

Measuring what matters

Progress across CESSDA 2020–2024





Authors' note

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Acronyms

Abbreviation	Full term
AC	Associated Countries
AI	Artificial intelligence
APIKS	Academic Profession in the Knowledge Society
C-KPI	CESSDA Key Performance Indicator
CARE	Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, Ethics
CDC	CESSDA Data Catalogue
CESSDA	Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives
CODATA	Committee on Data of the International Science Council
DAG	Data Archiving Guide
DDI	Data Documentation Initiative
DMEG	Data Management Expert Guide
ELSST	European Language Social Science Thesaurus
EOSC	European Open Science Cloud
EQB	European Question Bank
ERA	European Research Area
ERIC	European Research Infrastructure Consortium
ESFRI	European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures
EU	European Union
EUR	Euros
FAIR	Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GA	General Assembly
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
IDAN	International Data Access Network
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MO	Main Office



Abbreviation	Full term
MS	Member States
PDO	Primary Digital Objects
PID	Persistent identifiers
PPS	Percentage points
RACER	Relevant, Accepted, Credible, Easy to monitor, and Robust
RDA	Research Data Alliance
RDF	Resource Description Framework
RDM	Research Data Management
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SP	Service Provider
SPF	Service Provider Forum
TREs	Trusted Research Environments
TRL	Technical Readiness Level
TRUST	Transparency, Responsibility, User Focus, Sustainability, Technology

Abbreviation	Full Service Providers' names
AUSSDA	Austrian Social Science Data Archive
SODHA	Social Sciences and Digital Humanities Archive
FORS	Swiss Centre of Expertise in the Social Sciences
ČSDA	Czech Social Science Data Archive
GESIS	GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences
SoDaNet	Greek Research Infrastructure for the Social Sciences
FSD	Finnish Social Science Data Archive
Progedo	Progedo Research Infrastructure
CROSSDA	Croatian Social Science Data Archive
TÁRKI	Tárki Social Science Data Archive
ISSDA	Irish Social Science Data Archive
DATICE	Icelandic Social Science Data Service



Abbreviation	Full Service Providers' names
DASSI	Data Archive for Social Sciences in Italy
MK DASS	Social Science Data Archive of North Macedonia
DANS	Data Archiving and Networked Services
Sikt	Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research
APIS	Portuguese Social Information Archive
DCS	Data Centre Serbia for Social Sciences
SND	Swedish National Data Service
ADP	Social Science Data Archives
SASD	Slovak Archive of Social Data
UKDS	UK Data Service



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Key messages

CESSDA ERIC offers extensive, integrated, and sustainable data services through a network of social science data archives across Europe. CESSDA's member countries assign national Service Providers, which are central to engaging directly with data users. Since 2020, CESSDA has been strengthening its role in the European Research Area: user engagement is growing, high-quality datasets are continuously archived and shared, and education and public outreach are expanding. Its impact is further enhanced through stronger collaboration across Europe and beyond, as well as continued growth in organisational capacity. These achievements highlight CESSDA's contribution to scientific excellence, open data, and evidence-based policies:¹

- **CESSDA's data collections and user base are growing.** The collection of primary digital objects increased sharply by 36%, while registered user accounts rose steadily by 20%. Annual website visits have consistently reached around 10 million.
- **Data delivery and its research visibility continue to rise.** Primary digital objects delivered to users rose more than threefold. A majority of Service Providers estimate that over 40% of publications using their resources, including datasets, are peer-reviewed.
- **Offers high-quality data supported by a mature technological system.** Metadata from the CESSDA Data Catalogue scored particularly high in interoperability and findability in 2024. Service Providers enable data access, use, and reuse through mature software systems.
- **Education and public engagement are expanding rapidly.** The median number of training and outreach events more than doubled. Moreover, CESSDA demonstrates a strong connection with the user community through its website and social media presence.
- **Strong collaboration across Europe and beyond.** CESSDA had 22 members and 12 partners in 2024. It signals its pan-European and global relevance through three-quarters of website visits from ESFRI member countries (Europe) and one-fifth from non-ESFRI countries (namely the Americas and Asia).
- **Engagement in science advice and evidence-based policy is increasing.** A growing number of Service Providers participate in policy-related activities (more than 3 times per month on average).
- **Organisation capacity and funding show gradual growth.** Service Providers remain the heart of CESSDA's activity, highlighting its strength as a distributed research infrastructure. The median staffing levels increased by 36% and the median national funding (excluding other sources) increased by 3% – reflecting a steady expansion of operational resources.

¹ The percentage changes reported in the key message represent organisational medians compared with the 2020 baseline year, unless otherwise stated.



Introduction

Digital transformation, open science, and artificial intelligence are shaping how research is carried out and its connection with society. In this evolving research landscape, the Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives (CESSDA) plays a crucial role in developing metadata and data standards and building the capacity of data users to address societal challenges.

CESSDA's work is guided by foundational principles such as FAIR, TRUST, and CARE; it balances the need for openness with ethical considerations (Carroll et al. 2020; Lin et al. 2020; OECD 2025; Wilkinson et al. 2016).² CESSDA ensures long-term data accessibility and secure data storage through trustworthy repositories that are compliant with the CoreTrustSeal certification and Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) standards (CoreTrustSeal 2017; DDI 2025). The consortium contributes to the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) and the advancement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through participation in diverse European Union funded projects – as outlined in its 2023-2027 strategy (CESSDA 2023). CESSDA is committed to collaborating with other European Research Infrastructure Consortia (ERICs) and international partners (such as the Committee on Data of the International Science Council (CODATA) and the WorldFAIR project) to address societal challenges and shape a sustainable future.

To underpin a robust data ecosystem that fosters innovation while safeguarding public trust, CESSDA collects institution-wide data and evaluates its processes annually following the framework of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) (CESSDA 2021, 2025). This report presents CESSDA's key performance indicators (C-KPIs) from 2020 to 2024. Overall the KPIs show steady progress in expanding data holdings, strengthening metadata interoperability, and increasing researcher engagement. The KPIs also highlight CESSDA's growing role in training and capacity building, particularly in preparing research data managers and data users for an AI-driven research environment. Taken together, the combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators has offered valuable insights into the planning and implementation of CESSDA's future work.

This report is structured as follows. The next section introduces CESSDA. "[CESSDA in 2024](#)" and "[Progress across CESSDA, 2020–2024](#)" provide a snapshot of CESSDA's latest performance and trends. "[From numbers to impact](#)" highlights CESSDA's contribution to the European Research Area and ESFRI objectives. "[The way forward](#)" concludes with CESSDA's approach to achieve even greater societal impact. Finally, [Appendix 1](#) describes the methodology. [Appendix 2](#) details the KPI results.

² FAIR stands for Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable. TRUST stands for Transparency, Responsibility, User Focus, Sustainability, and Technology. CARE stands for Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics.



CESSDA – an integrated consortium

CESSDA operates as an integrated entity comprising the Main Office (acting as a coordination hub) and Service Providers (a network of data archives). CESSDA Service Providers (SPs) are social science data archives assigned by member countries. Member States of the European Union, associated countries, third countries other than associated countries, and intergovernmental organisations can join CESSDA as a member, partner, or observer. While each has distinct mandates, they work in close coordination toward shared objectives. As such, the KPIs presented in this report reflect the performance of the consortium as a whole.

By the end of 2024, CESSDA was a diverse community of data archives from 22 member countries and 12 partner countries that share expertise and technology. The 22 Service Providers dedicate tremendous time and effort to addressing the needs of data users, leveraging open science practices, and collecting KPI data annually.³ The SPs differ in terms of their governance structure (e.g., size, partners, and host organisation), archiving approach, and resource availability. They are:

- **Austria:** Austrian Social Science Data Archive (AUSSDA)
- **Belgium:** Social Sciences and Digital Humanities Archive (SODHA)
- **Croatia:** Croatian Social Science Data Archive (CROSSDA)
- **Czechia:** Czech Social Science Data Archive (ČSDA)
- **Finland:** Finnish Social Science Data Archive (FSD)
- **France:** Progedo Research Infrastructure (Progedo)
- **Germany:** GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (GESIS)
- **Greece:** Greek Research Infrastructure for the Social Sciences (SoDaNet)
- **Hungary:** Társi Social Science Data Archive (TÁRSI)
- **Iceland:** Icelandic Social Science Data Service (DATICE)
- **Ireland:** Irish Social Science Data Archive (ISSDA)
- **Italy:** Data Archive for Social Sciences in Italy (DASSI)
- **Netherlands:** Data Archiving and Networked Services (DANS)
- **North Macedonia:** Social Science Data Archive of North Macedonia (MK DASS)
- **Norway:** Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research (Sikt)
- **Portugal:** Portuguese Social Information Archive (APIS)
- **Serbia:** Data Centre Serbia for Social Sciences (DCS)
- **Slovakia:** Slovak Archive of Social Data (SASD)
- **Slovenia:** Social Science Data Archives (ADP)
- **Sweden:** Swedish National Data Service (SND)
- **Switzerland:** Swiss Centre of Expertise in Social Sciences (FORS)
- **United Kingdom:** UK Data Service (UKDS)

³ The Danish Data Archives (Denmark) was a Service Provider from 2020 to 2022. As of 2025, the Lithuanian Data Archive for Social Sciences and Humanities (LiDA) in Lithuania became a Service Provider.



The 12 partner countries collaborate with Service Providers in member countries to enable the research community to conduct high-quality social science research. KPI data is not currently collected from partner countries. The partners are:

- **Albania:** Albanian Data Archive for Social Science (ADAS)
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** Data Archive for Social Sciences (DASS)
- **Bulgaria:** The National Data Service
- **Estonia:** University of Tartu Library
- **Kosovo:** Kosovo Social Sciences Data Centre (KSSDC)
- **Latvia:** Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU)
- **Lithuania:** Lithuanian Data Archive for Humanities and Social Sciences (LiDA)
- **Luxembourg:** Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER)
- **Montenegro:** Montenegrin Social Science Data Archive (MSSDA)
- **Poland:** Polish Social Data Archive (PADS)
- **Romania:** Romanian Social Data Archive (RODA)
- **Ukraine:** Ukraine National Data Bank of Sociological Data (Kyiv Archive)

Most data in this report are drawn from the Service Providers, which engage directly with data users and policy actors at the national level. In some cases, data from the Main Office are incorporated to provide a complete picture of consortium-wide activities. The methodology and process informing this report are described in [Appendix 1](#). Data sources for all C-KPIs are provided in [Appendix 2](#) for reference. All in all, the KPI results should be interpreted as the collective performance of the consortium rather than that of its individual components.



CESSDA in 2024

Data & Research Visibility



41K

primary digital objects
(datasets) stored

575K

datasets delivered

F (68%) A (45%) I (77%) R (33%)



459K

registered users

606K

publications used CESSDA resources,
including datasets

→ 40% peer-reviewed

Education & Public Engagement



1,398

outreach events

42% training

→14K attendance in 587 trainings

21% Service Providers

engage in policy activities 3x/month

Website & Users



9.6M

website visits

84% from Europe

9% from the Americas

6% from Asia

1% from Africa and Oceania

Organisation



34

CESSDA members &
partners



663

staff

68% ESFRI Member States

26% ESFRI Associated Countries

6% non-ESFRI



62M

national funding (€)

Note: Figures based on totals across CESSDA in 2024. Please refer to the full report for details.



Progress across CESSDA, 2020–2024

Data & Research Visibility



↑36%

primary digital objects
(datasets) stored
median: 1K (2024)

↑224%

datasets delivered
median: 8K (2024)

PPS change since 2023:
F (+18) **A** (+1) **I** (+23) **R** (+4)



↑20%

registered users
median: 4K (2024)

↑73%

publications used CESSDA resources,
including datasets
median: 222 (2024)

Education & Public Engagement



↑120%

outreach events
median: 22 (2024)

↑42% training attendance
median: 285 (2024)

↑155% trainings
median: 14 (2024)

Main Office Website & Users



↑3%

website visits since 2021
total: 105K (2024)

4K

social media followers

Organisation



34

CESSDA members &
partners

68% ESFRI Member States
26% ESFRI Associated Countries
6% non-ESFRI



↑35%

staff
median: 9.5 (2024)



↑3%

national funding (€)
median: 300K (2024)

Note: Figures based on medians across CESSDA as compared to 2020, unless otherwise stated. "PPS" stands for percentage points. Please refer to the full report for details.



From numbers to impact

Enabling scientific excellence by optimising data use

Primary digital objects are the backbone of data archives. They are packages with unique persistent identifiers consisting of datasets, metadata, and other documentation. They provide valuable information for research and innovation.

CESSDA's primary digital objects reflect the evolving focus of social science research and other scientific domains. [Figure 1](#) shows that as of 2024 SPs store multiple distinct data types. Among Service Providers, the top three types of data stored are survey data (78% of SPs), administrative records (65%), and experimental data (52%). In addition, many Service Providers curate audio-visual data (43%), social media data (30%), geospatial data (26%), and commercial datasets (17%).

“ Access to high-quality, well-curated data helped me uncover new insights into how educational inequality persists and how policy can make a difference. ”

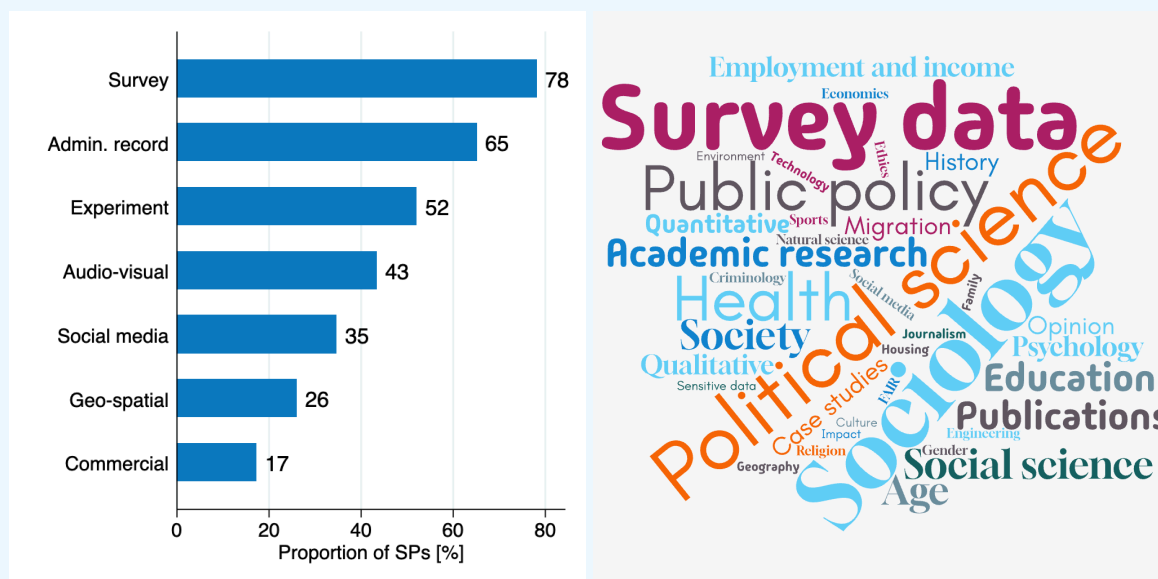
– Researcher using FORS data, Switzerland.

Survey data form the backbone of most empirical research, while administrative records enable longitudinal and population-level analyses. Experimental and social media data offer channels for studying human and societal behaviours online and offline. Audio-visual datasets support qualitative and mixed-method studies. Geospatial data enable the mapping of social phenomena across

borders, while commercial datasets provide insights into business activities.

This rich array of data types supports the development of innovative research methods and fosters interdisciplinary research, thus enabling a deeper understanding of complex societal challenges.

Figure 1: Percentage of SPs that store specific data types (left) and research use by theme (right), 2024



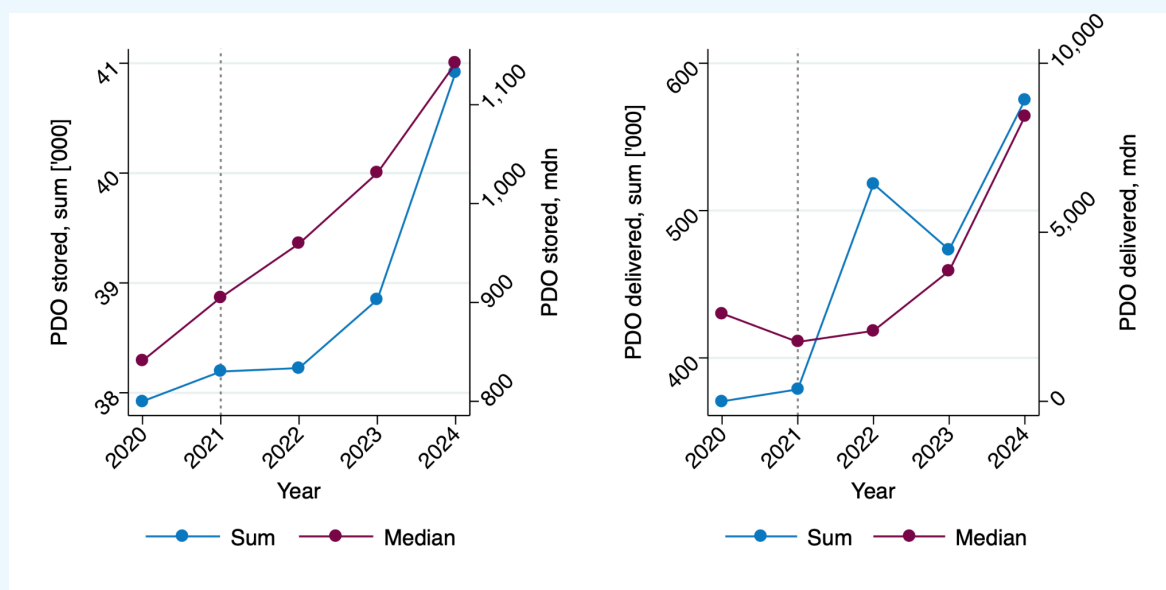
Note: Each row (data type) in the Y-axis sums to 100% SPs. Source: Service Provider databases and impact stories.

“ I explore how older adults used digital tools and social media during the pandemic. Reusing qualitative data gave me a head start in understanding ageism in Europe. ”

– PhD student using DASSI data, Italy.

Between 2020 and 2024, the median number of primary digital objects stored by SPs increased by 36% (from 841 to 1,142), while the total rose by 8% (from 37.9k to 40.9k) (see [Figure 2](#)). More importantly, the delivery of these objects to data users reflects a striking growth: the median distribution of primary digital objects climbed by 224% (from 2.6k to 8.4k), while the total increased by 55% (from 370.5k to 574.9k). In addition to research, data are reused in classrooms and for dissertations. These metrics collectively point to enhanced data access and reuse.

Figure 2: Primary digital objects stored and delivered, 2020–2024



Note: The left Y-axes are shown in '000. "Sum" represents consortium totals. "Mdn" stands for the median across CESSDA. The grey dashed line indicates the data before and including 2021 includes Denmark, which was a member until 2022. Source: Service Provider databases.

CESSDA disseminates its data resources through websites. Between 2020 and 2024, total website visits to data services remained at approximately 10 million per year (see [Appendix 2](#)). Website visits were generally higher in 2020 and 2021 during the COVID-19 period, while the subsequent gradual decline was driven by the discontinuation and consolidation of services that became obsolete or redundant. During the reporting period, CESSDA experienced a strong growth in registered user accounts. The median number of registered user accounts increased by 20% (from 3,300 to 4,000), whereas the total number of user accounts rose by 47% (from 313.2k to 459.1k). This highlights that the Main Office and Service Providers have continuously engaged data users through their web services.

Data has been used in publications, including peer-reviewed scientific articles, reports, and dissertations. Over three in four SPs estimate that over 40% of publications that used their resources, including datasets, are peer-reviewed. The number of publications that utilised CESSDA resources peaked in 2022 (median 355; total 651.2k), with some fluctuations in the reporting period (see [Appendix 2](#)). Rather than real changes in data use or reuse, these fluctuations likely reflect immature data citation practices and different reporting methods across SPs. Overall, these findings on data delivery and publications inform the need for rigorous curation, documentation, and metadata standards to ensure that data is discoverable and reusable in research. Boxes [1](#) and [2](#) below provide examples of data use and reuse.



Box 1: How is data used or reused?

CESSDA's data collections have been widely used by researchers to produce policy-relevant studies on topics including:

- Education inequality and equity (FORS, others)
- Youth well-being and political engagement (Sikt, others)
- Electoral behaviour and political representation (AUSSDA, CROSSDA, SoDaNet, SASD, others)
- COVID-19 impacts and social resilience (DASSI, SASD, others)
- Gender equality and environmental attitudes (ČSDA, SASD, others)

Box 2: Because of CESSDA data, we learn that ...

<p><i>Across Europe, internet banking is most common in countries with more individualistic and less masculine cultures.</i></p> <p>(Aguiar-Díaz and Ruiz-Mallorquí 2025)</p>	<p><i>In Slovenia, female, highly educated individuals, and healthcare professionals are more positive towards organ donation.</i></p> <p>(Božič et al. 2024)</p>
<p><i>In Finland, politically engaged mothers play a key role in boosting their daughters' interest in politics, thus narrowing the gender gap in political efficacy.</i></p> <p>(Kestilä-Kekkonen, Sipinen, and Söderlund 2025)</p>	<p><i>In Austria, high trust in government at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic shows a 'rally-round-the-flag' effect – broad support regardless of the wisdom of policies.</i></p> <p>(Kritzinger et al. 2021)</p>
<p><i>In Germany, the inaccessibility of public service infrastructure, especially train stations, is associated with lower trust in the government.</i></p> <p>(Stroppe 2023)</p>	<p><i>Across Europe, religion has multiple dimensions; both religion and secularisation continue to shape attitudes on moral and social issues.</i></p> <p>(Wilkins-Laflamme, Voas, and Hewlett 2025)</p>

Note: Authors' interpretation based on recent research using CESSDA data.



By safeguarding historical and qualitative data such as oral histories and retrospective surveys, CESSDA ensures that datasets remain reusable across decades and regions (examples include ADP, DANS, CROSSDA, and Progedo). This investment in long-term preservation not only strengthens the evidence base for today's scholars but also secures its value for future generations.

“ CROSSDA gives us the tools to revisit historical data from election studies to explore 30 years of political behaviour and opinion. Without it, examining changes over time wouldn't have been possible for researchers who did not collect primary data. ”

– Social science researcher in Croatia.

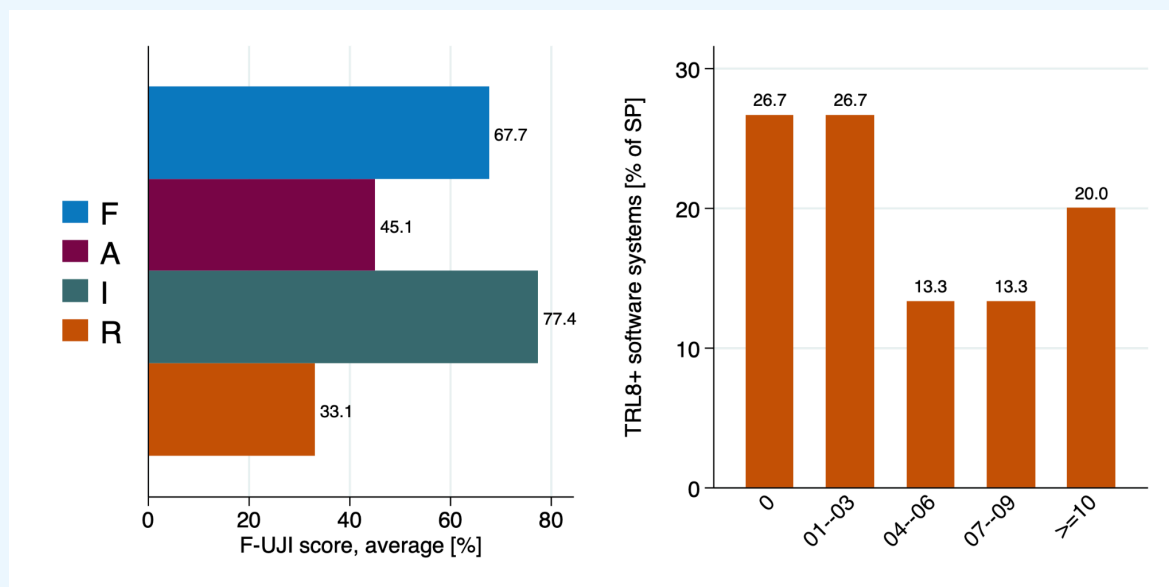
FAIR assessments and technological infrastructure

CESSDA contributes to advancing open data through its commitments to the community principles for data management and stewardship, including FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable), TRUST (Transparency, Responsibility, User Focus, Sustainability, and Technology), and CARE (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics). CESSDA participates in European Union-funded projects that shape assessment standards and tools. For example, FAIR compliance can be assessed through the F-UJI tool (Devaraju and Huber 2025). However, there are no universal standards for “good” or “bad” FAIR assessment scores, as the definitions and scoring criteria vary by the FAIR assessment model.

In 2024, CESSDA used the F-UJI tool to conduct a FAIR assessment on the CESSDA Data Catalogue (CDC) metadata. CESSDA scores particularly high on interoperability and findability. This reflects in CESSDA's commitment to assigning persistent identifiers and adherence to the Data Documentation Initiative (DDI) metadata standard (see [Figure 3](#)).⁴ At the same time, CESSDA's use of highly mature software systems (TRL8+ at ≥7 systems) reflects a robust technological ecosystem that supports efficient data access, use, and reuse.

⁴ It should be noted that the CDC holds metadata only. The underlying data is hosted by Service Providers. As such, the reuse score should be interpreted as metadata-level support for reuse rather than actual data reuse.

Figure 3: FAIR assessment and TRL8 production systems, 2024 [%]



Note: The mean FAIR scores across all CESSDA Data Catalogue (CDC) metadata are presented above, and they are similar to the median scores. The CDC includes metadata of primary digital objects from Service Providers and EU projects. Source: Metadata from the CDC (left); Service Provider and MO databases (right).

Taken together, CESSDA's rapid improvements in FAIR and technological infrastructure demonstrate its commitment to advancing scientific excellence and innovation. CESSDA plays a key role in robust social science research by enabling long-term access to high-quality, well-documented data across disciplines, career stages, and geographic regions.



Education, training, and public engagement

CESSDA tools and training are centred around the research data management (RDM) cycle (also called the research data lifecycle). The RDM lifecycle provides a framework for managing data responsibility which enhances research reproducibility, compliance with funding and journal policies, and strengthens public trust in research (see [Figure 4](#)).

Beyond social science researchers, data users with different roles may be involved before, during, and after the end of an experiment or a project. As such, CESSDA offers a broad array of tools to support these data users (see [Table 1](#) below). These tools include the CESSDA Data Catalogue (CDC), Resource Directory, Data Management Expert Guide (DMEG), European Question Bank (EQB), Data Citation Guide, European Language Social Science Thesaurus (ELSST), Vocabulary Service, Metadata Validator, and Data Archiving Guide (DAG).

Figure 4: Research data lifecycle



Table 1: Primary users of CESSDA tools

Tools / Primary Users	Researcher	Research Data Manager	Publisher/ Ethics Committee/ Funder	Data Archivist/ Curator
Data Catalogue	X			
Resource Directory	X	X		
DMEG	X	X		
European Question Bank	X			
Data Citation Guide	X	X	X	
ELSST		X		X
Vocabulary Service		X		X
Metadata Validator				X
Data Archiving Guide				X



The “plan” and “organise and document” phases of the RDM entail the first steps for designing data collection methods and preparing documentation for future data sharing. Tools such as the Resource Directory, DMEG, EQB, and Data Citation Guide support data users in designing studies, preparing data management plans, and creating metadata using controlled vocabularies. ELSST and the Vocabulary Services offer an extensive list of controlled vocabularies and concepts in different languages.

The “process”, “store”, and “protect” phases of the RDM entail data curation and preservation. The Metadata Validator and Data Archiving Guide help ensure data and metadata quality by validating records against DDI profiles, supporting secure storage, and promoting compliance with ethical and legal frameworks, including the European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Finally, the “publish” and “discover” phases of the RDM describe data dissemination and discovery. The CDC, ELSST, and Vocabulary Service enable users to find, access, and reuse data across repositories and languages.

“ I was new to data management, but the CESSDA Data Management Expert Guide gave me a clear roadmap. It made something that seemed complex feasible. ”

– PhD student in sociology, Ireland.

Beyond the above-mentioned tools, CESSDA fosters an inclusive and high-quality research environment by organising and attending public outreach events, including training and conferences. [Figure 5](#) highlights that the major themes of CESSDA training events in 2024 are open data, the FAIR principles, as well as data sharing and access. The growing demand for training in data management, discovery, and data publication reflects a policy-driven momentum towards open science.

“ When our findings make headlines across Slovakia, it shows the public deeply cares about data-driven insight. It’s why we keep sharing, explaining, and listening. ”

– Senior advisor at SASD, Slovakia.

“ We rely on CESSDA’s training materials to support interdisciplinary data management workshops.”

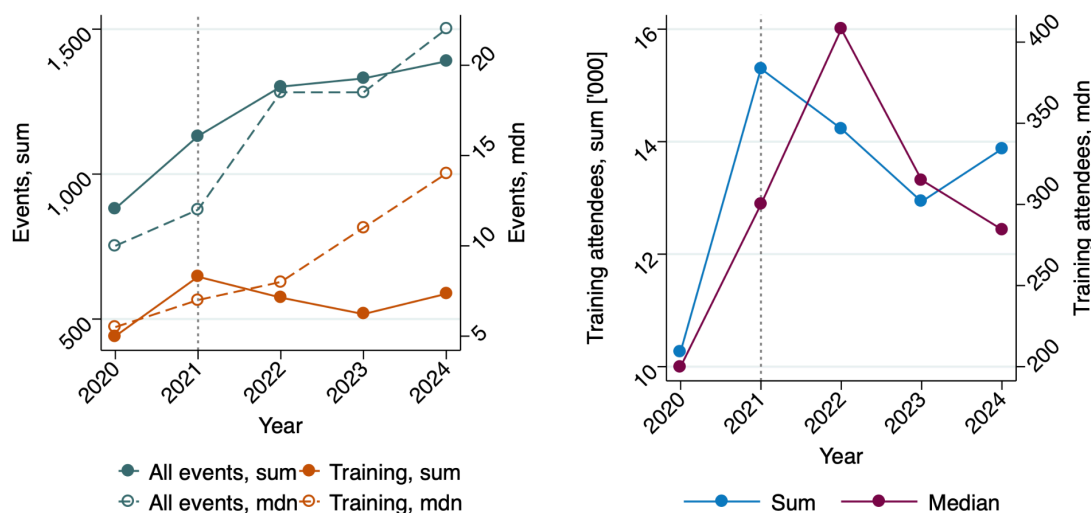
The practical guidance helps researchers apply FAIR and Open Science principles across disciplines, ranging from anthropology to environmental sciences. »

- Data steward, Slovenia.



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Figure 6: All outreach events, training and education events, and attendees in training and education events, 2020–2024



Note: "Sum" represents consortium totals. "Mdn" stands for the median across CESSDA. The grey dashed line indicates the data before and including 2021 includes Denmark, which was a member until 2022. Source: Service Provider databases.

“ I regularly include the CESSDA Data Catalogue in my lectures. It is an eye-opener for students, as they realise they can explore and use real data from across Europe. ”

– University lecturer, Czechia.

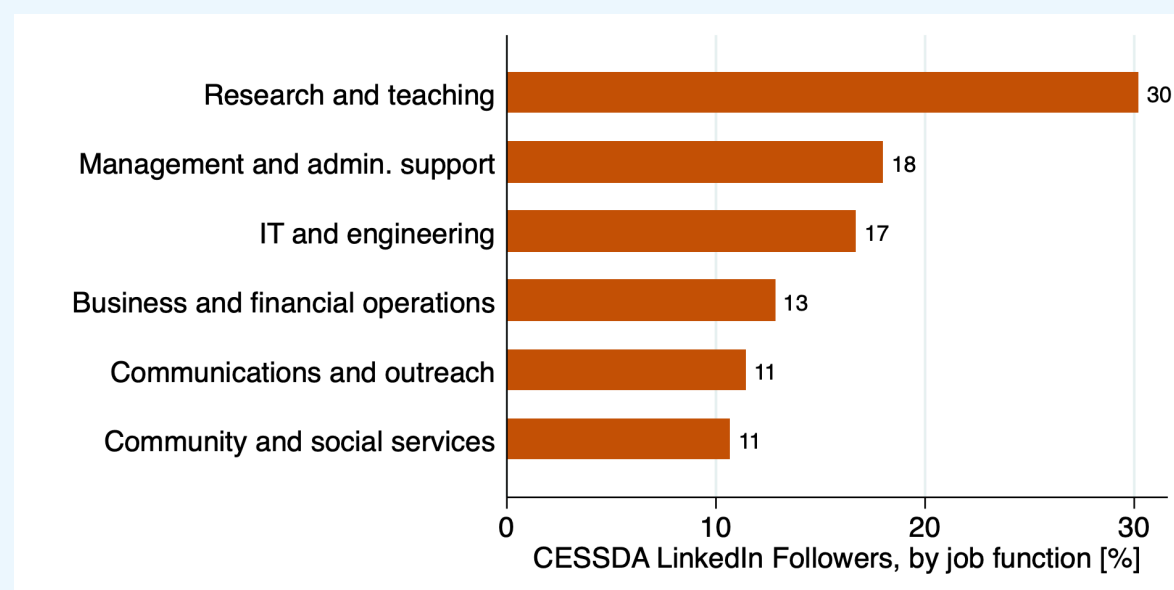
Beyond training and outreach events, CESSDA actively engages a broad audience through its website and social media accounts. For example, the Main Office’s website engagement increased from 81k visits in 2023 to 105k in 2024 (+30%). In 2024, its newsletter reached over 800 subscribers; its social media presence on LinkedIn and X reached over 4k followers with nearly 200 posts and over 2k likes.⁵

⁵ The Main Office’s LinkedIn page is available at <<https://www.linkedin.com/company/cessda>>; its X (former Twitter) account handle is <@CESSDA_Data>.



[Figure 7](#) illustrates that the Main Office's LinkedIn followers represent a diverse professional community. Followers' job functions are grouped following the O*NET job family (National Center for O*NET Development 2025).⁶ The top three job functions of followers are research and teaching (30%), management and administrative support (18%), and information technology and engineering (17%). Beyond job functions in academia and technical fields, CESSDA also engages with audiences that focus on business development (13%), public engagement (11%), and societal impact (11%).

Figure 7: LinkedIn followers by job function, 2024



Source: Main Office LinkedIn analytics.

Through strategic media engagement, expert commentary, and civic initiatives, CESSDA contributes to a more informed and data-literate public. This outreach supports democratic participation, promotes social inclusion, and fosters transparency in science beyond the academic community. Service Providers bring social science to public debates on issues such as fertility (FORS), immigration and race (UKDS), gender-based violence and gender equality (SoDaNet), and political engagement (Sikt). They also raise awareness about the importance of FAIR data in research

⁶ "Research and teaching" includes research and education. "Management and admin. (administrative) support" includes program/project management, operations, administration, support, and human resources. "IT and engineering" includes information technology, engineering, quality assurance, and product management. "Business and financial operations" include business development, consulting, entrepreneurship, real estate, finance, and accounting. "Communications and outreach" includes media, marketing, art/design, and sales. "Community and social services" includes healthcare, military/protection services, and law.



(DANS, ADP, others) and the long-term value of data preservation for science and society (ČSDA, others).

“ Through the School Election, a mock election debate, thousands of students engage with democratic processes every year. The survey data they generate helps us study the future of civic participation. ”

– Project leader for the Norwegian School Election Survey at Sikt, Norway.

“ Sharing data on gender-based violence through podcasts and public talks helps bring invisible issues into the light. It's about making research matter in everyday conversations. ”

– Sociologist and Data Archive Director at EKKE/SoDaNet, Greece.



Partnership for science advice and evidence-based policies

CESSDA's partnerships and engagement in evidence-based and science policy form the foundation of its mission to advance open data, FAIR, and social science research data infrastructures. By the end of 2023 and 2024, CESSDA had 22 Service Providers (SPs) and 12 partners which were also ESFRI member states (MS) or associated countries (AC) (see [Figure 8](#) and [Table 2](#)). In 2024, 16 SPs and 7 partners (23 entities total) were ESFRI Member States. 5 SPs and 4 partners (9 entities total) were ESFRI Associated Countries. Beyond countries with ESFRI affiliations, 1 SP (Switzerland) and 1 partner (Kosovo) were actively engaged in CESSDA activities.

CESSDA's membership structure and its website traffic reflect its pan-European scope and international reach. In 2024, ESFRI Member States accounted for 75% of website visits (4.2 million total), while Associated Countries accounted for 6% (328.5k total) (see [Figure 9](#) (top)). Strong demand from non-ESFRI countries generated 19% of all website visits (over one million visits total).

To complement the ESFRI country classification, [Figure 9](#) (bottom) presents the website visits by geographic region.⁷ It shows that over 83% of CESSDA's user base (almost 5 million visits) originates from Europe, followed by 9% from the Americas and 6% from Asia. The high website traffic demonstrates CESSDA's role in transferring knowledge across regions. It also underscores the strong partnerships CESSDA maintains with international partners, such as the Committee on Data of the International Science Council (CODATA), the Research Data Alliance (RDA), as well as leading social science data archives worldwide, namely Australia (Australian Data Archive [ADA]), Korea (Korea Social Science Data Archive [KOSSDA]), and Japan (Social Science Japan Data Archive [SSJDA]).

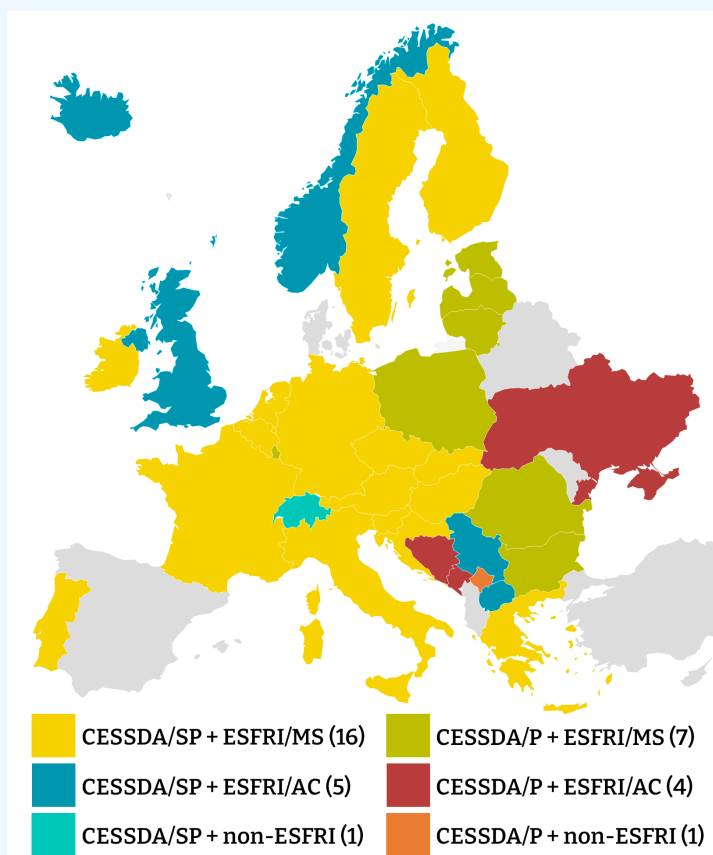
CESSDA's pan-European and international profile goes hand in hand with its science policy engagement. These engagement efforts ensure that the voices of the social sciences are represented in shaping future research and data ecosystems. By 2024, almost one in five Service Providers participated in policy-related activities more than 37 times per year — more than three times a month.

CESSDA have influenced national, European, as well as international policies on open science, data reuse, and research infrastructure governance. Boxes [3](#), [4](#), and [5](#) below illustrate this impact through national, European, and international collaborations.

⁷ The geographic classification follows the United Nations M49 standard <<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>>.



Figure 8: Engagement in CESSDA by ESFRI membership, 2024 [count]



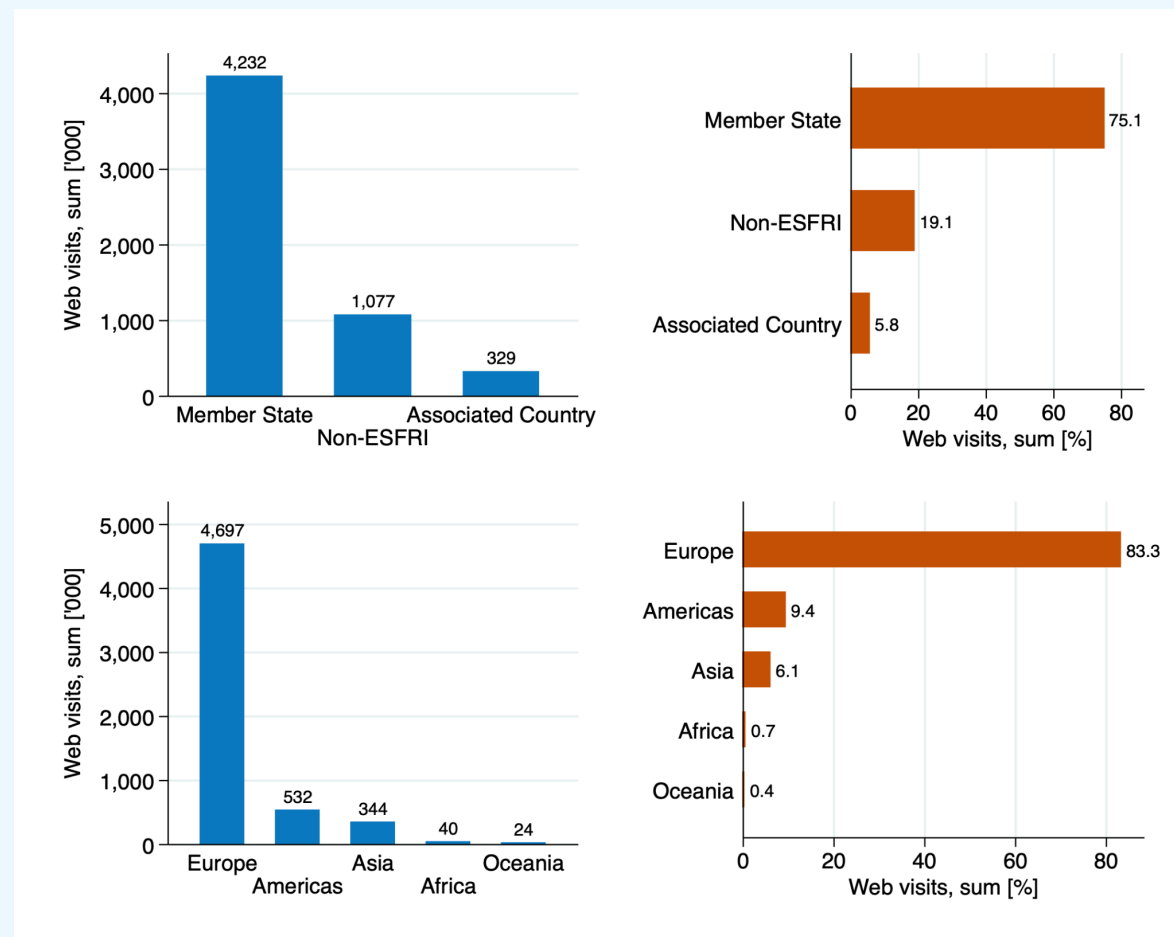
Note: "SP" stands for Service Provider; "P" stands for partner; "AC" stands for Associated Country; "MS" stands for Member State.

Table 2: List of Service Providers and Partners by ESFRI membership, 2024

CESSDA	ESFRI	N	Description
Service Provider	Member State	16	Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden.
	Associated Country	5	Iceland, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, United Kingdom.
	Non-ESFRI	1	Switzerland
Partner	Member State	7	Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania.
	Associated Country	4	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Ukraine.
	Non-ESFRI	1	Kosovo



Figure 9: Website visits by ESFRI and UN region, 2024 ['000 and % of total visits]



Note: The Y-axis is shown in thousands of visits (left) and the X-axis is shown in % of total visits (right). "Sum" represents consortium totals. Disaggregated country-level figures are incomplete as some services cannot disclose data for data protection reasons. Source: Website analytics from 16 Service Providers and the MO in 2024.



Box 3: Science advice and policy influence through national collaboration

- Contribute to shaping national Open Science strategies, including developing Open Science policies at universities, drafting legislative responses, and aligning institutional practices with national legislations (CROSSDA, ČSDA, DATICE, FORS, SoDaNet, others)
- Participate in national working groups and advisory boards focused on data sharing, research infrastructure development, and reuse of research data (AUSSDA, ČSDA, FSD, others)
- Support the implementation of national legislation on Open Data (SODHA, others)
- Inform evidence-based policy through export workshops, ministry consultations, and data analysis in fields such as social inclusion, youth access to sports, and labour policy (ČSDA, Progedo, others)

“ When advising on Belgium’s open data legislation, our role was to balance between ambition and practicality, so that the law works for both researchers and institutions. ”

– Legal and data policy specialist, Belgium.



Box 4: Strengthening European science policy collaborations

- Provide advisory input to support trans-European science policy development, e.g., AUSSDA to Bulgaria, via OpenAIRE
- Contribute to shaping the European research infrastructure landscape through roles in ESFRI, ERIC coordination platforms, and national delegations to European bodies (ČSDA, DASSI, others)
- Actively contribute to the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), including through national EOSC nodes, general assemblies, and working groups to strengthen interoperability and trusted research environments (AUSSDA, SoDaNet, Sikt, ČSDA, GESIS, others)
- Engage in projects contributing to reforming European science policy, such as research assessment and FAIR adoption (FORS, DANS, others)

“ Presenting CESSDA’s governance model at the OECD was an opportunity to show how a coordinated, pan-European approach to data governance can inform research infrastructure strategies worldwide. ”

– Director, CESSDA ERIC at the OECD Global Science Forum.

Box 5: Policy influence through international collaborations

- Provide expertise in shaping high-level recommendations on data sharing, FAIR principles, and research infrastructure sustainability in global policy forums, such as OECD Global Science Forum and the G7 Open Science Working Group (MO, DANS, others)
- Lead national participation in global networks, e.g., RDA, and facilitate local-global knowledge transfer and integrate international standards into national ecosystems (ADP, others)

“ Being invited to present at the G7 Open Science Working Group showed that the FAIR principles are globally relevant. ”

– Senior advisor at DANS, the Netherlands.



Advancing international standards and interoperability

CESSDA advances the development and alignment of international standards to ensure interoperability and cross-border research. This includes active roles in metadata standards such as DDI-CDI (Sikt, UKDS, others), development of a Resource Description Framework (RDF) platform to enable controlled vocabularies (UKDS), and coordination of national efforts within major international survey programmes such as the Generations and Gender Programme (GGP), International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), and European Social Survey (ESS) (AUSSDA, ČSDA, Progedo, others).

“ Together with DDI Alliance, we are making controlled vocabularies machine-readable and globally accessible. We are proud to build an invisible infrastructure that makes research truly interoperable and transnational. ”

– Semantic web specialist at UKDS, UK.

“ Our partnership with the Generations and Gender Programme helps Austrian researchers connect their work to global debates on family and demographic change. ”

– Head of AUSSDA, Austria.

Beyond standards, CESSDA also supports third-party initiatives such as the Academic Profession in the Knowledge Society (APIKS) project (AUSSDA, others), develops interoperable secure access solutions across trusted research environments (TREs) such as Safe Points and the International Data Access Network (IDAN) (GESIS, others), and contributes to long-term data preservation through the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) task forces (ČSDA and DANS) and enabling FAIR digital repositories via the FIDELIS project (DANS, FSD, GESIS, Sikt, UKDS, others).

“ Collaborating on cross-border access to sensitive data isn't easy, but we're proving it can be done with trusted networks and shared standards. ”

– Data infrastructure expert at GESIS, Germany.



Furthermore, CESSDA offers guidance for strategic and coordinated action through policy briefs and reports. In the post-COVID and public health context, Blomberg et al. (2023) promote open data as a tool for rapid evidence-based decision making and pandemic preparedness. Raess et al. (2024) offer operational guidance for remote and virtual access to research infrastructures, and advocate for expanding scientific capacity beyond institutional and geographic limits. Through CESSDA's participation in the EOSC Future project, Robertson et al. (2023) and Jones (2023) reflect on the opportunities and challenges in building EOSC, and recommend priorities for the Horizon Europe work programme for 2025/2027.

Through these initiatives and reports, CESSDA strengthens international collaboration and interoperability in line with the FAIR principles and the vision of EOSC. Its active involvement in setting standards, collecting cross-country data, and technical innovation ensures that social science data infrastructures remain trusted, sustainable, and globally connected. By integrating national and international efforts, CESSDA reinforces its position as a leader in shaping science policy and advancing evidence-based research practices across Europe and beyond.



Economic and organisational impact

Service Providers, which vary in resource capacity and governance structure, form the backbone of the consortium as a distributed research infrastructure. Most Service Providers (SPs) are nationally-funded institutions with relatively modest budgets and staffing levels. Yet together, CESSDA forms a pan-European digital infrastructure of significant reach and value.

Between 2020 and 2024, the median number of staff per SP increased from 7.0 to 9.5 (+36%); the total staffing levels rose from 598 to 663 (+11%) (see [Figure 10](#)). While SPs strive to operate efficiently by optimising human resources, this growth shows a slow but steady expansion of capacity.

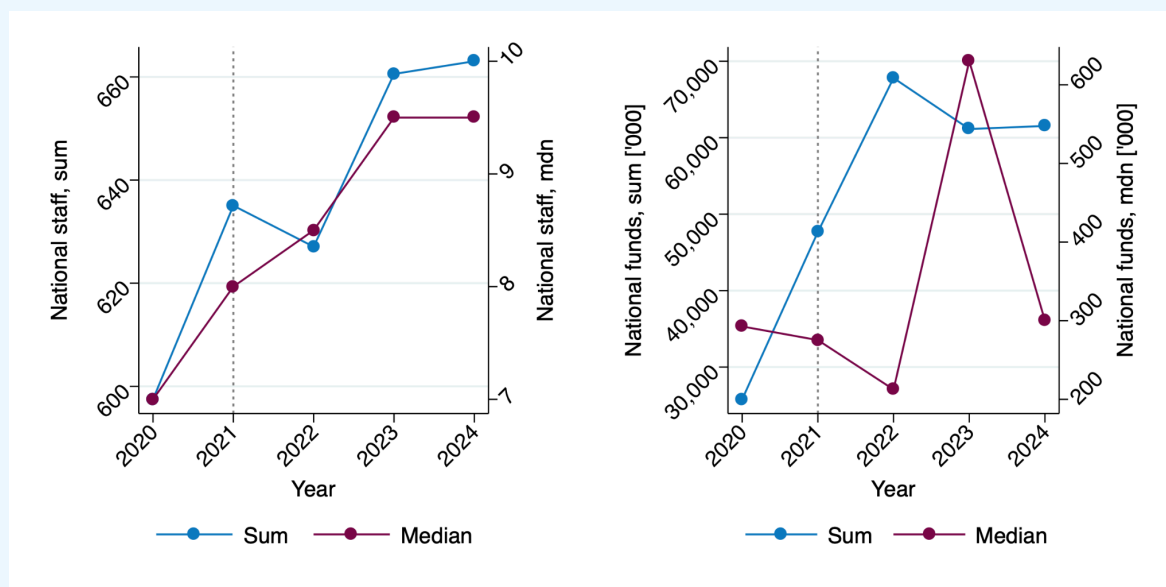
“ Our institutional membership financing model fosters shared responsibility and long-term commitment to Open and FAIR research data. ”

– Engagement coordinator at AUSSDA, Austria.

A SP's total budget tends to include national, European, and other funding sources to cover staff and other operational costs. Between 2020 and 2024, SPs continue to receive strong support from national governments to ensure high-quality data remains available and reusable over time. Median national funding per SP remained stable at around €300k; the increase at the median level in 2023 not only reflects higher national funding, but it is also related to the non-reporting of several lower-funded data archives in 2023 and 2024. At the aggregate level, total national funding more than doubled from €25.7 million to €61.5 million. However, this sharp increase was driven by changes in national funding models, thus exaggerating overall financial growth. Taken together, the median values present a stable picture; while CESSDA as a whole has grown, the typical SP remains a relatively small organisation with a limited but gradually expanding budget.⁸

⁸ A key area for future data collection and analysis could be the proportion of each SP's total budget that is derived from national funds. This indicator may clarify the extent to which national funding (as opposed to other funding sources) are used to sustain repository operations. It can help assess institutional vulnerability to changes in national budgets.

Figure 10: Staff per SP and funding from national sources, 2020–2024



Note: National staff may be funded from sources beyond national budgets, e.g., European Union-funded projects. "Sum" represents consortium totals. "Mdn" stands for the median across CESSDA. The grey dashed line indicates the data before and including 2021 includes Denmark, which was a CESSDA member until 2022. Source: Service Provider databases.

To complement national funding, Service Providers have explored other avenues to diversify funding streams. Institutional membership models secure a higher level of buy-in from universities and research institutions (AUSSDA, others), while value-added services and training bring in supplementary revenue. For instance, SoDaNet's fee-based seminar, "Do your survey", contributes directly to its financial sustainability and upskilling of data users, and Progedo provides consulting and survey services to regional authorities through its university platform network to help improve regional public service delivery. These examples illustrate that SPs are experimenting with mixed funding models to strengthen economic sustainability and demonstrate their added value to the economy.

“ Running a paid, hands-on seminar like ‘Do Your Survey’ helps us reinvest in services. It proves that there is a demand for practical, high-quality training.

”

– Training organiser at SoDaNet, Greece.



“ When a regional audit authority hired us for a survey, it showed how our expertise can directly support public sector decision-making and our own financial sustainability. ”

– Survey expert and Progedo’s partner, France.

By leveraging national investment, maintaining an efficient and growing workforce, and diversifying funding models, Service Providers generate economic value both within and beyond their national research community. Through a balance of stability and flexibility in its resource management model – supported by national governments and enhanced by value-added services – the C-KPIs demonstrate that high-quality trusted data repositories can be built and sustained by modestly resourced institutions.



The way forward

The open data landscape is evolving rapidly with new policy frameworks and the growing influence of artificial intelligence (AI) in research. These changes bring both opportunities and responsibilities for research infrastructures. It requires continuous adaptation to ensure that data remain FAIR, trustworthy, and impactful for society.

Building on the positive trend captured in this report, CESSDA will continue to strengthen its role in the European Research Area by:

- **Advancing data quality and technical infrastructure.** CESSDA will contribute to strengthening FAIR assessment standards and tools, enhance metadata interoperability, and pilot Trusted Research Environments to maximise data use and reuse in science and policy.
- **Adapting to evolving user needs.** CESSDA will assess user needs, promote data citation practices, and enhance the monitoring of researcher engagement with datasets.
- **Scaling up training and outreach.** CESSDA will equip research data managers with the technical skills to use AI to optimise workflows and support researchers. It will also develop practical guidance to help data users assess AI-related risks and comply with EU policy frameworks on AI and data protection.
- **Strengthening partnerships in Europe and beyond.** CESSDA will leverage its strong position in the social sciences to foster cross-domain collaboration in the European Research Area and build bridges to global initiatives.

Looking ahead, CESSDA aspires to continue improving its services while aligning with emerging user needs. By providing high-quality data and training resources, CESSDA will strengthen its contribution to open science and evidence-based research that benefits society.



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Appendices

Appendix 1: Overview of the methodology

CESSDA's 2020-2024 Key Performance Indicator report is the result of a transparent and collaborative process. This process ensures that the data are reliable and that the report can accurately reflect the activities and impact of all Service Providers.

Step 1: Co-create indicators

Service Providers (SPs) and the Main Office (MO) refined the CESSDA KPIs (C-KPIs) in a workshop to align them with ESFRI recommendations and CESSDA's strategic objectives. The updated C-KPI Handbook describes the indicators and outlines the data collection process. The revised C-KPIs were validated and approved at the General Assembly (GA).

Step 2: Data collection

An online survey and supporting documents were distributed to all SPs. Two weeks after the survey launch, MO organised an online Q&A session to ensure a consistent understanding of the indicators and address outstanding questions. SP representatives were given 3 months to gather data from various departments and functions to complete the survey.

Step 3: Data validation and feedback

MO shared a data validation spreadsheet and KPI visualisation with SPs to identify potential data entry errors and ensure consistent interpretation. To improve data collection procedures, MO shared a short, 3-question survey to collect feedback from SP representatives.

Step 4: Reporting and approval

Preliminary C-KPI analyses were presented to SP directors and representatives. While the quantitative data inform the statistical figures, the qualitative narratives illustrate key examples. Before finalising a version that is accessible to the public, the report was validated and approved by SP representatives at the Service Provider Forum (SPF) and SP directors at the GA.



Timeline at a glance

2024 Nov:	C-KPI workshop
2024 Dec:	Shared revised handbook with SPs for review
2025 Feb–Apr:	Collected quantitative and qualitative data via online survey
2025 May–Jul:	Validated data with SP representatives
2025 Oct–Nov:	Presented report at SPF and GA for approval and validation
2026 Jan:	Produced public-facing report

Survey scope and response rate for the period 2023 and 2024

Survey scope	A total of 51 questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32 questions on the quantitative KPIs • 6 questions on qualitative narratives • 6 questions on context and data collection methodology • 7 questions on primary digital objects
Response rate	90% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The remaining 10% were not able to respond due to limited resource capacity.

Data limitations

The data presented in this report were collected from 23 SPs (2020–2021) and from 22 SPs (2022–2024). There are significant differences across SPs in terms of governance, resource capacity, and digital infrastructure. Parts of the data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic with restrictions on social distancing, travel, and curfews. These circumstances may influence data archiving, training, and research practices. In less than 2% of cases – excluding budget and staffing data – missing values were imputed using linear interpolation and validated by respective SPs. The differences across SPs and over time affect the consistency and comparability of the data. Although every effort has been made to ensure data accuracy, the numbers should be interpreted as indicative rather than strictly comparable across SPs and years. These variations highlight the need for contextual information when interpreting the results.



Appendix 2: Aligning ESFRI objectives to CESSDA KPIs

CESSDA has been a Landmark of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) since 2016. As such, CESSDA is evaluated against a set of ESFRI objectives and the RACER criteria (i.e., relevant, accepted, credible, easy to monitor, and robust) (ESFRI 2019). Since 2020, CESSDA has collected key performance indicators (C-KPIs) to highlight CESSDA's impact on the European Research Area. Building on the latest recommendations from ESFRI, CESSDA has also collected qualitative narratives (also called impact stories) to complement the C-KPIs.

The following figures present the C-KPIs by ESFRI objective. They represent the collective outcomes achieved by the consortium. They are reported annually by the Main Office (MO) and the Service Providers (SPs).

Note: The grey dashed line indicates that data before and including 2021 includes Denmark, which was a member until 2022. "Sum" represents consortium totals. "Mdn" stands for the median across CESSDA.



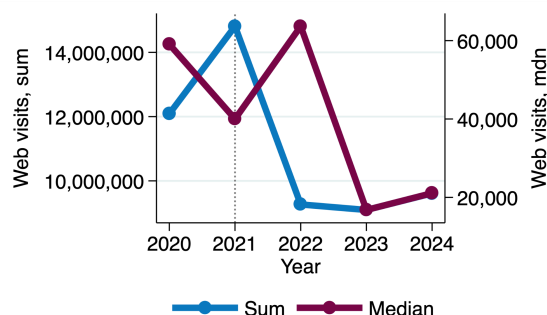
Enabling scientific excellence

6 indicators

Total number of visits across all externally facing products

2020–2024 | SP and MO website analytics

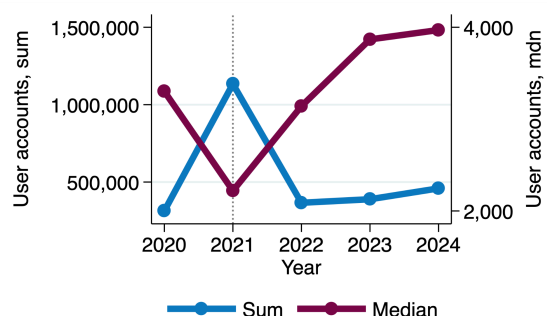
Annual visits to all CESSDA web products consistently reached about **10M**. Website visits were generally higher in 2020 and 2021, while the subsequent decline was driven by the discontinuation and consolidation of obsolete services.



Total number of registered user accounts

2020–2024 | SP database

Registered user accounts show a strong upward trend; the median grew from **3.3k** to **4.0k** (+20%), and the total increased from **313.3k** to **459.1k** (+47%).





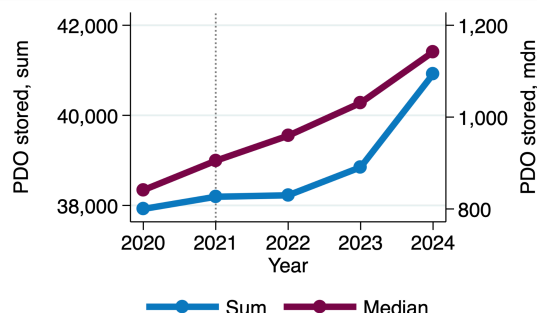
Enabling scientific excellence

6 indicators

Number of primary digital objects

2020–2024 | SP database

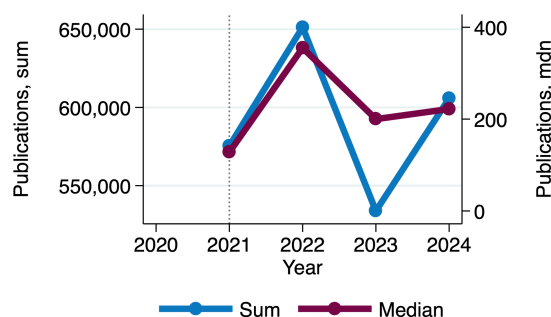
The collection of primary digital objects stored by SPs shows steady growth, with the median increased by **36%** (from 814 to 1,142) and the total expanded by **8%** (from 37.9k to 40.9k).



Number of publications

2021–2024 | SP database and DataCite

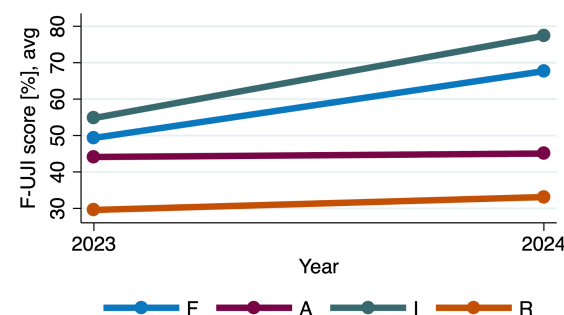
The number of publications peaked in 2022 (**median 355; total 651.2k**) with some fluctuations over time. These fluctuations likely reflect immature data citation practices and different reporting methods across SPs, rather than real changes in data use or reuse.



FAIR scores of digital objects

2023–2024 | Metadata from CDC

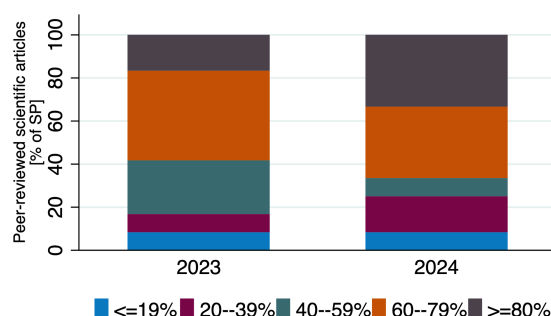
Since 2023, the average FAIR scores of CDC metadata have increased in **interoperability (+23 percentage points (pps))** and **findability (+18 pps)**, while accessibility and reusability have remained unchanged.



Estimated share of peer-reviewed articles using SP resources

2023–2024 | SP database

In 2024, **over 70%** of SPs estimate that **at least 40%** of publications using their resources (including datasets) are peer-reviewed.





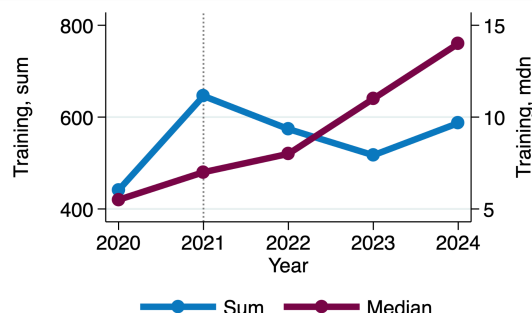
Delivery of education and training

2 indicators

Number of training/education events

2020–2024 | SP database

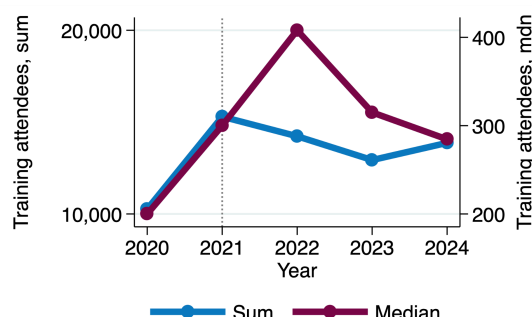
The median number of training and education events increased from **6** to **14** (+155%), while the total number of training events fluctuated between **441** and **587**; this shows an overall expansion in educational efforts.



Number of attendees in training/education events

2020–2024 | SP database

Participation in CESSDA's training events remained high, with median attendance up by **42%** (from 200 to 285) and an annual total of **10.3k–13.9k** attendees across all SPs.



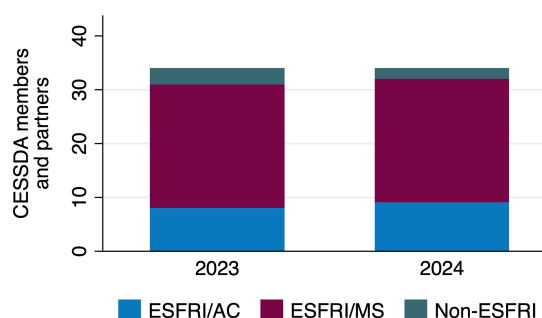
Enhancing transnational collaboration in Europe

2 indicators

Number of members of the RI from ESFRI countries

2023–2024 | MO database

In 2023 and 2024, CESSDA had 22 members and 12 partners. By 2024, **23 entities** (16 SPs; 7 partners) were from ESFRI Member States and **9 entities** (5 SPs; 4 partners) were from ESFRI Associated Countries.



Note: "AC" stands for Associated Country. "MS" stands for Member State.



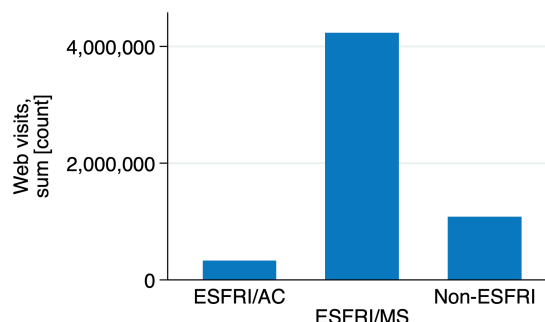
Enhancing transnational collaboration in Europe

2 indicators

Website visits by ESFRI membership

2024 | SP and MO database

In 2024, ESFRI Member States accounted for **75%** of website visits (**4.2M total**) as compared to **6%** (**329k total**) from Associated Countries. This highlights CESSDA's extensive outreach in ESFRI Member States.



Note: "AC" stands for Associated Country. "MS" stands for Member State.



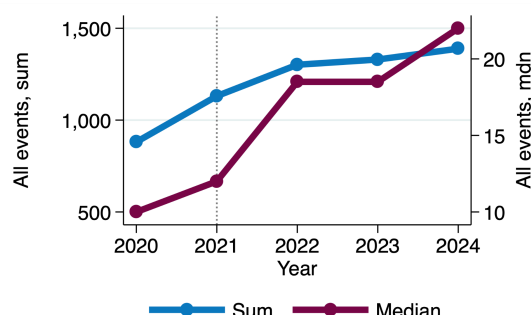
Outreach to the public

2 indicators

Number of events through direct outreach

2020–2024 | SP and MO database

CESSDA's outreach events expanded steadily; the median number of events **more than doubled** from 10 to 22, and the annual total increased from **881** to **1,389** (+58%).



Number of engagements via the RI's own website and social media

2024 | MO website analytics

The Main Office's website traffic rose from **81k visits** in 2023 to **105k** in 2024 (+30%). In 2024, it had two social media accounts (LinkedIn and X) with **over 4k followers, 200 posts, and 2k likes**; its newsletter reached **over 800 subscribers**.⁹



Main Office 2024 Highlights



Website: 105k visits (+30% from 2023)



Social media: 4k+ followers | ~200 posts | 2k+ likes



Newsletter: 800+ subscribers

⁹ The Main Office's LinkedIn page is available at <<https://www.linkedin.com/company/cessda>>. Its X (former Twitter) account handle is <@CESSDA_Data>.



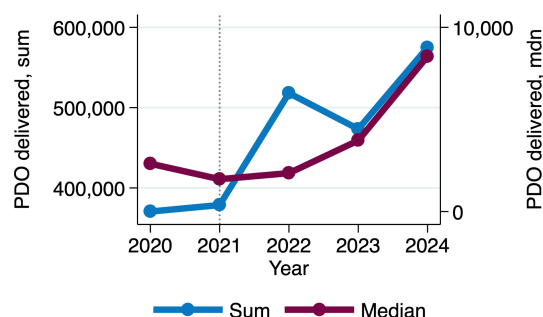
Optimising data use

2 indicators

Total number of primary digital objects delivered to users

2020–2024 | SP database

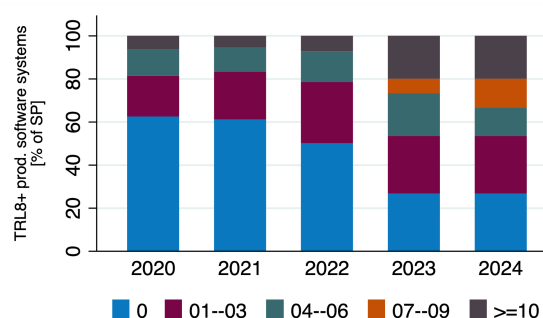
Primary digital objects delivered to users show an overall upward trend, with the median increased by more than threefold from **2.6k** to **8.4k** (+224%) and the total increased from **370.5k** to **574.9k** (+55%).



Share of production software systems (TRL8+)

2020–2024 | SP and MO database

The share of SPs offering highly mature software systems (TRL8+) (at ≥ 7 systems) has gradually increased. This indicates a shift towards more robust operational systems for long-term data access and preservation.



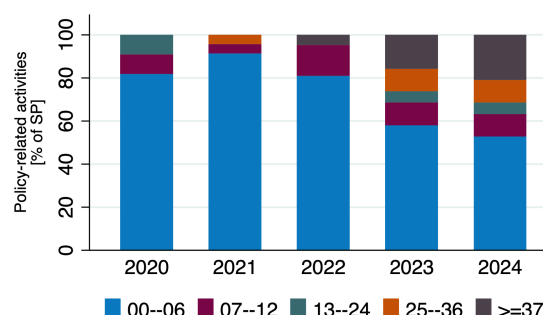
Provision of scientific advice

1 indicator

Number of times participated in policy-related activities

2020–2024 | SP and MO database

CESSDA's engagement in science policy grew over time; by 2024, 21% of all SPs actively participated in policy-related activities (i.e., ≥ 37 activities or more than 3 times per month on average).





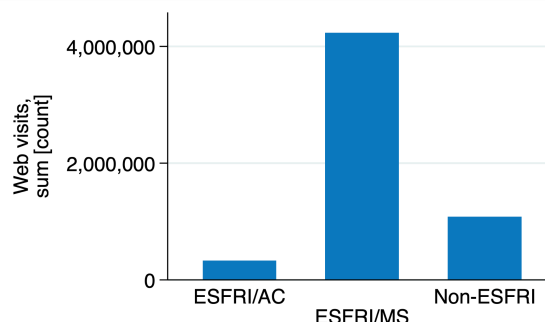
Facilitating international cooperation

2 indicators

Website visits by non-ESFRI member countries

2024 | SP and MO databases

In 2024, interest from non-ESFRI countries generated **19%** of all website visits, which amounts to **over 1M** visits.

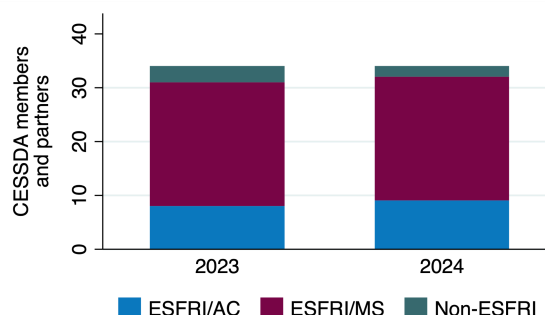


Note: "AC" stands for Associated Country. "MS" stands for Member State.

Number of members of the RI from non-ESFRI countries

2023–2024 | MO database

In 2023 and 2024, CESSDA had 22 members and 12 partners. By 2024, **2 entities** (1 SP – Switzerland; 1 partner – Kosovo) were from non-ESFRI countries.



Note: "AC" stands for Associated Country. "MS" stands for Member State.



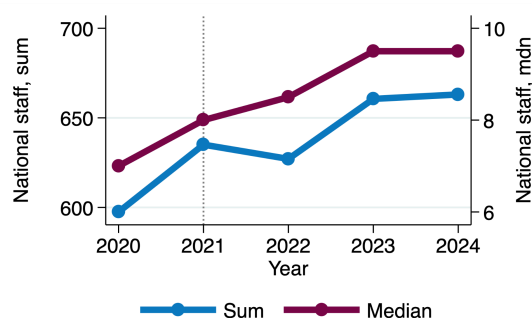
Optimising management

2 indicators

Total number of staff (FTE) per SP

2020–2024 | SP database

The median number of staff per SP increased from **7.0** to **9.5 (+36%)**, while the total across all SPs rose from **598** to **663 (+11%)**; this reflects a gradual growth in staffing levels.





Optimising management

2 indicators

Amount of national funding per SP (EUR)

2020–2024 | SP database

The median national funding per SP (excluding other sources) remained stable at around **€300k**, while the total national funding across all SPs **more than doubled** from **€25.8M** to **€61.5M**. This reflects changes in funding models in some SP countries.

