

28 May 2024**EU reform of research assessment: HRK will participate as a guest in the German National Chapter of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment**

The German Rectors' Conference (HRK) will join the National Chapter of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) as a guest, thus increasing its engagement with the efforts to reform research assessment at European level. The HRK General Assembly decided to take this step at its meeting in Fulda in mid-May.

Through its guest status as an associate member in the German National Chapter of CoARA, currently organised by the German Research Foundation (DFG), the HRK intends to promote the exchange of information on reform goals and measures relating to European research assessment with the higher education members and non-members of CoARA as well as with other German and European scientific organisations. The HRK will also set up a joint working group of its member groups on this topic to actively involve all types of higher education institutions in the subsequent discussion.

Prof Dr Georg Krausch, HRK Vice-President for Research and Academic Career Paths, explains: "The HRK has not yet signed the CoARA agreement and is therefore not a member. At the same time, we are monitoring this EU initiative to reform research assessment very closely and lively debate is taking place in our various bodies. Opinions on the principles and proposed commitments of the reform movement are very mixed. Some universities note the lack of an explicit commitment to scientific excellence, performance and competition in the present CoARA agreement – principles that have so far been indispensable for globally competitive cutting-edge research. At the same time, they embrace core findings of the initiative, in particular the criticism of a partial dominance of quantitative evaluation metrics."

Prof Dr Angela Ittel, HRK Vice-President for International Affairs, Equal Opportunities and Diversity and Head of the Research Assessment Working Group of the HRK's Universities Member Group, emphasises: "With its vote, the HRK General Assembly has recognised that the CoARA reform movement will shape the European and German academic landscape in the foreseeable future. The HRK's active participation in the discussion should help to ensure that the interests of German universities are sufficiently taken into account. A guest status for the HRK in the German National Chapter is currently a necessary signal for this."

In addition, the HRK recommends that its members carry out their own analysis of the CoARA initiative with regard to the possible effects of the planned reform on the

individual university. In the process, adds Ittel, they can also evaluate whether it makes sense for their university to join. Such an examination of the premises of the initiated reform process, she continues, prepares the basis for the upcoming discussion by German universities of the concrete reform proposals from the thematic CoARA working groups distributed across Europe.

The European process to reform research assessment was launched in January 2022 with a call from the European Commission to scientific organisations in the EU. The starting point is the finding that purely quantitative indicators are too dominant in the evaluation of research output. Accordingly, the EU's reform efforts are aimed at a broader recognition of different contributions to the quality and impact of research that go beyond the quantification of traditional publications and third-party funding.

In July 2022, the European Commission published the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment. This research policy agreement sets out the principles and commitments that will guide the intended reform of European research assessment. European scientific institutions and organisations that sign this agreement commit to working together to enable a systemic reform of research assessment in Europe. In addition, signatories have the opportunity to join the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA). More than 700 scientific institutions across Europe have signed the agreement. In Germany, there are just over 30 so far.