



Report on SEA-EU Workshop 2025

**Open Science Capacity Building:  
Finding solutions**

**Report to participants**

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## Executive summary

The SEA-EU Open Science Workshop (6-7 October 2025, Hamburg) brought together ambassadors from three SEA-EU member universities (Kiel University, the University of Split School of Medicine, and the University of Malta) alongside experts from the Open Science Learning GATE (GATE) and Open Science (OS) and legal experts. The workshop aimed to identify shared priorities and develop coordinated approaches to strengthening OS at the intersection with Artificial Intelligence (AI) across the [SEA-EU Alliance](#).

**Day 1** focused on institutional OS insights from the SEA-EU universities and on GATE's evidence-based analysis of OS guiding thoughts, practices, and OS–AI developments. Together, these inputs formed the basis of an emerging SEA-EU OS Capacity-Building Roadmap, structured around five action areas:

- (1) Awareness and Training
- (2) Policy and Evaluation Harmonisation
- (3) Responsible AI Integration
- (4) Legal and Structural Support
- (5) Lighthouse Projects Initiative

A *Lighthouse Projects Initiative* emerged as a central mechanism: researcher-driven, scalable demonstrations of OS in practice that can enhance reproducibility, collaboration and policy development across the alliance.

**Day 2**, held in a hybrid format, involved national funders (German Research Foundation (DFG) and Croatian Science Foundation) to assess alignment with national funding strategies and discuss conditions for successful OS implementation. Funders welcomed the so-called *Lighthouse Projects* from day one as constructive and non-prescriptive. A DFG representative responded particularly positively to GATE's evidence-based work, highlighting its value for understanding how OS is implemented in practice. The discussion also underscored the need for harmonisation rather than unification of OS approaches, the importance of metaresearch, and greater transparency in collaboration and funding landscapes.

As next steps, SEA-EU representatives and GATE will refine the roadmap with funder input, integrate outcomes into the GATE Report 2025, continue structured funder engagement, and support advancing a *Lighthouse Projects Initiative* as pilots for coordinated OS implementation across SEA-EU institutions.

## 1. Introduction

Open Science (OS) has become a central pillar of research policy and practice across Europe, underpinning the European Research Area's commitment to transparency, collaboration, and societal trust in science. Yet implementing OS effectively requires more than principles - it demands institutional capacity, supportive funding frameworks, and cross-sector cooperation. At the same time, the rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into research workflows increases the need for shared principles, transparency, and reliable practices.

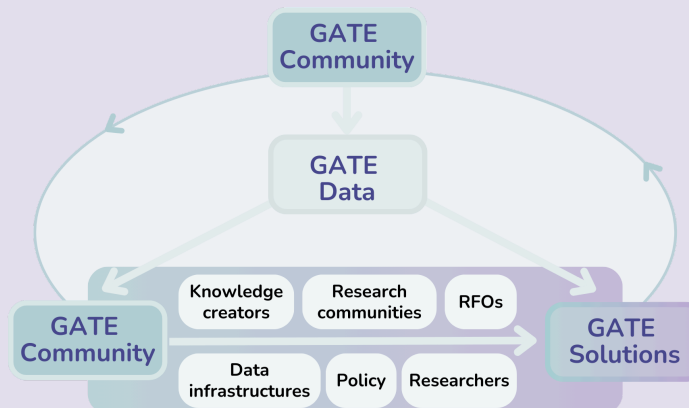
Against this backdrop, the SEA-EU Alliance ([www.sea-eu.org](http://www.sea-eu.org)) and the Open Science Learning GATE initiative (GATE; [www.opensciencegate.com](http://www.opensciencegate.com)) co-hosted a two-day workshop in Hamburg (6–7 October 2025). Representatives from SEA-EU universities, funders and OS experts worked together to identify shared priorities and practical pathways for strengthening OS (at the intersection with AI) across the alliance, drawing especially on GATE's structured evidence on current OS guiding thoughts and developments.

### Background: How GATE provides tangible means to support OS capacity building, also in times of AI

**GATE** is a non-profit initiative emphasising the deep interconnection of OS and AI. OS fosters transparency, reproducibility and trust, while enabling reuse and broad participation across disciplines and institutions. AI, in turn, relies on high-quality, openly accessible data and can help analyse and connect complex information - an effect that

will grow as openness expands. Together, they have the potential to accelerate discovery and support more informed decision-making across the research ecosystem. Yet this convergence also raises new questions about transparency, data governance, and the integrity of research processes; **questions that require the research community's shared understanding and evidence-based guidance.**

GATE systematically collects and analyses community-based knowledge on OS guiding thoughts - the evolving concepts that underpin reliable OS practice. By mapping these developments over time, GATE provides an evidence base (via the annual [GATE Reports](#)) that enables researchers, educators, institutions, (data-) infrastructures, funders and policymakers to engage in informed, constructive dialogue on how to implement OS effectively and responsibly.



## Background: How the SEA-EU Alliance supports education and research collaboration across borders

The [SEA-EU Alliance](#) unites nine coastal European universities into a “European Coastal Campus,” enabling students, academic staff, and researchers to collaborate across national borders. SEA-EU offers joint study programmes taught across several universities and provides a single recognised European degree. The alliance promotes mobility - physical and virtual - for students and staff, facilitating exchanges, internships, secondments or remote collaborations.



Moreover, SEA-EU supports cross-institutional research by offering seed funds for collaborative projects involving researchers from at least two partner institutions, enabling about 40 new research teams with joint funding. On top of that, its network spans associated partners from business, public authorities and NGOs, which helps connect higher-education and research to real-world applications and regional stakeholders.

Overall, SEA-EU fosters an integrated European higher-education and research community — combining joint curricula, mobility, shared research funding and stakeholder networks.

## Workshop Goals and Process

The SEA-EU workshop 2025 aimed to foster a mutually supportive collaboration between OS experts (researchers, educators, research-performing organisations) and national funders. Participants used institutional insights from SEA-EU members and GATE’s data-driven insights on OS guiding thoughts to identify shared OS priorities, understand common needs across SEA-EU member universities, and co-develop targeted strategies that address both opportunities and complexities in today’s research landscape.

Over two days of presentations, group work, and a hybrid dialogue with funders, participants identified common challenges, designed strategic actions, and explored mechanisms to build OS capacity across the nine SEA-EU universities.

A key outcome was the concept of a *Lighthouse Projects Initiative*, developed directly from GATE's structured evidence. Lighthouse Projects are envisioned as tangible, collaborative examples that make openness visible in practice, strengthening reproducibility and reliability, shared learning, and alignment with funder expectations.

The workshop also enabled the validation of an emerging SEA-EU OS Capacity-Building Roadmap with the participating funders. Their feedback will inform SEA-EU implementation pathways and be integrated into GATE's evaluation cycle through continued exchanges, follow-up workshops, and collaborative projects.

The outcomes presented here will directly inform the GATE Report 2025 as well as the joint GATE & SEA-EU Funders Report. This report summarises the workshop results, beginning with institutional perspectives (Section 2), followed by targeted actions derived from GATE data (Section 3), and concluding with funder alignment and next steps (Sections 4–5).

## Workshop participants

The event brought together experts from research, education, responsible conduct of research, research data infrastructure, law, and OS. Participants included

- SEA-EU Alliance's OS Ambassadors **Julia Priess-Buchheit** (Kiel University), **Ana Marušić** and **Ivan Buljan** (University of Split), **Raelene Church** (University of Malta)
- external experts **Linda Zollitsch** (Research Data Management, Kiel University), **Tim Errington** (Center for Open Science, COS), **Daniel Mietchen** (FIZ Karlsruhe), **Vanessa Guzek Hernando** (Miller International Knowledge, GATE's secretariat), together with GATE representative **Marie Alavi** (GATE).
- On day 2, funder representatives from Science Foundation Croatia and the German Research Foundation.

## 2. Overview of OS capacity building within three SEA-EU Organisations

Day 1 of the workshop started with three SEA-EU universities (Kiel University, University of Split School of Medicine, and University of Malta) presenting their OS approach and current challenges. Their cases showed diverse approaches, but revealed common needs such as stronger coordination, sustainable infrastructures, and clear institutional incentives. These inputs grounded the workshop in real practice and provided one part of the evidence base for shaping a joint **SEA-EU OS Roadmap** (see section 4).

### 2.1 Kiel University

**Presenter:** Linda Zollitsch

**Focus:** Research Data Management and Open Data Policy Development

**OS Approach / current topics:**

- Fast communication in the central research data management through collaboration between the computing centre and the university library.
- Demand for data management services grows as funders make Data Management Plans mandatory.
- An Open Data Policy is intended based on the SEA-EU framework.

**Challenges:**

- The Open Data Repository and the Open Access publication service have different criteria for accepting publications.
- The current financial situations does not allow to establish more permanent positions in research data management or open science.

**Solutions and next steps:**

- Establish a working group to develop an institutional Open Data Policy.
- Participating in IP4OS to bring different parts of the university together.
- Expand consultation services and align with funder requirements.

**Takeaway:**

*Kiel demonstrates that organisational integration accelerates OS, but long-term success requires consistent governance across systems.*

### 2.2 University of Split School of Medicine

**Presenters:** Ana Marušić & Ivan Buljan

**Focus:** Research Integrity, Pre-registration, Training

### OS approach / current topics

- Strong emphasis on **pre-registration** (to prevent questionable research practices), research protocols, and mandatory trusted repository registration for students.
- Use of open tools (R, JASP, Jamovi, OSF, Zenodo) and training in data sharing and AI.
- Active participation in national and European reproducibility and OS networks.

### Challenges

- Pre-registration not yet routine; protocol deviations still common.
- Limited evidence from early programme cohorts; some OS practices are not suitable for all research types.
- Data sharing adoption is uneven, and the overall community using OS practices remains small.

### Solutions and next steps

- Identify and scale the unit of change (from departments to entire alliance).
- Promote joint SEA-EU publications and shared [repository efforts](#) (e.g., reSEArch-EU on Zenodo).
- Develop shared infrastructure and research potential databases.
- Scale OS practices via SEA-EU and GATE networks toward institution-level policies.

### Takeaway

*Split illustrates that OS progress hinges on training and network initiatives, supported by shared infrastructures.*

## 2.3 University of Malta

**Presenter:** Raelene Church

**Focus:** Library-led OS Services & Open Access Models

### OS approach / current topics

- Library-led OS services through extensive read-and-publish agreements and the Figshare repository.
- Support for open data mirroring and DOI assignment.
- Active engagement with licensing, authorship rights, and repository alignment.

### Challenges

- A considerable part of the nearly 90% of the library budget devoted to online resources is spent on read-and-publish agreements with publishers.
- Slow peer-review processes and publication delays hinder openness.
- ORCID verification limits and complexities around Secondary Publication Rights.

### Solutions and next steps

- Transition towards **Diamond Open Access** to reduce financial strain.



- Strengthen institutional OS policies and align with EOSC standards.
- Promote open licensing, preprints, and clearer copyright awareness.
- Encourage funder-driven policy shifts toward openness.

#### Takeaway

*Malta highlights that OS sustainability depends not only on infrastructure, but on viable economic and legal frameworks.*

Overall and across institutions, participants agreed that lasting OS progress depends on aligned leadership, policy, and funding - not individual effort. They highlighted the need for clear governance, recognition systems, and cross-departmental collaboration.

The lessons from these cases informed the next workshop phase, in which GATE data guided the design of targeted actions and a shared strategy to strengthen OS capacity within the SEA-EU Alliance. Section 3 presents the resulting action areas and the expert guidance that shaped them.

### 3. Strengthening OS capacity within the SEA-EU Alliance via GATE Data: Developing targeted actions

This part of the workshop started with **Marie Alavi** presenting GATE's latest data-driven insights into OS guiding thoughts, practices, and emerging developments. These findings formed the analytical basis for identifying targeted actions relevant to SEA-EU partners. The process was further refined by **Daniel Mietchen (FIZ Karlsruhe)** and **Tim Errington (Center for Open Science)**, whose expertise helped translate the evidence into practical, scalable strategies. Together, participants developed five interconnected action areas for strengthening OS capacity across the SEA-EU Alliance.

#### 1. Awareness and Training

SEA-EU partners emphasised the foundational need to strengthen OS and AI literacy across researchers, educators, administrators, funders and evaluators. This includes accessible training and informative formats, clear communication roles, and the exchange of good practices across SEA-EU institutions, connecting successful practitioners and demonstrating OS's economic and social impact.

*Expert insight:* Both experts stressed that awareness is essential for systemic change and must be supported by persistent communication structures and visible incentives.

*GATE contribution:* GATE's co-creative workshops support the sharing of success stories and the implementation of OS-advancing solutions among institutions.

## 2. Policy & Evaluation Harmonisation

Participants identified the need for aligned OS policies and evaluation criteria across SEA-EU institutions and funders. Priorities include recognising OS outputs in hiring and promotion, mapping existing institutional and national OS policies, and shifting metrics toward transparency, reliable reuse, and demonstrable impact.

*Expert insight:* Both experts emphasised that OS must function as a *mechanism* embedded in evaluation systems, not an add-on.

## 3. Responsible AI Integration

Given the increasing role of AI in research, SEA-EU partners highlighted the need for coordinated policies that ensure responsible, transparent, and reproducible use of AI. Focus areas include secure internal tools, guidance for AI use in research and assessment, and alignment with OS guiding thoughts such as traceability, accountability, and interpretability.

*GATE contribution:* GATE's structured insights on OS-AI intersections provided the conceptual foundation for this discussion. Moreover, GATE's continuous collection on OS-AI development creates a unique knowledge hub for this dynamic intersection.

## 4. Legal and 'Structural Support

Participants stressed that OS capacity building depends on supportive legal and organisational structures. This includes clear guidance on licensing and intellectual property, tools that help researchers align with funder requirements, and mechanisms such as Red Teams to identify systemic gaps and strengthen reproducibility. Transparent, interoperable infrastructures were identified as critical enablers across SEA-EU.

*Expert insight:* Both experts highlighted that legal clarity and structural coherence are prerequisites for consistent OS practice and cross-institutional alignment.

*GATE contribution:* With its continuously updated knowledge on OS development, GATE supports policymakers, funders and (data) infrastructure providers to optimise and upscale their resources.

## 5. Community and Lighthouse Projects Initiative

A central outcome of the session was the idea to develop a **Lighthouse Projects Initiative**, emphasising practical, collaborative pilots that demonstrate OS in action. These projects aim to create visible, reproducible examples of OS implementation across SEA-EU institutions and foster cross-university collaboration, mutual learning, and policy integration. The Lighthouse concept emerged as a central mechanism for translating OS principles into practice and aligning institutional efforts with funder expectations.

### Lighthouse Projects will:

- Demonstrate OS in action through tangible, collaborative, and scalable examples across SEA-EU;
- make the impact of OS practices on quality, reproducibility, and societally valuable while strengthening cross-national collaboration and policy learning;
- reduce funding waste by promoting open sharing and reusable research outputs;
- serve as sustainable mechanisms that embed OS practices into long-term institutional and funder strategies.



*Expert insight:* Both experts endorsed the *Lighthouse Projects Initiative* as a powerful bottom-up mechanism for motivating researchers and scaling OS adoption across alliances like SEA-EU.

With the five priority domains of action defined, the workshop turned to the question of implementation. How can institutions and funders jointly advance these actions, and which mechanisms support long-term sustainability? These considerations shaped a draft of the **SEA-EU OS Capacity-Building**, which was then validated in dialogue with national funders on Day 2. Section 4 outlines this roadmap; it also integrates input from and discussion with funders, as well as the shared commitments that emerged.

## 4. SEA-EU OS Capacity Building and Alignment with National Funders

Workshop Day 2, held in a hybrid format, focused on discussing the emerging OS priorities with national funders. The session built on two core inputs: the SEA-EU institutional perspective presented by the University of Split and GATE's evidence-based analysis of OS guiding thoughts and emerging challenges. These contributions formed the basis for an initial SEA-EU OS Capacity-Building Roadmap, which was then discussed with **representatives from the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the Science Foundation Croatia (SFC)** to assess feasibility, alignment with national strategies and opportunities for joint action.

### 4.1 Inputs from SEA-EU and GATE

**Ana Marušić (Split)** presented **SEA-EU's** current OS practices, emphasising pre-registration, protocol transparency, use of open tools, and education in data sharing and AI. She highlighted the challenge of limited OS uptake across institutions and the need for coordinated SEA-EU strategies, joint publications, shared repositories, and cross-university infrastructures to scale OS capacity. **Marie Alavi** then presented **GATE's structured evidence** on OS guiding

thoughts, practices, and emerging developments at the OS–AI intersection. She explained how GATE’s systematic mapping supports data-driven decision-making for institutions and funders.

## 4.2 Funder Perspectives

**Croatian Science Foundation** representative noted a strong alignment between the proposed capacity building and Croatia’s national OS plan, which emphasises open access, transparent assessment of research outputs, and integration with EOSC. She highlighted the need for clear evaluation criteria, sustainable infrastructures, and the value of international collaboration through alliances such as SEA-EU.

The **DFG** representative stressed that OS must strengthen research quality rather than serve as a bureaucratic objective. He underscored the growing importance of *knowledge security* in an increasingly AI-driven research environment, the need for transparency in AI models and data provenance, and the importance of infrastructures where openness is built in from the start. He also emphasised scientific autonomy from commercial platforms.

Both funders recognised the value of researcher-driven approaches and confirmed their readiness to continue the dialogue.

## 4.3 Joint discussion: Towards Next Steps

Funders and workshop participants discussed the **Lighthouse Project Initiative** proposal as a bottom-up mechanism for implementing OS without imposing new policy requirements. While the approach aligns with the DFG’s researcher-oriented ethos, it also highlights a persistent tension: research activities are often prioritised over OS as a broader framework. Lighthouse Projects were therefore seen as a way to integrate both dimensions within a coherent workflow.

Funders welcomed the proposal as a constructive, non-prescriptive mechanism that can

- illustrate good practice (e.g. qualitative data management plans, reviewer literacy),
- strengthen international coordination, and
- avoid additional bureaucratic burden.

DFG responded particularly positively to **GATE’s evidence-based approach**, noting that funders often operate on assumptions about openness and need clearer insight into how OS is implemented in practice. GATE’s analytical work was therefore recognised as valuable for informing policy development, funder strategy and capacity building.

Funders also pointed to practical barriers to cross-national implementation, such as differing procedures, funding lines and OS cultures, and agreed with participants that harmonisation rather than unification is the realistic path forward. They further stressed the importance of **research on research (metaresearch)** to understand OS impact, reproducibility and collaboration patterns, referring to resources such as OpenAlex, national project databases

([DFG-GEPRIS](#), [HRZZ](#), [Swiss National Science Foundation's project database](#)), the [French Open Science Monitor](#) and [ANR Open Science calls](#), and Daniel Mietchen's work on funding transparency ([link](#)).

Overall, funders viewed the *Lighthouse Projects Initiative* as a promising, researcher-led mechanism to strengthen OS practices across borders. Supported by GATE's ongoing mapping of OS guiding thoughts, practices and OS-AI developments, it offers a practical route toward coordinated implementation. Workshop participants expressed readiness to contribute expertise in research, metaresearch, OS, European funding (SEA-EU), continuous OS mapping (GATE) and legal advice (MIK).

## 5. Next Steps and Conclusion

### 5.1 Next Steps

Building on the shared understanding developed during the hybrid session on Day 2, SEA-EU and GATE will:

- Further refine the SEA-EU OS Capacity-Building, integrating feedback from DFG and Science Foundation Croatia and aligning it with the five action areas identified through GATE data and SEA-EU institutional priorities;
- incorporate the next steps into the upcoming GATE Report 2025 to inform the wider OS community, policymakers and funders while strengthening GATE's continuous evidence cycle;
- continue structured dialogue with additional national and European funders through follow-up workshops and collaborative initiatives to develop shared approaches to OS implementation;
- develop and pilot Lighthouse Projects as practical demonstrations of OS across SEA-EU institutions, enabling reproducibility, collaboration and policy learning, and showing how funders can support researcher-driven openness.

### 5.2 Conclusion

The workshop demonstrated the value of combining SEA-EU's institutional perspectives, GATE's evidence-based analysis, and funder insights to co-develop a shared approach to strengthening OS across the alliance. The resulting SEA-EU OS Capacity-Building, shaped by five action areas and grounded in empirical insight, provides a coherent foundation for future collaboration.

Lighthouse Projects emerged as a particularly promising mechanism - researcher-driven, scalable, and well aligned with funder expectations. Supported by GATE's ongoing mapping of OS guiding thoughts, practices and OS-AI developments, they offer a practical route toward

embedding transparency, reliability, and collaboration in long-term institutional and funding structures.

With continued support from research funders, SEA-EU is well-positioned to advance sustainable, evidence-informed OS practices that strengthen research quality and responsible innovation across Europe.

### Further information on the Open Science Learning GATE:

**The GATE initiative provides a cooperative, transparent and trustworthy mechanism to strengthen OS capacity and sustainable collaboration among stakeholders.** By combining a participatory [GATE Service](#) and solution-oriented GATE Workshops, [GATE Research](#) with an annual [GATE Report](#), GATE provides an ongoing feedback loop between practitioners, educators, researchers, infrastructures, funders, policymakers and the wider community on how the current research landscape understands openness while underpinning the premises of responsible conduct of research as constitutive foundations of OS.

**For more information, visit [www.openscienceGATE.com](http://www.openscienceGATE.com).**

**Knowledge creators are invited to contribute their OS knowledge to the [GATE Service](#).**





**Workshop video:** <https://youtu.be/hEd9XpoZ4HM?si=M1XT2OazsnL5qcrm>

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