

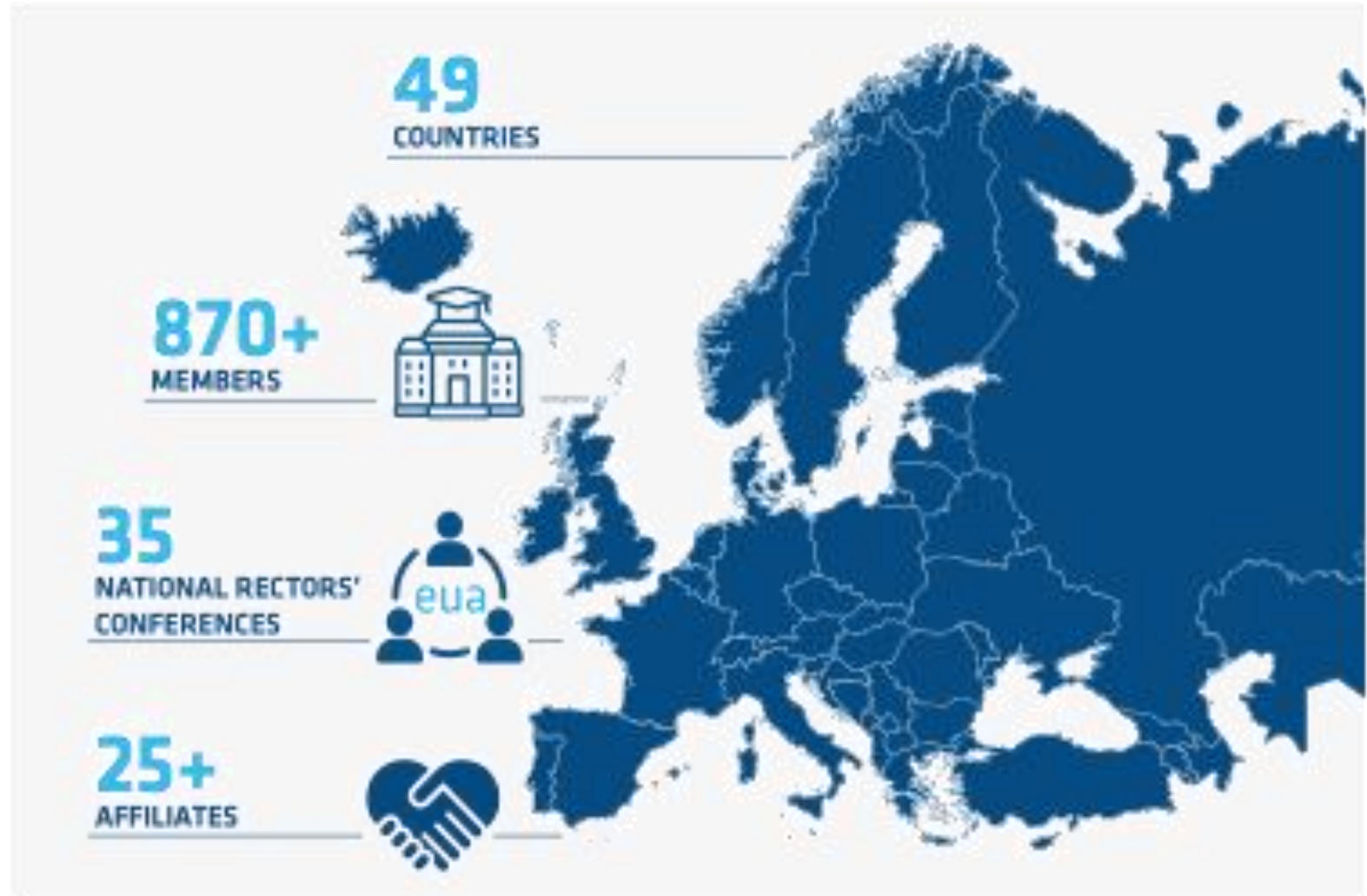
Broadening our assessment of academic careers: how far have we come and what does the future hold?

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Adviser for Research & Innovation

4 June 2025

International workshop
The future of academic careers in
Latvia and beyond

EUA is a community of over 900 members and affiliates.



Academic Careers – Strategic importance for universities

Reforming academic careers is a **strategic priority** for EUA

Importance of **core academic values** (e.g. research integrity, cooperation, openness, knowledge sharing)

Current **research culture does not recognise the diversity and richness** of research practices and contributions

Need to develop research assessment approaches that **focus** on the **broad range of scholarly outputs** and outcomes, including research quality potential, future impact and Open Science contributions

“Academic careers can be multifaceted and for many include education, administration, management and public engagement, alongside R&I activities. In order to reflect the holistic mission of universities, all aspects of the academic profession should be valued and rewarded appropriately.”

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Universities without walls
A vision for 2030

February 2021

EUA activities related to academic careers

- **EUA Task and Finish Group on Academic Careers**
 - One year (2024-2025), consisting of 12 experts
 - Working on key principles for attractive and sustainable academic careers.
 - Report published on 27 May 2025
- **Staff development for learning and teaching at European universities (STAFF-DEV) project**
 - How staff development and academic assessment are conducted at European HEIs and strengthening institutional capacity and strategies in this area.
- Coordination of the **CoARA Working Group on Reforming Academic Career Assessment**

Academic careers – Key principles

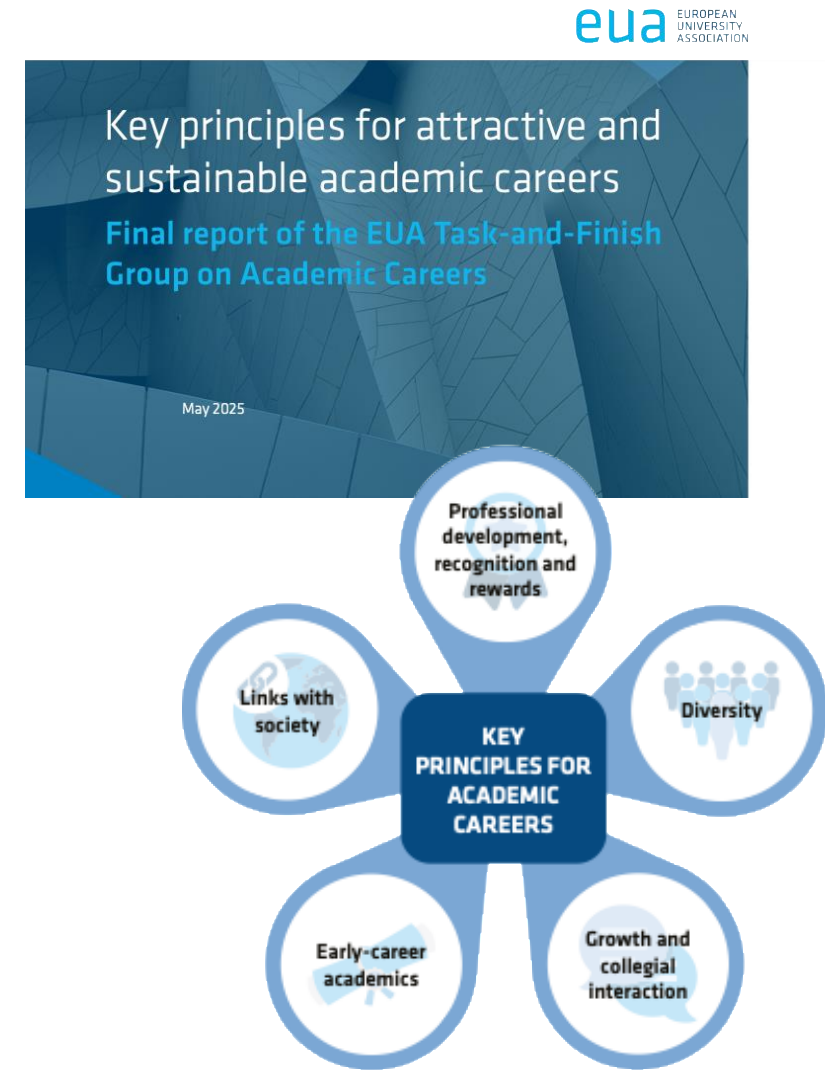
#1 - Universities actively and transparently support academic quality through continuous professional development, and through adequate recognition and rewards for excellence.

#2 - Universities are diverse and this diversity is also reflected in academic staff profiles and career paths.

#3 - Universities are spaces for personal, professional and intellectual growth. The institutional working environment fosters collegial interaction, exchange and support.

#4 - An investment in early-career academics is an investment in the sustainability of the higher education sector.

#5 - Universities serve society, hence career models are aligned with a university's mission and objectives.



Research assessment – an urgent need for reform

Assessment processes relying predominantly on journal- and publication-based metrics **can be a hurdle to the recognition of diverse contributions and may negatively affect the quality and impact of research.**

They also contribute to an **unhealthy research culture** and an **unaffordable publication system.**



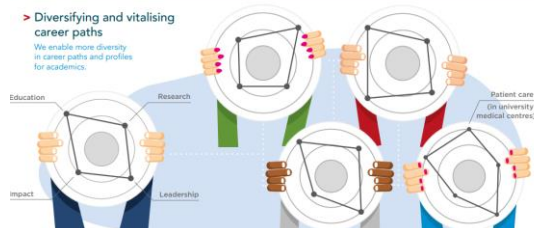
Change is happening...

National and institutional level



Room for everyone's talent

towards a new balance in the recognition and rewards of academics



Policy level

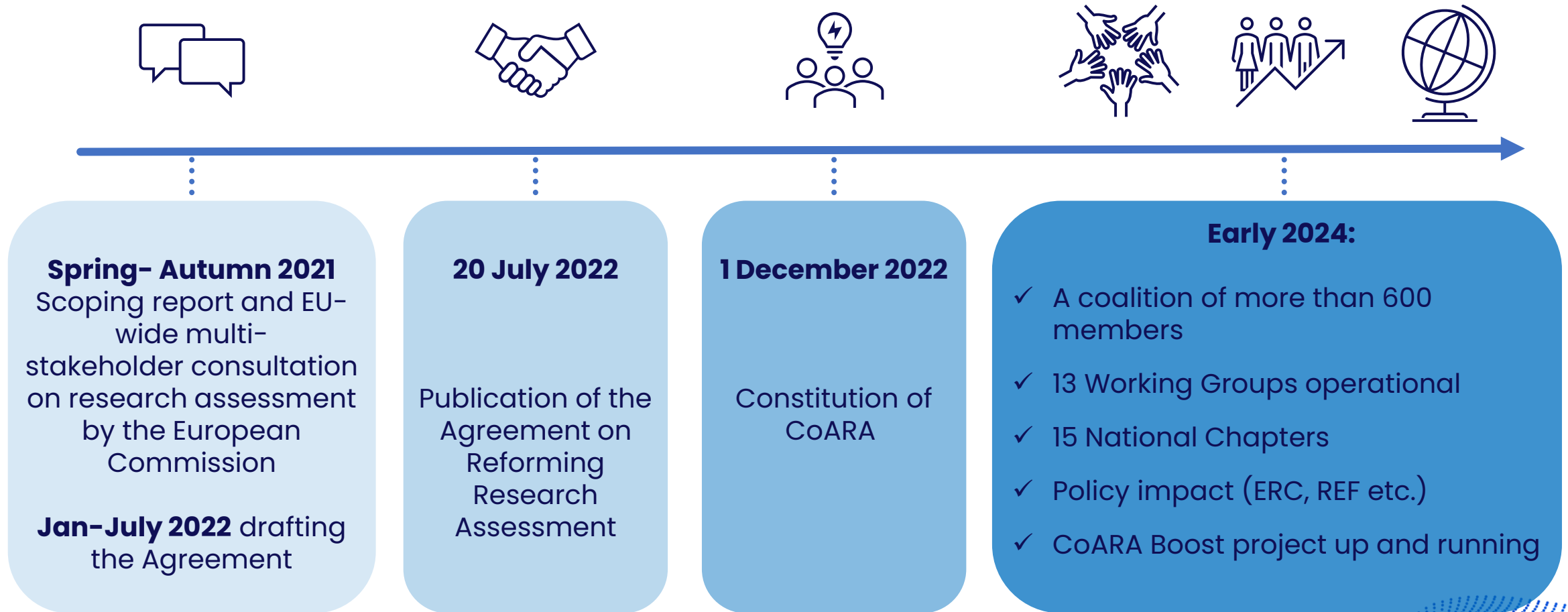
- [Council Recommendation on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe \(2023\)](#)
- [Council Recommendation on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education \(2024\)](#)
- [ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024](#) (actions on research assessment and research careers)
- [ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027](#) (structural policies on researchers' careers and mobility, and research assessment and reward systems)

CoARA: a shared direction to the reform of research assessment

- Building on progress made so far (DORA, Leiden Manifesto, Hong Kong Principles)
- Establishing a **common direction for research assessment reform**
- Respecting organisations' **autonomy**
- Based on **shared principles, 10 commitments, and a timeframe** (1 & 5 years) for reforms
- Overarching goal to **maximise the quality and impact of research**
- Basing assessment primarily on **qualitative judgement**, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators.
- The Agreement was **published on 20 July 2022**
- The Agreement full text – CoARA
- [CoARA.eu](https://www.coara.eu)



Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA): From Agreement to Action



Overview of the CoARA Working Groups



Reforming Academic Career Assessment



Multilingualism and Language Biases in Research Assessment



Towards Open Infrastructure for Responsible Research Assessment



Global Framework for Research Evaluation in the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH)



Responsible Metrics and Indicators



Towards Transformation, Transdisciplinarity, Applied/Practice-Based Research, and Impacts



Early-and-Mid-Career Researchers (EMCRs)
– Assessment and Research Culture



Supporting the Alignment of Research Assessment Systems with CoARA in Biomedical Disciplines Through Administrative Reforms and Governance



Recognizing and Rewarding Peer Review



Experiments in Assessment – Idea Generation, Co-Creation, and Piloting



Improving Practices in the Assessment of Research Proposals



Ethics and Research Integrity Policy in Responsible Research Assessment for Data and Artificial Intelligence



TIER – Towards an Inclusive Evaluation of Research



**1st WGs Co-Chair meeting
17 November 2023**

CoARA Working Group on Reforming Academic Career Assessment (WG ACA)

- The **academic community** should **drive reforms** in evaluating the quality and impact of academic activities and careers.
- **ACA systems** should adequately **reflect** the different **tasks, functions and roles** academics fulfil over the course of their career.
- Aim is to **broaden the reflection** on research assessment to ACA, supporting models that take into account the full range of work conducted by academics in research, teaching and learning, innovation, management/leadership and service to society.

Work Programme of WG ACA

Phase 1 – Mapping existing initiatives on academic career assessment (concluded)

- Development of a [targeted mapping](#) of initiatives at institutional and national levels on academic career assessment
- Publication of the outputs of the mapping initiatives on academic career assessment (Jan 2025)
 - [11 case studies](#)
 - [Survey results](#)
 - [Rethinking academic career assessment – Lessons and tools for reform](#)
 - Translation to ES by CLACSO-FOLEC ([Repensando la evaluación de las carreras académicas: lecciones y herramientas para la reforma](#))

Phase 2 – Development of a toolbox for academic career assessment (ongoing)

[Link to CoARA WG on Reforming Academic Career Assessment](#)

Lessons learned – Phase 1

1 – Academic organisations across the world are moving towards reform

2 – Reform is possible

3 – Academics are key to success

4 – The scope of academic career assessment is expanding

5 – Bibliometrics tell a story, but not the whole story

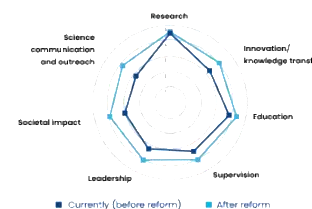
6 – Reform requires an open conversation on the nature of quality and excellence



Research lies at the heart of academic careers. Yet academics have always engaged in a much wider range of activities beyond research. They also teach, lead, collaborate and contribute to societal needs. Until recently, the focus on academic career assessment was predominantly on research, neglecting other academic activities. There is a growing awareness that this is a limiting and biased approach that does not do justice to the manifold talents and responsibilities of academics. Instead, organisations are looking for new ways to incorporate teaching, leadership, teamwork, open science, knowledge valorisation, societal outreach, engagement with other sectors, and other activities into their assessment procedures. All of this points to a shared aim of systematically meriting academic staff for a broader scope of academic activities beyond just publications.

Learn more about the relevant data

Role of academic staff in the reform process



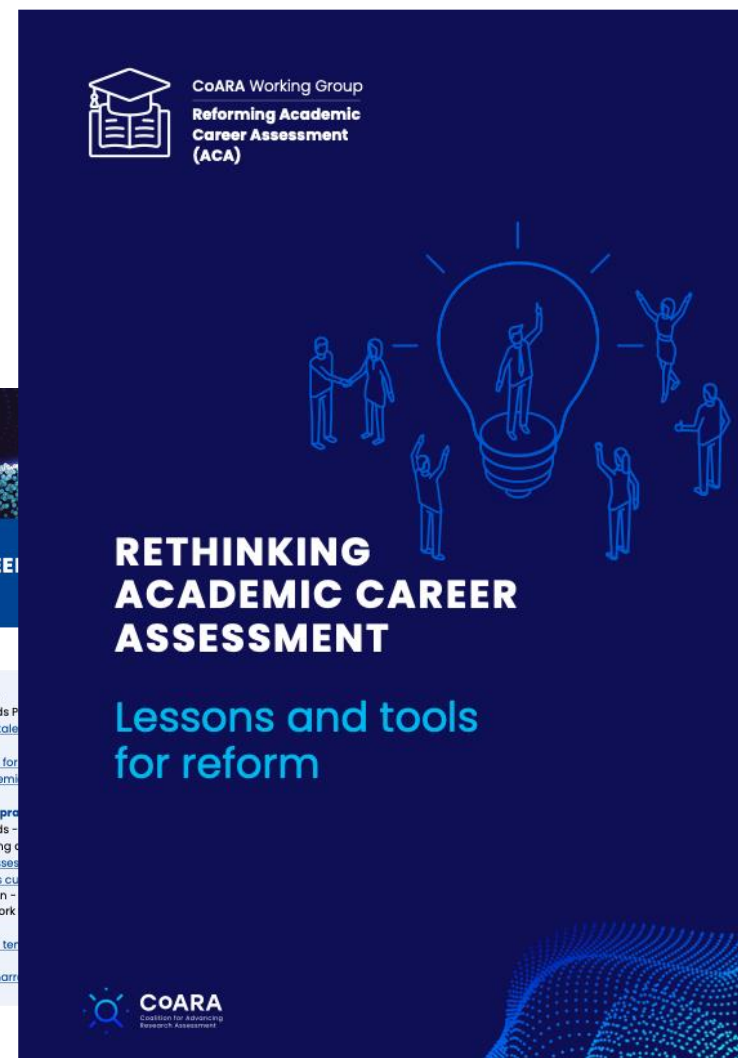
Read our case studies:

- Recognition & Rewards Framework for everyone's tale academia
- NOR-CAM - A toolbox for and rewards in academia

Get started with these practices:

- Recognition & Rewards - practices in developing countries
- NOR-CAM - career assessment
- Finland - researcher's curriculum
- European Commission - competence framework (ResearchCamp)
- ANECA - narrative CV template (Spanish)
- DORA - guide to the narrative

"Undertaking a reform of the evaluation system is intended to have a number of positive effects (...) the fact of evaluating research with criteria that are not solely quantitative and do not give excessive priority to the publication of papers, aims to encourage greater recognition of other tasks such as transfer, teaching, commitment with outreach activities, better working environment, etc."



Lessons learned

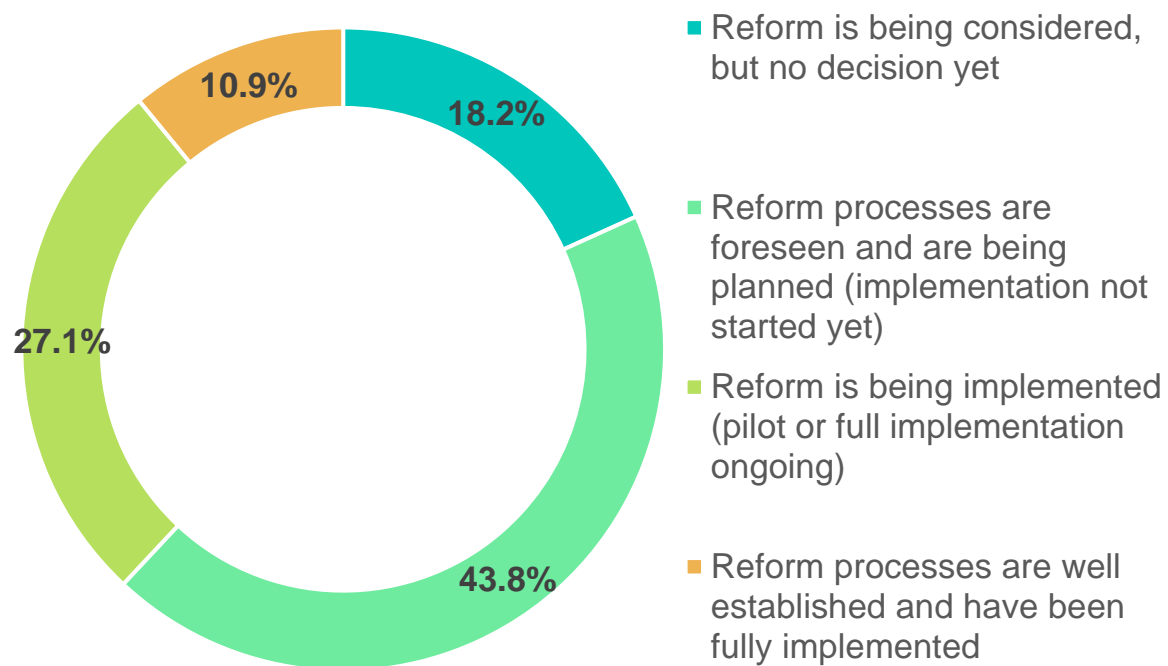
#1 – Academic organisations across the world are moving towards reform

- **Similar concerns** on current career evaluation practices.
- Variation in the approach and progress towards reforms, but **most organisations** are **moving** in a **similar direction**.
- The global reform movement is stimulated by international initiatives.
- **Together, we can make change a reality.**

Source: [Rethinking academic career assessment - Lessons and tools for reform](#)

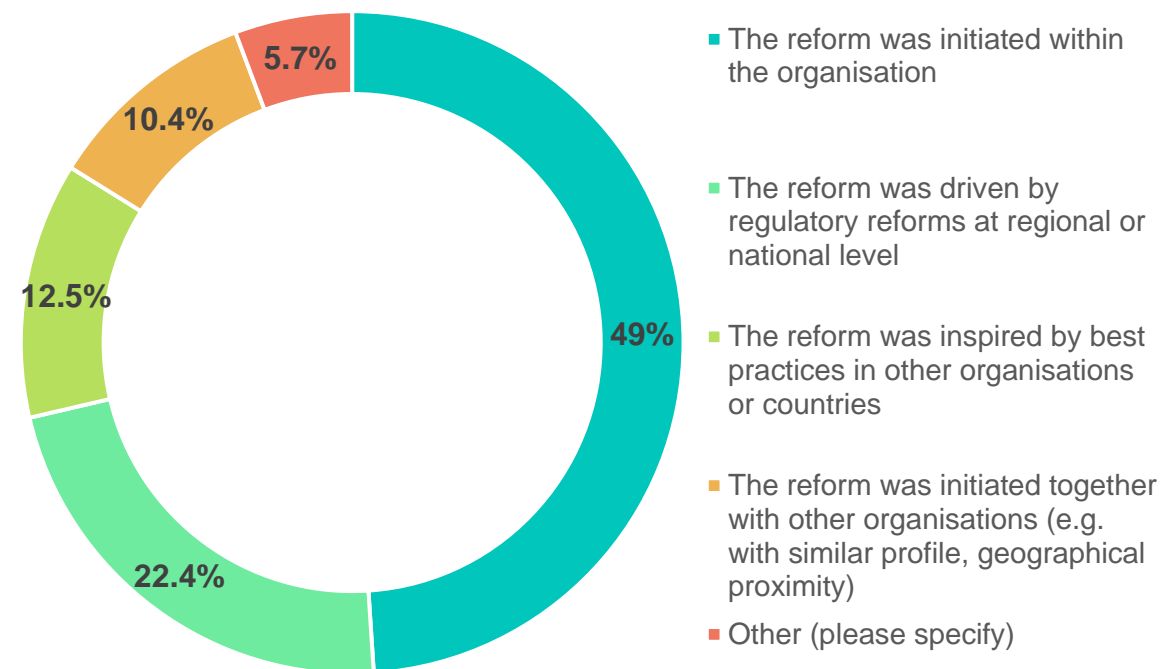
Status of ACA reforms

Reform process stage



Number of respondents: 192/192

Reform drivers



Number of respondents: 192/192

Source: [WG ACA survey outcomes](#)

Lessons learned

#2 – Reform is possible

- **Many academic organisations have initiated reforms**, varying in size and profile.
- Successful reforms hinges on a variety of factors (e.g. time, engagement, resources, framework conditions).
- The **motivation to change**, one incremental step at a time, **remains fundamental** to reform progress.
- Organisations can accelerate progress and help build a supportive community of institutions undergoing similar reforms

Source: [Rethinking academic career assessment - Lessons and tools for reform](#)

Motivations for engaging in ACA reform

1. Offering a more diversified, fair set of evaluation criteria, encompassing multifaceted academic work

- Assessment
- Evaluation

2. Establishing transparent practices of assessment and career progression

- Career

3. Guaranteeing high research quality

- Quality

4. Embedding open science principles

- Open Science

5. Considering staff wellbeing

- Well-being/development
- Diversity

6. Making the organisation an attractive employer

- Recruitment

7. Alignment with National/International regulations

- National/International standards, regulations, norms, rules, agreement

"Considering a wider range of scientific contributions and activity types when evaluating the performance of academic staff (...) Encouraging more diversity amongst scientists to create a more inclusive and equitable environment."

"Recruitment procedures must be more transparent to avoid mistrust"

"Different academic disciplines as well as different levels of career stages require a more customized career assessment procedure"

"be an attractive employer offering modern career opportunities".

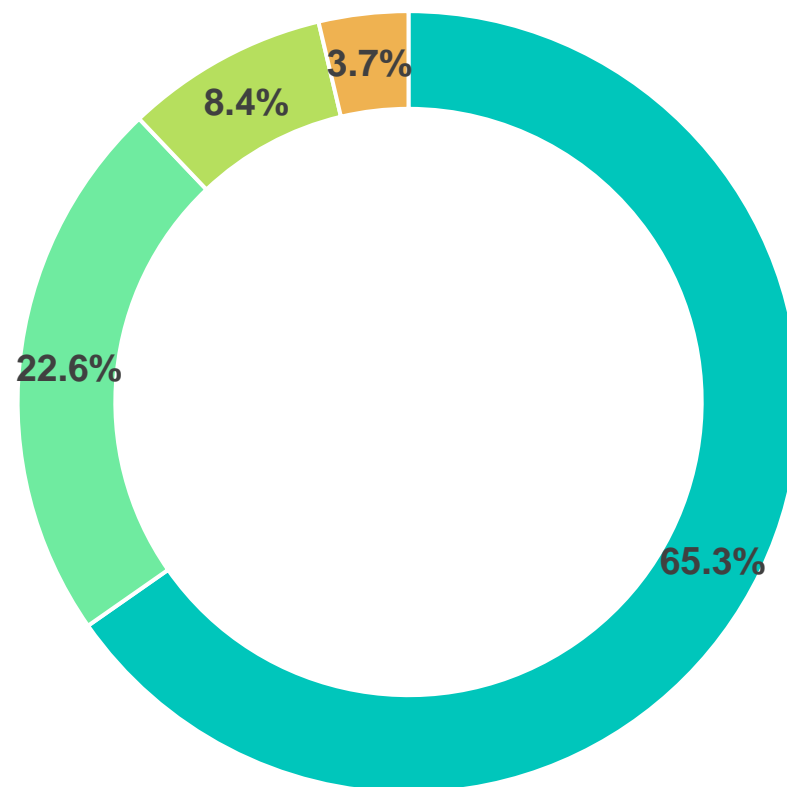
Lessons learned

#3 – Academics are key to success

- Current career assessment practices negatively impact academics.
- The **importance of involving academic staff** in reform is widely affirmed. Yet some academics are hesitant, **unsure how reform will impact them**.
- Although they are often consulted, academics are rarely in charge of reform efforts.
- To ensure the acceptance of and support for reform, **academics from all disciplines and all levels of seniority need to be directly involved from the outset**.

Source: [Rethinking academic career assessment - Lessons and tools for reform](#)

Role of academic staff in the reform process



- Academic staff (or their representatives) are actively participating in discussions on reform and in developing new processes for academic career assessment
- Academic staff (or their representatives) are consulted on the reform principles and/or steps, but are not actively involved in developing new processes for academic career assessment
- Academic staff (or their representatives) are kept informed of the reform process, but do not have an active role in the reform discussions processes or in the development of new processes for academic career assessment
- Other

Resistance to reforms

Senior and mid-career academics

- **Resistance to change and fear of the unknown**
- **Uncertainty about qualitative methods**
- **'Metrics tradition' and preference for quantitative measures**
- **Lack of understanding of change**
- **Increased workload concerns**

"General resistance to change. Keeping bad habits is easier than changing to new ways of working you don't know the benefits of."

"Feeling that subjective assessment took over the objective assessment and that research assessment would no longer be based on quality but on whoever is more proficient in telling a good story."

"Belief that there are no problems with the current system. Researchers (especially those coming from fields where it is easy to publish many papers, publish in high impact factor journals or getting a lot of citations purely because of the field) are not always aware of how the system works against researchers coming from smaller fields or different type of research with fewer papers, which are no less impactful. There is a sort of willful tunnel vision."

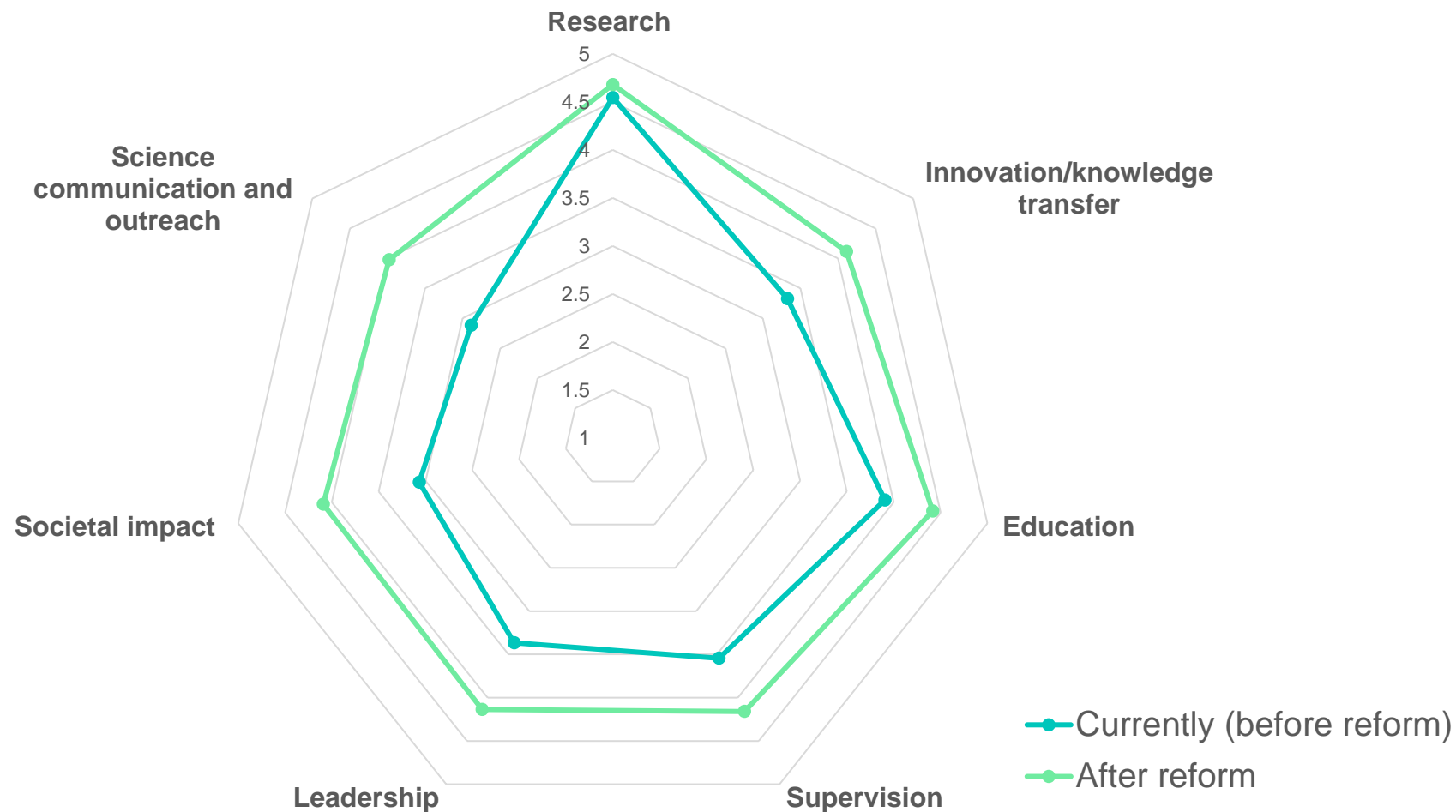
Lessons learned

#4 – The scope of academic career assessment is expanding

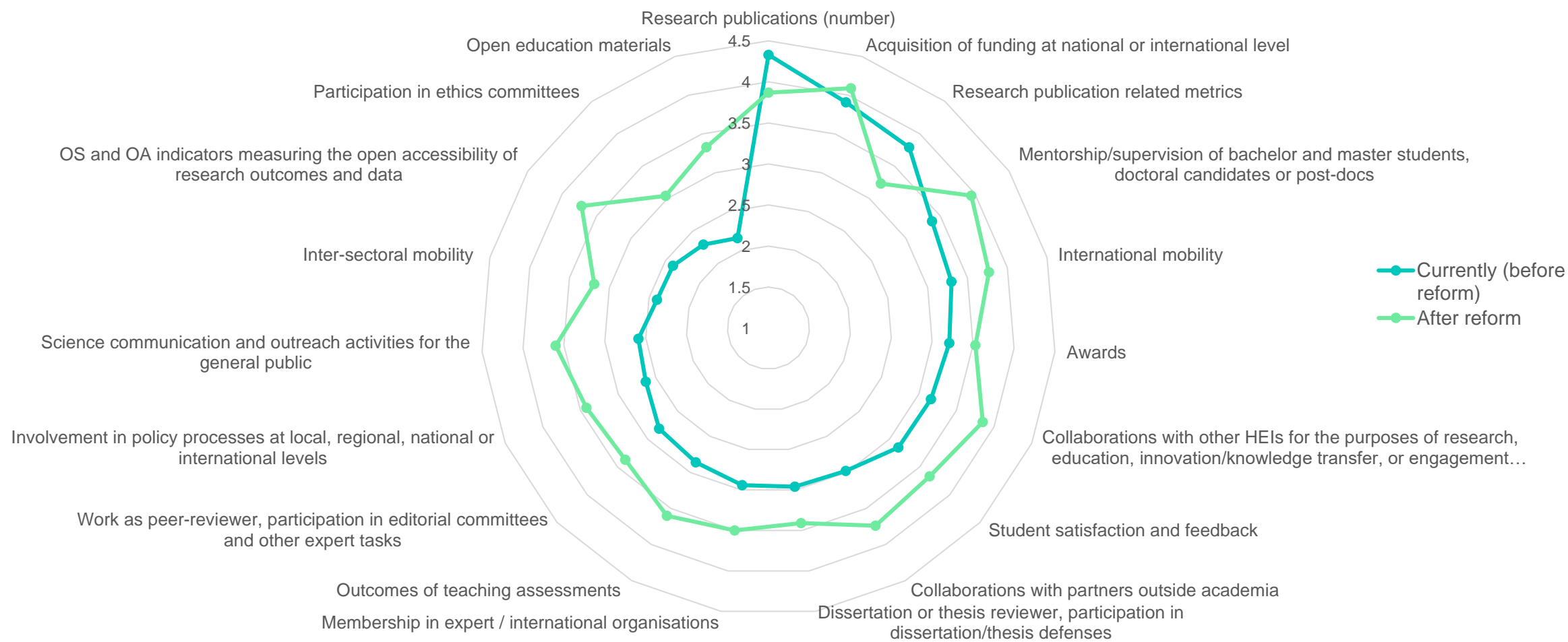
- Until recently, the focus on ACA was predominantly on research, neglecting other academic activities.
- Organisations are looking for **new ways to incorporate teaching, leadership, teamwork, open science, knowledge valorisation, societal outreach, engagement with other sectors,** and other activities into their assessment procedures.
- Shared aim of systematically **meriting academic staff** for a **broader scope of academic activities** beyond just publications.

Source: [Rethinking academic career assessment - Lessons and tools for reform](#)

Activities considered in ACA



Indicators for assessing academic careers



Source: [WG ACA survey outcomes](#)

Lessons learned

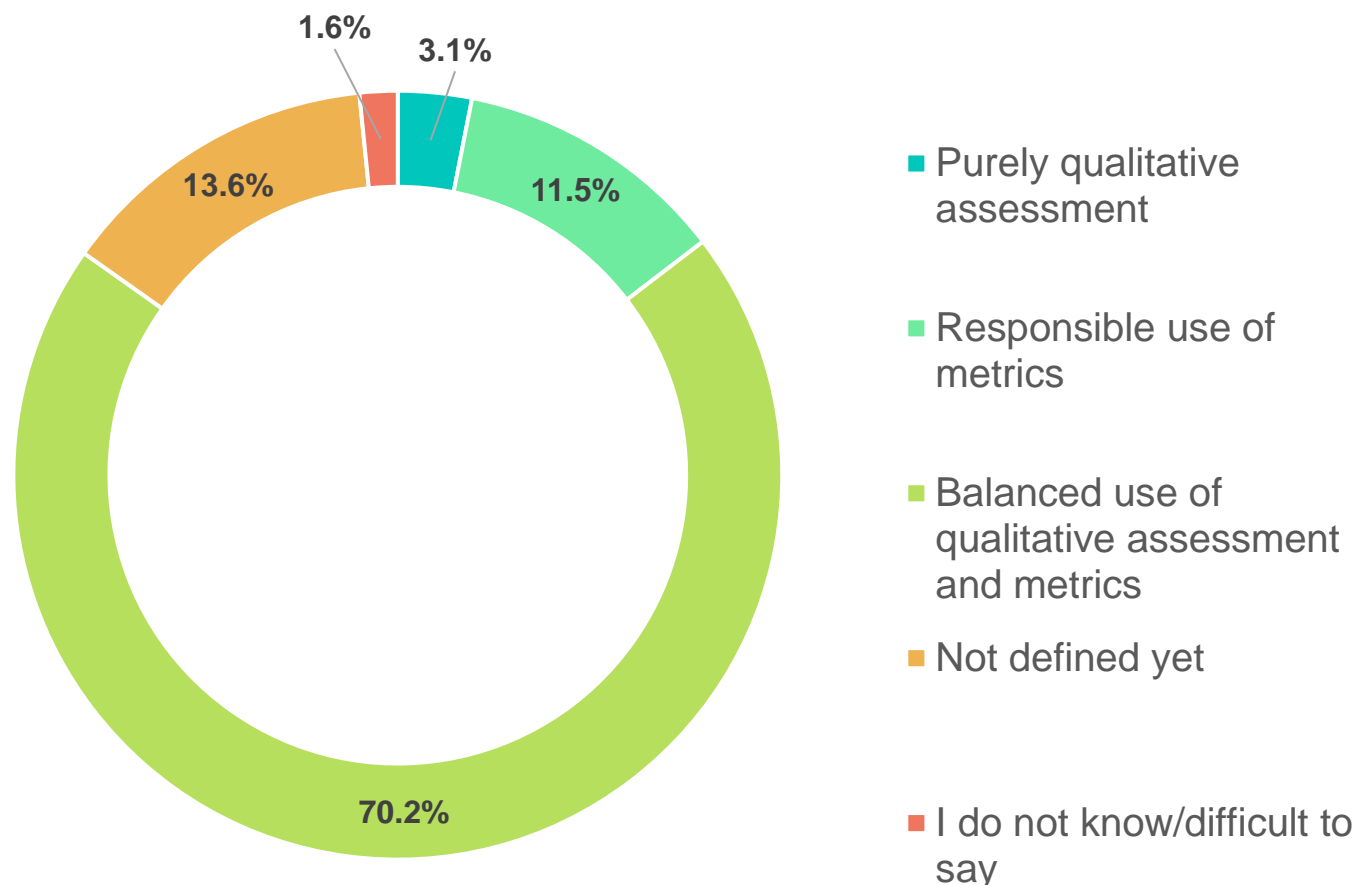
#5 – Bibliometrics tell a story, but not the whole story

- Publication-based metrics have formed the gold standard for assessing academic careers in many disciplines, but this only gives limited perspective on academic achievements.
- A new approach to academic career assessment is called for, in which **the responsible use of bibliometric data and complementary quantitative data is coupled with more qualitative assessment criteria and methods**. This in turn will require careful consideration and documentation.

Source: [Rethinking academic career assessment - Lessons and tools for reform](#)

Reform expectations

Focus of ACA after the reform



Lessons learned

#6 – Reform requires an open conversation on the nature of quality and excellence

- Reform brings with it a **period of uncertainty**.
- Different parties hold **diverging views on what 'excellent research' or 'outstanding teaching' means**.
- What is needed is an **inclusive conversation on what excellence entails, and how it can best be evaluated and measured**.

Source: [Rethinking academic career assessment - Lessons and tools for reform](#)

Main achievements

1. Awareness and initial engagement in reform

- Early-stage planning and discussion
- Stakeholder involvement and consensus-building
- Awareness-raising and mindset shift

2. Alignment with reform initiatives

- Alignment with reform initiatives at national and international level

3. Transparency and clarity

- Transparency and fairness in criteria
- Clear assessment guidelines

4. Career support and recognition of diverse career paths

- Enhanced career support and career development initiatives
- Recognition of diverse academic careers and contributions

"The initiation of discussions and the spreading of awareness on the subject within our institution have been significant achievements. This early stage of engagement has laid a valuable foundation for implementation of reforms."

5. Improving assessment practices

- Development of discipline-specific assessment criteria
- Shift towards more qualitative assessment
- Open Science adoption
- Standardization of processes
- Implementation of innovative assessment schemes and career models

6. Organisational advancement

- Reflection on change process
- Improvement in academic activities (e.g. research, education, attracting staff)

"Introducing a pilot scheme for peer-review based research assessment at unit level, in form of a learning agreement with critical friends. Introducing a new and more comprehensive career model for academic staff, better combining education, R&I and practical field/experiences."

"Proceedings have been professionalized with visible improvement in the qualifications of incomings, in particular postdocs."

Source: [WG ACA survey outcomes](#)

Next steps and additional resources

WG ACA:

- Development of a framework/toolbox for academic career assessment
 - Testing the interest of universities and research organisations in this type of framework
 - Link to [CoARA WG on Reforming Academic Career Assessment](#)
 - Contact: coara.wg.aca@gmail.com / rita.morais@eua.eu
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- Webinar “[Towards a holistic reform: Exploring EUA’s key principles for attractive and sustainable academic careers](#)” (23 June, 14:00–15:00 CEST)
 - Link to [EUA’s work on academic careers](#)

Thank you!