operation and sustainability strategies of these networks, provided by the main stakeholders/leaders in these networks. Unless otherwise specified, reports are authored by leadership in Task 6.3.1

2.1 Comunita Italiana dei Data Stewards (Italian Data Stewardship Community)

2.1.1 Introduction

The Italian Data Stewardship Community (CIDS) was officially launched in November 2023, and there are currently 172 members. It was created with the support of Italian Computing and Data Infrastructure (ICDI) by stakeholders in Italy, and is led by a core group of individuals namely Dr Giulia Caldoni (Universita di Bologna), Elda Osmenaj (Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia), Dr Mauro Paschetta (Politecnico di Torino) and Dr Valentina Pasquale (Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia). Support provided by Skills4EOSC WP6 took the form of creating connections in the international context for collaboration for example via Task Group 7 *Networking & Knowledge Exchange* within the Research Data Alliance Professionalising Data Stewardship Interest Group (PDS IG), the transfer of ideas from other Skills4EOSC supported networks and through sharing resources, such as the Starter Kit for Data Stewardship Networks produced in Task 6.2 (see [D6.2](#)). CIDS in turn has contributed greatly to work in Task 6.3.1, by sharing ideas and tools, such as the data professional mapping survey mentioned below, recently adapted and run in Portugal, and by sharing their evolving story and experiences. Task 6.3.1 therefore maintained a light relationship with CIDS, with periodic meetings for updates and discussion of any potential support.

Below follows an account of the development of CIDS from Dr Caldoni.

2.1.2 Purpose

The Data Steward as a professional figure is still relatively unknown in Italy but is increasingly being integrated into the research landscape of our country. The concept, functions, and activities of data stewards often depend on the institution where they work and data stewards are usually referred to in many ways, such as data managers, data librarians, research data management specialists, etc. Despite this, the underlying theme is that the “data steward” is a figure with transversal skills in research data management (disciplinary, IT and technical, legal) and often acts as a bridge between researchers (i.e., producers and users of research data), infrastructure, and research organizations.

In recent years, the need has emerged in Italy to recognize and enhance the role of data stewards, as it has been acknowledged that although many professionals

already perform these functions, they are often assigned to different roles without formal recognition.

2.1.3 First Steps

In 2023, ICDI (Italian Computing and Data Infrastructure), coordinator of the European project Skills4EOSC, in collaboration with the University of Bologna, GARR, and IIT (Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia), carried out a survey to map the presence of professionals supporting data management in Italian universities and research institutions and to propose the creation of a national sharing group. While this survey was being conducted, ICDI brought together the leaders of the initiative and the lead of Skills4EOSC Task 6.3.1.

The survey was prepared during the summer of 2023 and was circulated via open-science-related mailing lists or through direct contact with interested institutions. It consisted of 16 questions, most of which featured closed-ended answers. Respondents could answer either on a personal basis or as representatives of their institutions.

One of the active Working Groups (WGs) of the community is finalising the analysis of the survey results, which will likely be published before the end of 2025.

Respondents were also invited to leave their contact information if they wished to be involved in building a national community of data stewards. Based on the expressions of interest gathered, a mailing list was activated in early October 2023 to facilitate exchanges within the nascent community and to invite all interested parties to an in-person meeting held in Rome in November 2023. This event marked the official kick-off of the community. More than 50 people, from both universities and research institutions and with good geographical representation across the country, attended the event. As of July 2025, 174 people have subscribed to the mailing list.

2.1.4 Why a Community for Italian Data Stewards?

The Community of Italian Data Stewards (CIDS) is a bottom-up initiative that brings together research data management professionals working in different institutions across the country and identifying as data stewards, in line with the definition provided by the Skills4EOSC Minimum Viable Skillset.

CIDS aims to support, promote, and enhance the role of data stewards in Italy and is committed to creating a recognized, sustainable professional community based on cooperation and training. Through its actions and initiatives, CIDS strives to ensure that the essential data management support role played by data

stewards in universities, institutions, and research infrastructures is recognized, strengthened, and enhanced.

CIDS's strategic goals, presented in the community Manifesto published in 2025 and publicly available on Zenodo in both Italian and English, are:

- To create opportunities for sharing and developing new skills
- To support the adoption of best practices in research data management
- To increase awareness of the data steward role

The community's activities are organized around these strategic goals.

2.1.5 Structure and Activities

Peer-to-peer knowledge exchange was recognized from the beginning as one of the main activities to be carried out within the community. To address this need, the first Working Group (WG) was established during the kick-off meeting with the objective of organizing online meetings on topics of interest to the community. These meetings are organized into two alternating bimonthly series:

- The first series is dedicated to mailing list subscribers and covers day-to-day practices. One or more CIDS members present good practices and/or challenges they encounter in their work, and peer discussion is a key feature of these meetings.
- The second series is open to the public and features external speakers on key research data management topics of interest to the community.

These events are well-attended, with 30 to 50 participants typically joining each session. In-person meetings have also taken place approximately every six months since the community's launch. These events, hosted by various institutions, provide regular opportunities for networking and discussion, with around 30 in-person participants at each event.

To maximise the knowledge-sharing potential of these activities, a Zenodo community has been established to collect and showcase all outputs presented by CIDS members during both online and in-person meetings.

The main activity of 2025, also conducted within a WG, was the drafting of the CIDS Manifesto. This document presents the community to the public, defining not only who the participants are but also CIDS's objectives and possible forms of participation.

The discussion on participation led to the recognition of four different ways to engage with CIDS activities:

- Those who want to stay informed and/or promote events can request to join the mailing list.
- Those who wish to participate more actively can apply via the mailing list for membership in the collaboration spaces.
- Any participant may propose the creation of a WG or request to join an existing one. WGs can be temporary or permanent and are focused on specific activities or initiatives.
- The chairs of active WGs form the Steering Group, a permanent WG that oversees the community and coordinates the activities of the various WGs.

A WG dedicated to disseminating CIDS activities via social networks has recently been established and will be active before the end of 2025.

In addition to the WGs already mentioned (Meetings, Manifesto, Survey Results, Communication), other active WGs focus on managing community spaces and interacting with international networks, including participation in TG7 (Networking and Knowledge Exchange) within the RDA Professionalising Data Stewards IG.

Interaction with other international communities has brought inspiration and new strategies for cooperation. For example, the survey conducted before CIDS's launch was shared with colleagues in Austria and Portugal, who adapted it to their contexts and used the same tool to gather information on data stewards in their countries.

2.1.6 What's Next for the Community?

The establishment of CIDS in its current form has been a significant bottom-up effort by individuals from various institutions who recognized the value of building such a community.

Maintaining momentum and attention on CIDS's activities—by aligning with participants' interests and delivering valuable content—remains a challenge.

Dissemination of CIDS's work will be a major milestone in 2026 and will help raise awareness of the community at the national level, hopefully also attracting data stewards working in companies, who are currently underrepresented.

2.2 Rede Portuguesa de Data Stewards (Portuguese National Data Stewardship Network)

2.2.1 Introduction

The Portuguese National Data Stewardship Network (RPDS) was officially launched in March 2025, and its membership currently stands at 70. Collaboration between Skills4EOSC and stakeholders interested in creating a national network began early in 2023 with T6.3.1 lead Curtis Sharma and Clara Parente Boavida, data steward at Iscte University Institute, Lisboa. From there a core group of individuals already working with a national strategy in mind, was assembled. The core group consisted of Dr Sharma (Skills4EOSC), Ms Boavida (Iscte), Pedro Principe (University of Minho), Dr Jorge Noro (University of Coimbra), Filipa Pereira (FCCN), with Ms Boavida leading efforts in Portugal. Close collaboration began in earnest in November 2023 when Dr Sharma presented the Skills4EOSC project on data stewardship networks at the FORUM GDI (Portuguese Forum on Research Data Management). Support from Skills4EOSC included monthly meetings to bring stakeholders together to develop ideas and tools for defining, growing and establishing the network, to align development of the network in the wider national context, for example support from the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT-FCCN), and to bring the Portuguese initiative in touch with other networks for the exchange of ideas.

Below follows an account by Ms Boavida, who has a leading role in RPDS, including its purpose, operation, activities and sustainability plans.

2.2.2 Purpose

The Portuguese Data Stewards Network (RPDS) aims to bring together professionals with common interests and challenges in research data management from collection to documentation, storage, to publication and preservation of research data. The network aims to provide a space for sharing, learning and collaboration. RPDS is structured to strengthen the community, encourage interaction with national and international initiatives, share resources and knowledge about *data stewardship* and contribute to the training and professionalisation of its members.

2.2.3 Goals

- Establish and maintain a community where professionals involved in research data management and *data stewardship* activities face common

challenges, share experiences, and explore opportunities for collaboration.

- Promote contact and interaction with other working groups, networks and initiatives, both nationally and internationally.
- Share information, events, training and resources on data stewardship and research data management.
- Contribute to the training of professionals, career development and professionalization.

2.2.4 Operation

2.2.4.1 Communications

Communications with members of the Portuguese Data Stewards Network are carried out through the mailing list [datasteward\[@\]lists.redata.pt](mailto:datasteward[@]lists.redata.pt) and a [Discord Channel](#). A dedicated group is also being enriched in the [Zotero](#).

2.2.4.2 Network Membership

Member registration is facilitated through [Microsoft forms](#). So far we have 77 members registered, from Portuguese Research Performing Organisations.

2.2.5 Activities

The activities organised within the network so far are:

1. A national survey was conducted to characterise professionals who support research data management. The target audience was professionals whose roles were related to supporting research data management. Contact was made with institutions that carry out scientific research. The survey was open from March to June 2025.
2. A Working Group on Data Steward Profiles was created. This group collaborates with the GDI Forum Working Group on Training and Skills. The main goals are: a) guiding activity towards analysing data obtained from Policy WG and Data Stewards Network surveys (questions related to skills); b) defining the data steward profile relevant to recruitment processes.
3. A workshop was held on 26 June to train researchers in the use of electronic research notebooks through the eLabFTW software. Aimed at showcasing the software's potential and providing practical examples of its application across various research domains, the session brought

together 31 participants from diverse fields. There was unanimous agreement on the need for national-level software installation to enable the entire scientific community to benefit from this resource.

4. A presentation at network meetings highlighting initiatives in progress or scheduled for implementation across the 13 competence centres being set up in Portugal.

2.2.6 Plans for the next year

The network will be maintained under the coordination of the national initiative Re.Data (Portuguese Network for RDM support). We also intend to maintain the working groups that are being set up within the network. The activities carried out by these working groups are carried out in collaboration with other working groups previously established in Portugal under the RDM Forum. For example, we set up a working group to define data steward profiles, and we launched two activities this semester. These were a national survey to characterise research data management support professionals, and a workshop on the use of electronic research notebooks.

2.2.7 Sustainability of the network

The sustainability of the network is a component of Re.Data's sustainability plan, which will be defined within the consortium in coordination with the national body, FCT-FCCN. To ensure practical sustainability, we are setting up a steering group to plan short- and medium-term activities, evaluate the progress and impact of RPDS activities carried out this year, and guarantee the network's long-term sustainability. This year, the network is funded by the national funding agency, FCT – Foundation for Science and Technology, under the coordination of the Re.Data consortium. Although the FCT is committed to analysing the possibility of continuing funding, we intend to continue its activities in the following years with the support of the relevant institutions and the involvement of members.

2.3 Magyar Adatgazdász Hálózat (Hungarian Data Stewardship Network)

2.3.1 Introduction

The Hungarian Data Stewardship Network (MAH) was officially launched in October 2024. It has a current membership of around 40 data stewards. Collaboration between Skills4EOSC and stakeholders working towards a national

network began with a meeting between Curtis Sharma and Ildikó Kádárné Kelemen (then of KIFU, now of Pro-M) at the EOSC Symposium in September 2023. Ms Kelemen and Dr Sharma discussed the aims of T6.3 in Skills4EOSC and the initiative led by three institutions in Hungary: KIFÜ, now Pro-M, (HUN-REN, the Hungarian Research Network and ELTE, Eötvös Loránd University Budapest). In February 2024 Ms Kelemen brought together Dr Sharma and Dr Ákos Lencsés (then of KIFU, now of Pro-M), who became the main contact between Skills4EOSC and the network stakeholders. A few meetings were then held, during which Dr Sharma and representatives of other networks talked about the development and operation of their networks and the benefits and challenges encountered. The idea of creating a national data stewardship network was also discussed – motivation, feasibility, operation, etc. Dr Sharma and Dr Lencsés kept regular contact, as Hungarian stakeholders continued the discussion amongst themselves. We continued to work on other important aspects such as a possible Hungarian Skills4EOSC Competence Centre which would support sustainability of the Network. In September 2024 the first informal meeting of Hungarian data stewards was held, supported by KIFU, HUN-REN and ELTE, with around 20 participants. Around this time, it became compulsory for each member-institution in HUN-REN to have a data steward – this meant that another 20 data stewards would potentially join the next meeting in November 2024. The MAH was now considered to be established. Following this monthly online meetings were held in which Dr Sharma, key members of the MAH, and occasionally members from the broader network discussed updates, plans, activities, opportunities and possible ways of structuring the network. The core members involved were Dr Lencsés and Ms Kelemen mentioned above, Anna Horváth (HUN-REN), Henrietta Farkas (HUN-REN) and Dr Zsuzsa Sido (ELTE). Other participants were Dr Vida Bence (ELTE) and Dr Julia Egyed Gergely (HUN-REN). The following is an account of MAH based on input from the core members and discussions held during the monthly meetings.

2.3.2 Overview of Magyar Adatgazdász Hálózat

MAH was established to foster knowledge exchange between two emerging data steward communities—ELTE’s Digital Heritage National Laboratory (DH-LAB) and the HUN-REN research network—as well as data stewards operating outside these groups. The network supports a growing need for collaboration, training, and community building among data professionals in Hungary. In spring 2023, ELTE DH-LAB launched the first official Hungarian data stewardship training program, a 1.5-year course with practical components supported by partner institutions; the first cohort graduated in January 2025, with a new two-semester program set to begin in fall 2025. In parallel, the ARP Ambassador Program

trained 19 ambassadors during 2023–2024, focusing on research data management and the use of the ARP platform. Following a policy change in October 2024, employing data stewards became mandatory for all research centers and institutions, with newly appointed stewards completing training and receiving certification by January 2025. Key institutional supporters include Pro-M (formerly KIFÜ), which provides IT infrastructure and promotes open science practices as Hungary’s sole EOSC member. The HUN-REN network now includes around 20 data stewards, while the ELTE training’s first cohort included 15 participants. The network itself remains informal and has no official membership; participation ranges from 15 to 40 individuals per event, drawn from various research institutions and universities. Regular in-person meetings occur every two months and typically include 1–3 invited presentations followed by open discussion. Meetings are promoted via mailing lists and personal outreach, with efforts underway to strengthen engagement and expand participation. There is currently no formal leadership with organisation of meetings is typically shared by members from the three core institutions, with all participants encouraged to contribute. The overarching aim is to build a supportive and well-connected data stewardship community by addressing shared challenges, supporting training opportunities, and fostering a sense of professional identity within the research landscape.

2.3.3 Objectives of MAH

During the monthly meetings convened through Skills4EOSC, discussions were held about the objectives of the network in line with the needs of data steward and data stewardship in Hungary. MAH outlined a comprehensive set of objectives aimed at strengthening data stewardship and supporting data professionals nationwide. Central to its mission is the coordination of training, possibilities, and a collaborative platform for data professionals, helping them develop the skills and support networks essential for their roles.

A key priority is the establishment of dedicated data steward positions within research institutions across the country. Data Stewards at Hungarian institutions can be supported by the network through structured training and mentoring. For this, training programs of ELTE and HUN-REN can be adapted for new user groups. These training programmes cover core areas such as data management, repository use, and policy development, with flexibility for extension based on funding and institutional needs. Ongoing mentoring is an integral part of the initiative, helping data stewards navigate their responsibilities, assess institutional needs, and build effective relationships with researchers. These stewards are also tasked with promoting best practices in data management,

which includes developing internal policies, conducting assessments, and facilitating data deposition.

To foster a strong community, the network encourages collaboration and knowledge sharing among data stewards and stakeholders. This is achieved through regular meetings, exchange of tools and ideas, and collective problem-solving efforts. Continuous evaluation is built into the network's approach, with performance assessments, participant feedback, and adaptive improvements guiding its development. Ultimately, the network seeks to ensure its long-term sustainability by securing funding, creating a robust training model, and building an enduring structure to support its growth and impact.

2.3.4 Sustainability

Sustainability—both of the MAH network and of data stewardship as a recognised professional profile—remains a central focus for the network's leadership. A number of practices are already in place to support this goal, alongside new ideas aimed at ensuring long-term impact. The network currently operates on a structured schedule, holding bi-monthly meetings with prepared agendas to maintain engagement and focus. A strong emphasis is placed on mentoring and support for data stewards, helping them overcome challenges, share knowledge, and build confidence in their roles.

Training continues to be a cornerstone of the network's efforts. In addition to the existing in-person program, plans are underway to develop an e-training curriculum that would increase accessibility and allow for more flexible, long-term delivery. Financial sustainability is also under consideration, with proposals to rework the training into a two-semester course and to explore funding options such as scholarships. These adjustments aim to make the program more scalable and inclusive over time.

The network also recognizes the importance of continuous improvement and feedback. Regular evaluation of activities, along with input from participants, will help ensure the network remains relevant and responsive to member needs. Building strong interpersonal relationships and a supportive community is viewed as essential for maintaining engagement beyond the initial enthusiasm, helping to foster a culture of collaboration and shared purpose.

Discussions were also held about engagement with international initiatives such as the Research Data Alliance Professionalising Data Stewardship Interest Group (RDA PDSIG), particularly Task Group 7 on Networking and Knowledge Exchange. This global involvement offers opportunities to share ideas, access resources, and strengthen connections with other data stewardship networks.

Lastly, it was suggested that introducing more structure—such as a steering group or defined leadership roles—is being considered as a means of ensuring continuity, organization, and long-term strategic direction. The current consensus, however, is that the organic way in which MAH presently operates seems to be working well, and perhaps more structure is something to be considered after consultation with the broader community. It was agreed that building a network takes time and should be done in consultation with its members to ensure it meets their needs and context. The importance of being flexible and adapting the network's structure and activities based on feedback and evolving circumstances was emphasised.

2.3.5 Looking forward

Towards the end of Skills4EOSC, discussions centred around present challenges and potential practical ways of moving forward. These focused on membership and attendance, meetings and documentation, formal structure and institutional support.

2.3.5.1 *Membership and attendance*

Concerns were noted about the declining diversity of participants in recent meetings, noting a shift toward attendees mainly from ELTE and the HUN-REN network. There are challenges in getting people to join the mailing list, possibly due to a weak sense of identity as data stewards. It was suggested that having only in-person meetings may limit participation. A possible solution with added benefits might be to have rotating meeting locations across the country to boost engagement.

2.3.5.2 *Meetings and documentation*

The value of a structured approach to meetings was emphasized, highlighting the introduction of agendas, designated facilitators, and varied program elements like presentations and icebreakers. This structure improves clarity, engagement, and attendance. Introducing a regular agenda item to encourage mailing list subscriptions could help with diversifying membership and increasing membership and attendance. It was also agreed to document meeting processes to maintain consistency. Clear communication was also emphasised; meeting invitations should clearly outline the benefits of attending. Overall, organisation, transparency, and strategic communication could be harnessed to boost participation and engagement.

2.3.5.3 Formalising network structure and measuring success

While some members supported the idea of a structured network, it is felt that the network's goals and direction need clearer definition. The importance of understanding members' needs and involving them in shaping the network was emphasised. To this end, it was suggested to document the current state of the network, gathering regular feedback through surveys, and reviewing progress periodically. The network should operate as a mutually beneficial system, where members both contribute and gain value. Creative methods could be used such as the "data monster game", and making meeting invitations more compelling by clearly stating their benefits. Acknowledging the barriers posed by in-person meetings, online formats to increase accessibility could be considered. Finally, the need to define success through clear milestones was raised, such as having data stewards in all institutions and ensuring consistent participation. Overall, structured planning, member input, creative engagement, and measurable goals could be implemented to guide the network's development.

2.3.5.4 National institutional support

The importance of national institutional support for the network was emphasised, but simultaneously there were doubts about receiving this support at a national level in the near term due to ongoing structural changes. This uncertainty was shared across the MAH leadership, although there was hope that HUN-REN could, after addressing current challenges around merging several institutions, eventually provide an umbrella for the network, the current reorganisation of four institutions ((including the one where the data steward network originated)) poses significant challenges. Overall, discussions stressed the need for long-term sustainability while recognizing the current limitations in institutional capacity.

2.3.6 International Collaboration

Members of MAH leadership have attended meetings of the RDA PDISG Task Group 7 Networking and Knowledge Exchange (mentioned in section 2.3.4 above) and are on the mailing list of this new international community of data steward networks presented in more detail in section 3 below. While it is acknowledged that being part of yet another network places demands on time and effort that need to be justified, benefits have already been realised for MAH through this community. Firstly, representatives of the Data Steward Interest Group of the Netherlands (DSIG), one of the largest and most successful data steward networks; the Nordic Data Stewardship Network (NDSN, see section 2.4 below) and the Portuguese Data Stewardship Network (PDSN, see section 2.2 above) have presented stories about their development, operation, benefits and

challenges to the MAH through Skills4EOSC. MAH core group members have also been present at TG7 meetings where other national networks have presented.

An immediate and practical benefit has been a presentation from Clara Boavida of the PDSN on implementation of a data stewardship profiling survey in Portugal. Importantly, this was a survey first conducted in Italy and adopted for Portugal through collaboration in TG7. This survey, adapted for the Hungarian context towards “understanding the importance of members' needs and involving them in shaping the network” as proposed in section 2.3.5.3 above. Ms Boavida talked about the challenges involved, things to keep in mind, and the importance of adapting the survey to local contexts. She has also shared an English language version of the Portuguese survey.

2.3.7 Conclusion and Next Steps

In conclusion, MAH is a healthy data stewardship network. Its strong leadership is aware of the positives and challenges, as well as the avenues through which the network can further develop and the support that would be needed. The MAH leadership expressed interest in potentially adapting and running the data steward profile survey in Hungary, and this could be a possible next step for the network. In the event that MAH decides to implement a more formal structure, the adaptation of tools and documentation templates such as Terms of Reference, Playbooks, etc., created and shared by network members in TG7 could prove helpful. Contributions from MAH to the international community would no doubt be just as valuable.

2.4 Nordic Data Stewardship Network

2.4.1 Introduction

The Nordic Data Stewardship Network (NDSN) will be launched in July 2025. Directly and indirectly, the network will reach over 300 data professionals working in Open Science (OS). The conception of the NDSN started in mid-2023 with discussion Swedish and Finnish partners in T6.3.1, who believed that there were enough commonalities across the Nordic countries to motivate having a regional network. At the same time, there were already existing national networks in Sweden and Finland, which covered the needs of RDM/data professionals, and we wished to avoid duplication. Danish partners originally stepped back because of a national restructuring of approaches to Open Science (OS) and RDM, however, in January 2024, they decided to join the initiative, which was officially

launched on 17 January. This decision was based on the desire to be part of the driving of change in the Danish national context, and Danish partners have gone on to be a driving force within the establishing and sustaining of the NDSN. Norwegian involvement came after a meeting between Skills4EOSC/WP6 representatives and members of the Norwegian Data Curators Network initiative. Soon after in April 2024, Interest was expressed from colleagues in Iceland and they were invited to join the initiative. Thus we now had participation/representation from all sovereign Nordic countries. The core members, some of whom went on to form the current steering group (SG) appear in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Core members of the Nordic Data Stewardship Network

Name	Institution	Role in Network
Curtis Sharma (S4E)	Delft University of Technology, Netherlands (TU Delft)	Provisional network lead until May 2025
Katrine Flindt Holmstrand (S4E)	Technical University of Denmark (DTU) &	Activities and education (SG*)
Päivi Rauste (S4E)	IT Center for Science (CSC), Finland &	External engagement and collaboration (SG)
Carolín Rebernig-Hedman (S4E)	Umeå University, Sweden (UU) & Skills4EOSC	Previous SG (content and communication),
Olivia Ekman	Umeå University, Sweden (UU)	Content and communication (SG)
Anna-Maria Hämäläinen	IT Center for Science (CSC), Finland	External engagement and collaboration
Kjartan Ólafsson	Icelandic social science data service (DATICE), Iceland	Network lead (SG)
Eiríkur Stephensen	University of Iceland (HI)	Network lead (SG)
Marta Eide	University of Bergen, Norway (UiB)	Community engagement & champions lead
Thea Drachen (S4E)	University of Southern Denmark (SDU)	SG support (to August 2025)
Philipp Konzett	University of Tromsø, Norway (UiT)	SG support
Alexandra Frogmann-Schulz (S4E)	Royal Danish Library (KBD)	SG support
Evgenios Vlachos (S4E)	University of Southern Denmark (SDU)	SG support
Katrine Weisteen Bjerde	Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HKDIR)	SG support
*Steering Group, S4E – Skills4EOSC		

Other contributing members were Huw Grange (UiT), Leif Longva (UiT), Siiri Fuchs (CSC), Vesa Savolainen (CSC) and Svein Høier (NTNU, Norway). From its conception in mid-2023 the core team worked to develop the structure, value and purpose of the network for its eventual stakeholders, culminating in an in-person SG meeting in Copenhagen in May 2025 (funded by Skills4EOSC and Technical University of Denmark, with support from the Royal Danish Library) when an official association with the Nordic e-Infrastructure Collaboration (represented by Tomasz Malkiewicz) was established and leadership of the network was officially passed on from Dr Sharma to the SG.

The following is an account of the network's development adapted from the rolling meeting notes to which all core members contributed.

2.4.2 Objectives of the NDSN

As mentioned in the introduction, two ideas driving the establishment of the NDSN were addressing commonalities in data stewardship across the Nordic countries and influencing change in the national context, but in order to build membership and be effective, and sustainable, this needed to be made more explicit. In terms of commonalities, as with data stewardship in academia in other countries, many challenges exist including professional profiling, availability of training and capacity. A Nordic network would enable the sharing of ideas, resources, tools etc across borders that have a good chance of being adopted and implemented due to similarities in culture and ways of working across the Nordics. A goal would be to engage the majority of data professionals across all countries towards these ends. In terms of driving national change, whereas in [Sweden](#), [Finland](#) and [Denmark](#) networks supporting data professionals were well-established, in the other countries this was not so. In Norway work is currently proceeding towards establishing a national data curator network, but this cannot serve the needs of the wider data professional community. In Iceland the role of data steward is still emerging and consequently there is as yet no relevant network. Although there is a network in Denmark, NDSN members from that country believe that discussions at the Nordic level could influence decisions in other areas of Open Science, such as the establishment of competence centres. The NDSN would operate as a lightweight network given the existence of national networks in some countries, and engage data professionals mostly indirectly, while facilitating direct interaction through an online platform and biannual meetings. These ideas are elaborated on below.

2.4.3 Development of the NDSN

One of the first main tasks of the core group has been to codify its purpose and proposed ways of working in a Terms of Reference (ToR) document, the completion of which was celebrated at the first in-person meeting of the SG in Copenhagen mentioned above and discussed later in more detail. The ToR lays out in concise terms, the purpose and objectives of the NDSN; the target community (its membership); frequency of meetings; modes of communication; governance structure; method of operation and code of conduct. Ambitions and purpose having been established, attention turned to the development of the network. A *condicio sine qua non* for the NDSN to work was that there must be representation in the SG from each country to shape the network, maintain relevance and connection with national networks and their members and share the workload, with each SG member required to lead or co-lead on agreed-upon themes and tasks. These are defined in Table 3 below

Table 3 NDSN Steering Group Roles and Responsibilities

SG Role	Key responsibilities
Network lead	Coordinate overall activities, convene meetings, etc
Documentation, content curation and communication	Document meetings and ensuring output is available and current, and communicate these to membership
Activities and education	Plan activities, collect/share educational resources, organise training.
Outreach and engagement	Look for collaborative opportunities and prospective members
Community engagement and champions Lead	Initiate discussion, involve enthusiastic members in work and SG responsibilities

A maximum of two SG members per country was agreed-upon to avoid having a top-heavy structure and an accompanying aim was to have two people in each role to enable continuity and alleviate pressure on professional commitments. An important consideration was that while there is a nominated lead for responsibilities, it is expected that other SG members would contribute and support, and not be excluded from taking initiative in any activity they feel important or interesting. There are of course overlaps and interdependencies across the roles and responsibilities. The SG membership currently stands at seven with one representative each from Norway, Denmark and Sweden. This

means that currently the SG is not at desired capacity, with co-leads only in the roles of Network Lead and Outreach and Engagement (see table 1, section 2.4.1).

Simultaneous with the development of the ToR and SG were discussions on how the NDSN would operate and how it would be supported and sustained. The idea of a Playbook was introduced by Dr Sharma as implemented in many communities. A playbook would lay out SG roles in greater elaboration, an SG directory so to speak, the structure for meetings, templates and tools to be used for meetings newsletters, etc., platforms for collaboration, communication and community engagement (an important issue considering the international nature of the network). Other discussions, that would also be included in a playbook, centred around making the network and meetings meaningful for members. Ideas proposed were engagement with the community to promote discussion and to collect issues and challenges that the network could solve together. Approaches the SG felt could be useful included some from other successful networks, such as the [DSIG in the Netherlands](#), who plan every meeting around solving a problem presented by a member, and have rotated chairing of meetings. Another of these was the setting up of working groups within the NDSN to produce tangible resources or to solve more complex issues, an approach used in the Italian DS Network (see section 2.1). Alignment and collaboration with other networks and efforts such as those within the Research Data Alliance (RDA) and Skills4EOSC were also discussed and deemed important to join and with which to remain abreast.

SG members considered that both human and financial resources are usually in short supply when it comes to professional networks. Therefore alliances with formal bodies and funding for events, community platforms etc., would need be sourced. In addition, a stipulation in Task 6.3.1, was that all networks created be linked to a national Skills4EOSC competence centre (CC). It was acknowledged that for this latter, NDSN may face a problem, as it is a supranational network. Additionally, the idea of CCs were, and still are to some extent, vague, and only a few were established at the time. For the interest of the NDSN, only Finland through CSC, and Sweden through the Swedish National Data Service (SND) had identified or were planning to identify as a Skills4EOSC CC. Thus support, mentorship, guidance and coordination for the NDSN post-Skills4EOSC was in doubt. Fortunately, as mentioned in section 2.4.1 an official association has been established between NDSN and NelC (an early success for our external engagement SG members Ms Rauste and Ms Hämäläinen), who will support NDSN in these areas, thus acting as de facto CC.

The challenge of funding still remained (and still remains). Several ideas were discussed, particularly as SG members increasingly felt that an intense in-person meeting was needed to move work beyond the then current stage. Online hour-long meetings with long intervals between these were hampering discerning a clear path, taking crucial decisions and making truly meaningful steps. These ideas included accessing [RDA Tiger](#) funding, applying to [COST Actions](#), but after investigation, it was found that these were not accessible by initiatives like NDSN. The SG began to look beyond the Skills4EOSC project to an upcoming call (now open at the time of writing) [Data stewards, skills and training for Open Science and FAIR practices](#) that might make provision for supporting new networks. However, there were several delays in releasing the call and that project would not begin until summer or autumn 2026, and the nascent network would need to continue to grow and develop in the meantime. It still remains a possibility that Skills4EOSC networks could receive support in some way once that project becomes a reality.

2.4.4 Steering Group In-person Meeting and the Future

The SG continued to plan an in-person SG meeting. All SG and core members contributed ideas for the agenda and Activities and Education officer Ms Holmstrand lead on the practicalities arranging accommodation, meeting venue, catering and fun activities. The benefits of an in-person meeting were reiterated:

- **More Efficient and Focused Discussions:** in-person meetings tend to be more efficient and enable deeper conversations, especially when trying to build networks and collaborations.
- **Better Engagement and Participation:** it is more rewarding to meet in person since it is hard to have sustained discussions in online meetings, with wider participation in online meetings.
- **Dedicated Time for Planning:** an in-person meeting would allow for dedicated time to gather, allocate time, and put things on the board, which has been challenging to achieve in online meetings.

The Copenhagen Meeting of the NDSN SG was held on 14–15 May 2025. The event brought together representatives from Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, and Norway, along with observers from NeIC. The venue for the meeting was the Royal Danish Library, arranged by Dr Frogtmann-Schulz. Travel and accommodation for SG members who were also partners in Skills4EOSC were covered from Skills4EOSC budgets and DTU covered expenses for catering and activities, arranged by Ms Holmstrand. Participants in the meeting were: Curtis

Sharma, Kjartan Ólafsson, Eiríkur Stephensen, Katrine Flindt Holmstrand, Päivi Rauste, Marta Eide, Olivia Ekman, Anna-Maria Hämäläinen, Thea Drachen and Tomasz Malkiewicz of NeIC. Jenny O'Neill, Research Engagement Officer at HEAnet (Ireland's National Research and Education Network) was a special guest, presenting virtually on the development Sonrai, the Irish Data Steward Network, of which she is co-lead.

The purpose of the meeting was to strengthen regional collaboration in data stewardship, align national efforts, and plan the official launch of the NDSN. Key highlights included:

2.4.4.1 National updates

- Denmark emphasized the need for professionalisation and better integration between infrastructure and RDM efforts.
- Finland showcased a successful community-driven model with regular 'data coffee' meetings and informal engagement.
- Sweden is reanimating its network and seeks support for training, identity, and legal clarity.
- Iceland, with a small research community, aims to build foundational RDM practices and learn from Nordic peers.
- Norway is developing a national curator network and exploring a competence centre to support data stewardship.

2.4.4.2 Strategic Decisions Taken

- Terms of Reference (ToR) agreed upon with revisions every two years.
- Communication tools include a Sunet forum, Mailchimp newsletter, and a simple website.
- NeIC collaboration to support hybrid meetings, training, and dissemination of outputs.

2.4.4.3 Initiatives and Workshops

- Subgroups and task forces will address legal issues, DMPs, FAIR data, and software.
- Training coordination includes archiving materials, promoting exchanges, and collaborating with other networks.

2.4.4.4 Launch and Next Steps

- Official launch planned for July 2025

- Deliverables include website, logo, forum guide, newsletter, and playbook finalisation.
- SG meetings scheduled for June (completed), August, November 2025
- First network meeting October 2025 (online)
- Hybrid network meeting in May 2026

2.4.4.5 Action Items Summary

These include website development (hosted by University of Iceland); design of a network logo, creation of a guide for using the Sunet forum and invitation data stewards to join and engage with others; assemble a list of trainings, resources, tools, etc., finalisation of playbook and two year-roadmap.

At the end of the two days, Dr Sharma formally handed over leadership to network co-leads and the rest of the SG, who are currently working on the steps and actions laid out above. Dr Sharma will maintain contact with members of the SG after Skills4EOSC through the Networking and Knowledge Exchange Task Group, which he co-leads, within the RDA Professionalising Data Stewardship Interest Group (PDS IG). In this way the network will continue to grow and develop, offering and receiving support from and collaborating with other Data Stewardship Networks worldwide.

2.5 Data Stewardship Networks – Conclusion

The establishment and evolution of national and regional data stewardship networks across Europe—such as CIDS in Italy, RPDS in Portugal, MAH in Hungary, and the NDSN in the Nordic countries (see figure below)—demonstrate a growing recognition of the critical role data stewards play in advancing open science and responsible research data management. These networks, while diverse in structure and maturity, share a common foundation: the strategic support and coordination provided by the Skills4EOSC project. Through targeted interventions, resource sharing, and international collaboration, Skills4EOSC has acted as a catalyst for community building, professional development, and sustainability planning. Central to this effort has been guidance under Task 6.3.1, which has been instrumental in shaping the vision, structure, and operational strategies of these networks. The Task’s role in fostering cross-border dialogue, mentoring emerging communities, and facilitating knowledge exchange through platforms like the RDA PDS IG Task Group 7 (see section 3) has ensured that each network benefits from shared experiences and collective wisdom. As these communities continue to grow, their alignment with Skills4EOSC’s principles and

collaboration across networks will remain vital to their long-term impact and integration into the broader European Open Science ecosystem.

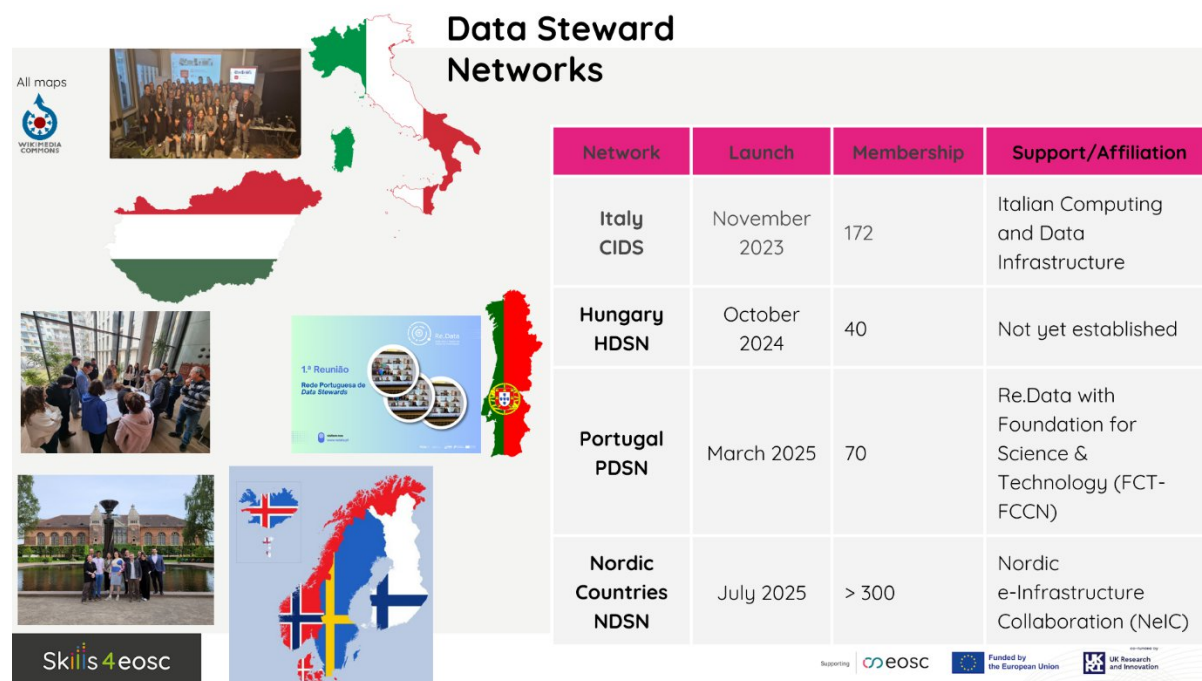


Figure 1 Skills4EOSC Data Stewardship Networks (June 2025)

3 Harmonisation of Data Stewardship Networks

3.1 Introduction

As part of Task 6.3.1, all new data stewardship networks created were to be harmonised under the umbrella of the [RDA Professionalising Data Stewardship Interest Group](#) (PDS IG). The PDS IG was established in 2020 to focus on sharing good practices, initiatives, and projects that could help research organisations in professionalising data stewardship, aiming to stimulate collaboration within and outside the RDA community. There are currently 348 members. The IG thus serves as the ideal forum for data stewards to connect and collaborate with each other. However, there was not an express space connection at the network level for example, for network leads, network initiative leads, or individuals interested in starting a network to share ideas about setting up, operating and sustaining networks, or for sharing best practices across networks. Connections at this level could better facilitate addressing wide-ranging commonalities, support the professionalisation of data stewardship, promote knowledge exchange at the network level, say by networks inviting talks from leaders of other networks to share stories, strategies, challenges, and successes.

3.2 RDA PDS IG Task Group 7 Networking and Knowledge Exchange

3.2.1 Origins

Work on this aspect of Task 6.3.1 commenced at the start of 2023, with elaboration of the concept of “harmonisation”, investigations as to whether any similar initiative already existed and approaching co-chairs of the PDS IG to obtain their support for such an initiative. WP and task lead Dr Sharma, while working with task members in these efforts and already taking advantage of the results emerging from Task 6.1 *Mapping of Existing Professional Networks*, took the decision to attend the 20th RDA Plenary to take place in March 2023 in Gothenburg, Sweden. Having been a member of the PDS IG since 2021, he had already begun conversations with co-chairs of the IG and became aware of a proposal a Birds of a Feather (BoF) session for this plenary, seeking to open discussions on “Promoting synergies between national RDM and data

stewardship networks”. Dr Sharma reached out to Aofie Coffey of University College Cork, one of the organisers of the BoF, to share that he was currently leading a Skills4EOSC initiative with a similar theme and proposed collaboration. Dr Coffey invited Dr Sharma to present during the BoF and participate in the open discussions. The BoF was well-attended, and representatives of several DS networks and emerging network initiatives shared stories, including Dr Caldoni eventual co-lead of the Italian DS Network. During the open discussion Dr Sharma talked about the work in WP6 and Task 6.3.1, the goal to create a “community of networks” within the PDS IG and its potential value for data stewards and data stewardship. Dr Coffey presented the work currently being done in Ireland and outlined her reasoning and vision for such a community. These included: sharing experiences, and identifying common goals, challenges and potential collaborations. After engaging discussion from the audience, speakers and online participants, it became clear that such a community was desirable and would be useful. It was decided that the representatives of networks at the BoF would get together some time after the Plenary to work out the next steps.

3.2.2 Next Steps and Launch of TG7

Over the next six months, while the Italian, Portuguese, Hungarian and Nordic DS networks began to take shape and develop at different speeds, Dr Sharma and Dr Coffey met several times to align our visions and determine what kind of space we could occupy in the PDS IG, having several exchanges with IG co-chairs. Dr Caldoni also participated in these discussions and brainstorming sessions from time to time. After several rounds of discussions, co-chairs of the PDS IG offered Task Group 7 Networking (TG7) and Knowledge Exchange as a home for our budding community of DS networks. TG7 was a dormant forum and the (former) lead happily agreed for us to co-opt and use it. We felt that this TG was appropriate for us, although we understood that its responsibilities would not be limited to providing a networking and knowledge exchange space for networks, but would encompass the wider membership of the IG. Having the comfort of this space, from November 2023 Dr Sharma and Dr Coffey proceeded to involve representatives of other networks in our discussions and from among ourselves choose a representative to be a co-chair of the PDS IG as required for every TG. At this point, there were seven core members, who voted on this. Dr Sharma and Dr Coffey, having been nominated by the others as official co-leads of TG7 stood down from this election and further it was agreed upon that the new co-chair should add some diversity to the current composition in terms of geographical location. Eventually, Mikala Narlock then based at the Data

Curation Network and University of Minnesota USA, took on the role. During a session of the PDS IG at the fully online RDA Plenary 22 in May 2024, Task Group 7 Networking and Knowledge Exchange was formally launched with the participation of six networks/countries: Netherlands, Ireland, Italy, Sweden, Canada and USA.

3.2.3 Growth and Development of TG7

From the launch of TG7 in May 2024, online meetings were held almost every month, attended by the core group shown in Table 4 below

Table 4 TG7 Core Group (November 2023)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organisation and Country</i>
Curtis Sharma	TU Delft/Skills4EOSC, Netherlands
Aoife Coffey	University College Cork & Sonrai/Irish Data Stewardship Network
Giulia Caldoni	University of Bologna - Italy
Mikala Narlock	Data Curation Network / University of Minnesota – USA (now at Indiana University Bloomington)
Parul Tewatia	Data centre, Scilifelab, Sweden
Carolyn Rebernig-Hedman	Umeå University/Skills4EOSC, Sweden (now replaced by Olivia Ekman)
Erin Clary	Digital Research Alliance of Canada (now at Simon Fraser University, Digital Research Alliance of Canada)

The TG and membership continued to grow gradually and organically. Core members were already very busy with other aspects of their work, as well as those individuals who we hoped would become members. Nevertheless, aims of the TG were already being achieved. Dr Caldoni spoke about the Italian DS network's development: purpose, strategies used, goals, challenges, etc., to the developing Nordic DS Network, Dr Sharma and Dr Caldoni participated in a panel discussion at the launch of Sonrai, and experiences were shared across the networks represented at monthly meetings.

During this time the core group worked on creating a Terms of Reference (ToC) for the TG, agreed on the responsibilities core group members should take on as we sought to establish an SG, what strategies we should take to gain more representation, etc. Forms for registration, expressions of interest etc, were

created towards these efforts. Meetings were also held with co-chairs of the PDS IG to understand at what level of autonomy the TG works, what support is available to us and to report progress etc. By the end of 2024, two more members were added to the core group, and several more network representatives began attending TG7 meetings. This was prompted by the information that a BoF “Networks of Data Ambassadors & Stewards - Sharing Experiences” was proposed by colleagues at INRAE (Institut national de recherche pour l'agriculture, l'alimentation et l'environnement) for the 23rd RDA Plenary in Costa Rica in November 2024. Dr Sharma reached out to organisers and suggested collaboration. The BoF was well-attended, including participants from Latin America and the Caribbean and PDS IG co-chairs. At the end of the session, it was agreed that collaboration should continue through TG7 as it was already established and had a formal place within the PDS IG. It was also agreed that TG7 would not go through the effort of creating a playbook of it's own, as one was being developed via the wider IG.

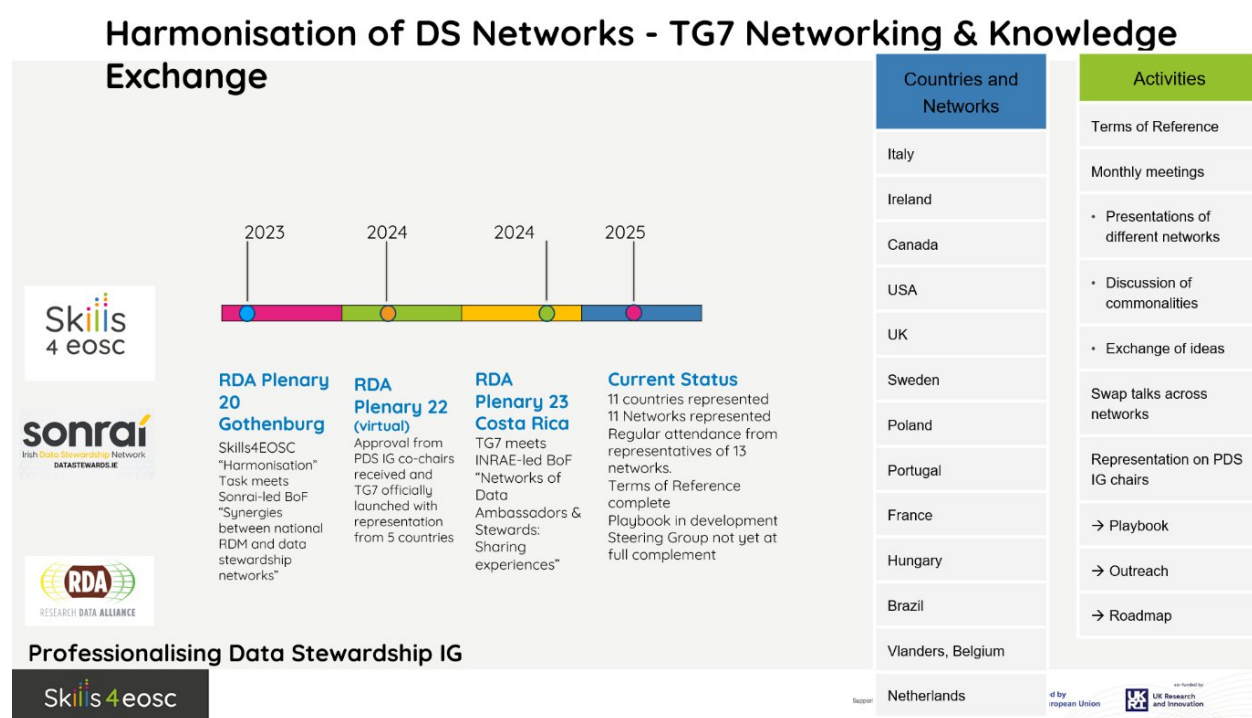


Figure 2 Timeline and Current Participation in TG7

3.2.4 Present and Future

Membership and attendance continued to grow with more exchange of talks for example Italy at Portuguese DS Network Meetings, Portugal and Nordic at Hungarian DS Network Meetings. Presentations at TG7 meetings from the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO), Belgium, etc. The figure below shows engagement with TG7 as of June 2025. Since then, two more networks have requested to join.

As Skills4EOSC draws to a close, TG7 will provide a space the DS networks created during the Skills4EOSC project to themselves continue to grow and develop through taking advantage of the experiences and cross-pollination of ideas that such a network enables. The harmonisation with other networks in Europe and beyond can only serve to enrich the experience for all involved. The community itself having identified (repeatedly) the need and utility of this community of networks will continue to support it to expand, supporting exchange of best practices, collaboration to solve common challenges and support the professionalisation of data stewardship.

4 Open Science Communities

The following report is submitted by Dr Anita Eerland (Radboud University, Netherlands) co-lead along with Dr Loek Brinkman (DANS, Netherlands) on the highly successful Open Science Community Incubator Program ran several times during Skills4EOSC creating numerous new OSCs in Europe and around the world.

4.1 Accelerating the transition to Open Science

Open Science can be considered a set of practices aimed at increasing the accessibility, transparency, reproducibility, and inclusivity of science. The transition to Open Science is an ongoing process. In essence, it is about changing the current research culture. Such a change requires collaborative action of stakeholders at five different layers (Figure 1). To implement Open Science practices the required infrastructure should be in place, such as Open Access journals and data repositories. These infrastructures need to be made available to researchers, and training or support should be offered to make adoption of these new techniques easy. In the end, it is the researchers themselves who determine the norms and standards in the field and are therefore at the heart of the transition. Researchers' behaviour is to a large extent driven by the incentive structure in academia -how to make a career in science- and on the requirements set in institutional or national policies.

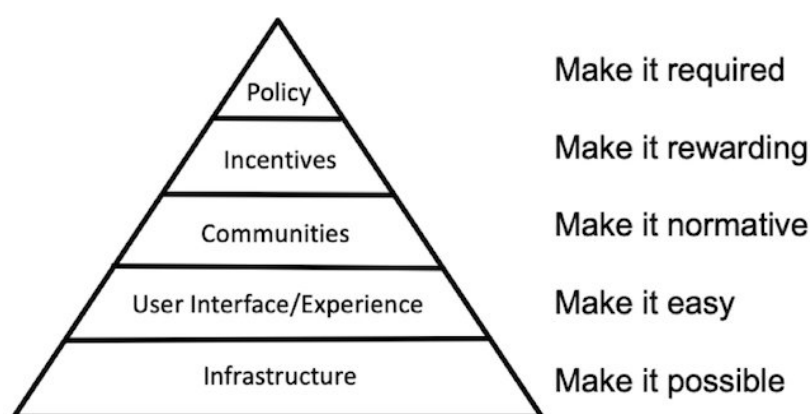


Figure 3 A change in research culture requires collaborative action of stakeholders in five layers (Nosek 2019)

Tremendous work has been done to create infrastructures for Open Science and policies and incentive structures are slowly but surely moving in the direction of Open Science. However, little has been done to target the layer of community engagement ([Armeni et al. 2021](#)). To facilitate the uptake of Open Science practices, Open Science and Scholarship Communities (OSCs) are crucial as they have the power to make Open Science practices normative (Nosek, 2019).

4.2 Open Science Communities

The purpose of an Open Science or Scholarship Community (OSC) is to accelerate the normalization of Open Science practices amongst researchers. It does so by making the Open Science practices of its members visible and accessible to colleagues. OSCs are learning communities that encourage researchers to showcase how they incorporate Open Science in their workflow and help colleagues to follow suit.

OSCs are open to everyone interested in Open Science. No prior knowledge or expertise is required to become a member. The target audience of OSCs are researchers and scholars from all disciplines and career stages. However, OSCs particularly welcome others with an interest in Open Science, such as support staff, administrators and stakeholders in OS. In fact, OSCs can help policy makers, service providers or providers of research infrastructure to connect with their end-users and collect feedback to improve their policies, tools and services.

OSCs are governed by a Core Team of active members. An OSC is independent, bottom-up, self-governing, and self-steering. Its course of action is not determined by institutional policies. However, OSCs are encouraged to collaborate with their respective institutions, libraries, and (where applicable) institutional Open Science programs. Core Team members are often researchers, but support staff are also well suited to be part of the team.

4.3 The International Network of Open Science and Scholarship Communities

OSCs are part of the [International Network of Open Science and Scholarship Communities](#) (INOSC). INOSC facilitates knowledge exchange amongst the Core Teams of OSCs during regular meetings, where OSC representatives share best-practices and work on solutions. Regularly, OSCs team-up for joint-events or provide workshops to each other's OSCs. As the number of OSCs grows,

OSCs may also unite in regional or national networks, such as OSC-NL, the network of Dutch Open Science Communities. National and international networks are well suited to interact with national and international stakeholders on behalf of their associated OSCs.

4.4 The OSC Incubator Program

Workpackage T6.3.2 is aimed at helping Open Science enthusiasts – mainly but not exclusively in Europe - setting up a local OSC, thereby expanding INOSC. To do so, we developed and offered a 14-week online course for free in which participants learned about and worked on 1) a community identity, 2) community engagement, 3) a communication strategy, 4) stakeholder engagement, 5) governance and sustainability, and 6) becoming a member of INOSC. Each of these topics was covered in two weekly meetings and came with an assignment. By the end of the program, these assignments combined formed the Masterplan of a local OSC. It is an important document that OSC coordinators can use as a compass for their OSC and that can be updated over time as their OSC develops.

Within Skills4EOSC, the OSC Incubator Program ran successfully four times. While the number of applications for the program exceeded the number of spots available, we accepted approximately ten participants of different regions per iteration. Figure 2 shows the impact of the OSC Incubator Program. Table 1 provides more detailed information on each iteration. Please note that some OSCs, especially those who took part in the last iterations, are not officially launched yet.

Table 5 Details per iteration of the OSC Incubator Program

Iteration	Duration IP	# participants started	# founded OSCs	# members
1	March – June, 2023	11	6	65
2	January – April 2024	9	8	110
3	September – December 2024	13	13	13
4	January – May 2025	12	10	4

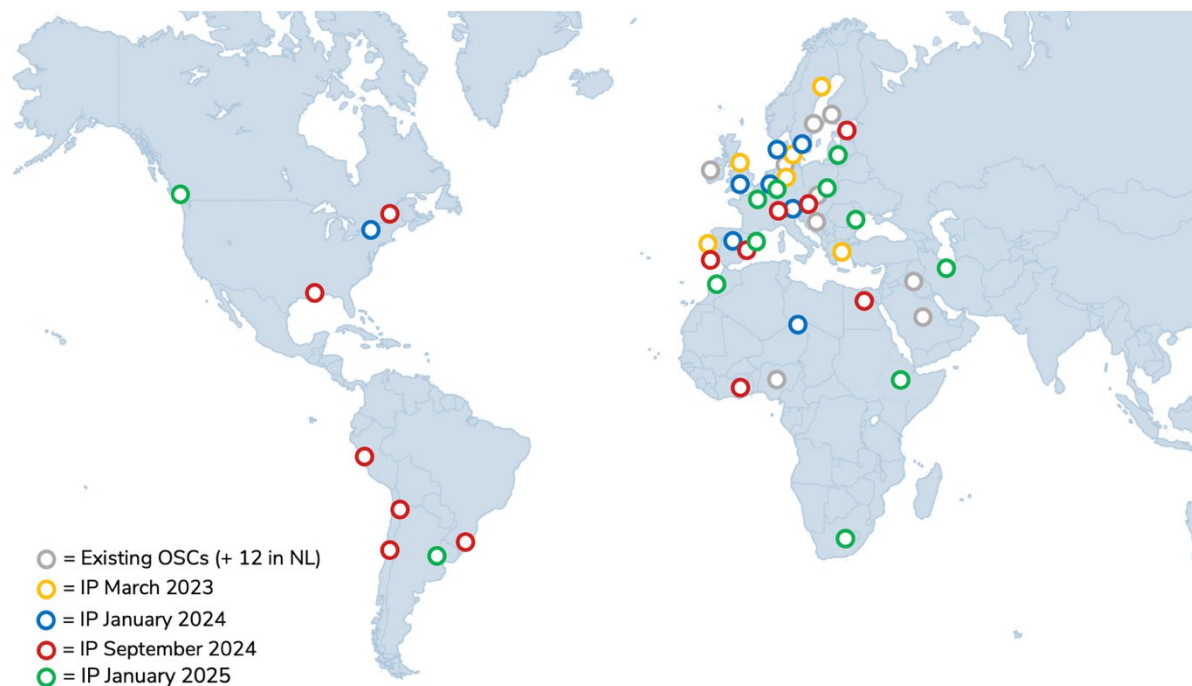


Figure 4 Overview of newly founded OSCs for each of the iterations of the OSC Incubator Program

5 FAIR Data for Health and Technology Network

5.1 Milestones Reached as of June 2025

WP6 was tasked with the creation of two thematic FAIR data Networks, one for museum curators (Task 6.3.3c) discussed in section 6 below, and one for persons interested in making Health Technology (HT) research data FAIR (Task 6.3.3b). Section 4 of the deliverable [D6.3 “Top 10 FAIR Data Things” in Artificial Intelligence & Published recommendations on FAIR data in Health Technology](#), provides a detailed account of the efforts in establishing a Network for FAIR Data and HT up until the final Skills4EOSC conference in June 2025. Given that the deliverable has already covered the task progression comprehensively, restating here would serve no additional purpose. Please refer to that document to contextualise this short report. The Task 6.3.3b team consisted of Curtis Sharma (TU Delft), Elda Osmenaj (IIT) and Valentina Pasquale (IIT).

5.2 First Meeting of Interested Persons

D6.3 section 4 concludes with the planning of two meetings with a core group of 14 interested persons, and further the involvement of colleagues in Sweden who have recently initiated or been associated with similar or at least aligned efforts. All 14 individuals were invited to an online meeting with task members to share and discuss the results of the survey reported in section 4 of D6.3, hear about the initiatives in Sweden and contribute their views on moving forward with a network for FAIR data in HT. Six of the invited persons attended the meeting in July 2025 ; one person sent apologies; two responded that they would like to be kept informed of developments, but to not be involved at this stage; five did not respond at all.

5.2.1 SciLifeLab Metadata Network

Colleagues at [SciLifeLab](#) collaborated with Task 6.3.3b to promote the survey on awareness and implementation of FAIR practices in HT research, and Parul Tewatia presented on their initiative for a metadata network. The metadata network, while having been in development for some time, remains a relatively new and evolving initiative. It was established with a strong emphasis on FAIR data and semantic interoperability, recognizing that standardized metadata is

essential for efficient understanding, use, and reuse across diverse contexts. Despite growing knowledge in the field, implementation challenges persist, particularly in integrating metadata practices into existing workflows. Nevertheless, networks such as this can play a crucial role by facilitating the sharing of tools, knowledge, resources, and experiences. Dr Tewatia emphasised that the network seeks to encourage collaboration with both internal and external parties, prevent duplication of effort, and reassure participants that they are not working in isolation. To support this mission, the network offers a range of resources and initiatives, including a dedicated platform, communication channels, engagement strategies, monthly discussion themes and outreach activities.

5.2.2 Takeaways from First Meeting

While attendees participated well in the meeting, with the exception of SciLifeLab colleagues, motivation to put effort into creating a network was not apparent. This may be a reflection of previous resistance faced through doubts about whether joining a new network is necessary or feasible when one is already active in one (health-related) or another (technology-related). Indeed, such a risk was explicitly expressed in the technical description of the Skills4EOSC project proposal. It seems that the value of a FAIR data network for HT research is only just emerging, and while Skills4EOSC recognised this value, more time is needed for manifestation.

5.3 Conclusion and Next Steps

Based on the above takeaways, the task team will email the 14 individuals who expressed interest during the survey, thanking those who participated in the meeting, inviting them all to continue to meet outside after Skills4EOSC, utilising the project's outputs and training programmes, and to follow the activities of the SciLifeLab metadata network to inform their own ideas of a FAIR data network for HT as developments in this domain become clearer. A positive that arose from the meeting Task 6.3.3 members at IIT recognised many overlaps in their efforts with those in the SciLifeLab metadata network and for this reason, plan to get together outside of Skills4EOSC to explore knowledge exchange and possible collaboration.

6 Museum Curator Network for FAIR data

This report is submitted by Heimo Rainer, Elena Ritschard, Megumi Kiesel of the Natural History Museum Vienna, Austria

6.1 Introduction

This final report outlines the progress made in regards of Task 6.3.3c, which is dedicated to the development of the *Museums Curator Network for FAIR Data*. Over the course of the Skills4EOSC project, the task team has build relevant connections in the collections field at both national and international levels, established a Steering Board and the means of communication and dissemination of the network. The achievement of another project task, the T5.5 Train-the-Trainers course on “Open Science skills for Digital Collections Curators” can be considered as well a network activity, as it gathered together museum professionals aiming to expand their skills on the FAIR digitization of their collections and promoted their exchange on the subject. Further structuring and development of the network will happen in the immediate aftermath of the project, and the regularity of events, activities and communications will ultimately depend on the development of a Competence Centre(s), leading the maintenance of OS practices in museums and other collection-holding institutions.

6.2 Objectives of the Network

The *Museums Curators Network for FAIR Data* aims to facilitate the opening up of countless, (physical) object-based collections, by connecting professionals working in the digitization and/or with already digitized museum collections. It advocates the spirit of openness, integrate the relevant multidisciplinary standards and support the community in professionalising FAIR data curation.

6.3 Development and implementation of the network

Relevant contacts in the collections field, mostly at a national level (*i.e.*, Austria), were established during the starting phase of the network (see [Technical Report 2024](#)). Contributing to the network international expansion and the awareness-raising of FAIR data relevance in the field, the Skills4EOSC Train-the-Trainers course for Digital Collections Curators delivered in May 2025 served both as a first network activity and a networking opportunity (see more details in 4. Impact and Outcomes) .

A **steering board** (SB) for the *Museums Curators Network for FAIR data* has been established. It will be represented by the following museum professionals:

- Heimo Rainer: Head of the Botany Department at the Natural History Museum of Vienna (NHMW), Austria

- Katrin Vohland: General Director of the NHMW
- Frederike Korth: Coordinator of the Open Scientific Collections Austria ([OSCA](#))
- Philip Fischer: Coordinator of the NHMW Digital Agenda and [Kulturpool](#), Austria

In the collections field, there are multiple networks already established. This network adds to the existing ones, interconnecting them in order to introduce FAIR data practices in the field. Following this line of thought and making use of the connections established throughout this task, the **dissemination of its activities** will be carried out via newsletters and communications (as well as meetings) of other networks. In particular, the following channels will be used:

- The European Open Science Cloud Support Office Austria ([EOSC-SOA](#)) at a national level, and through them to the EOSC Secretariat (EU-Level).
- The International Council of Museums ([ICOM](#)), which is the biggest international museums network with national nodes around the globe.
- Already established communities working with digital collections, like Kulturpool, OSCA , Distributed System of Scientific Collections ([DiSSCo](#)), Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities ([CETAF](#)) and European Holocaust Research Infrastructure ([EHRI](#)).

6.4 Impact and Outcomes

The latest network activity is also an achievement from the Skills4EOSC project. The Train-the-Trainers course for Digital Collections Curators was the first event to bring people from different collection-holding institutions to learn for two days about Open Science skills in collections data management. From a total of 65 participants, most of them belonged to museums, followed by universities and libraries (Figure 1). Despite it being an outcome of another work package, this course is an important step for the propagation of the network and for the sustainable establishment of FAIR practices in the area. After completion of the TtT course, some participants raised the interest of staying in contact and being part of the *Museums Curators Network for FAIR data*.

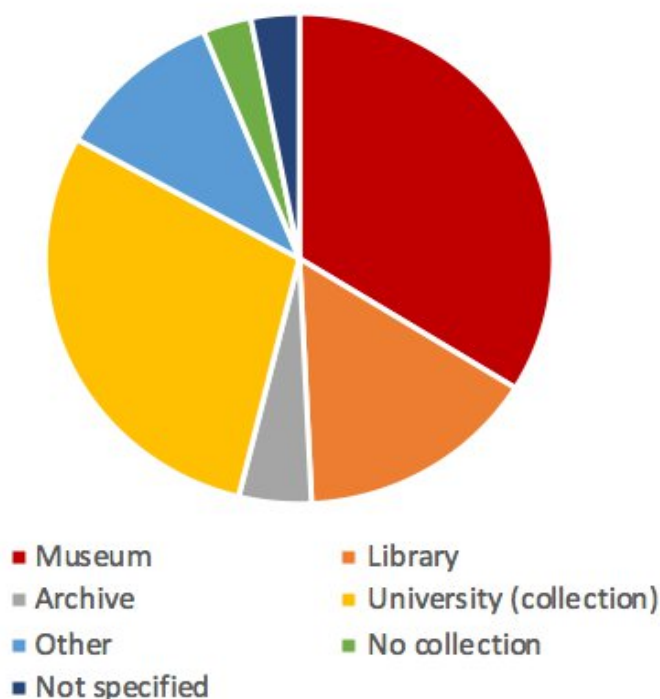


Figure 5 Types of collections to which participants (N=65) of TtT belonged

6.5 Future Plans

The establishment of Thematic Competence Centres (TCCs) in the course of the formation of EOSC is part of an ongoing debate. Likewise such TCCs are depending on national infrastructures and it is yet unclear how they will be integrated in the National Competence Centre (NCC) Landscape.

Thus fostering the implementation of OS practices in museums and other collection-holding institutions needs regular communication activities of the SB in the relevant networks mentioned above.

Commitments and sustainable communication channels for object based collections in general are already established on a national scale for Austria. For natural history collections DiSSCo and CETAF communications channels are also established on a European scale. Both will be serving as crystallisation points for broadening the uptake of OS concepts in LAM institutions of Europe on the basis of training materials developed in the Skills4EOSC project.