



RoRI Working Paper No.15

**A new typology of national  
research assessment  
systems: continuity and  
change in 13 countries**

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Claire Fraser, Nino Gogadze, Natalia Gras, Jon Holm, Peter Kolarz, Moumita Koley,  
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May 2025

## A new typology of research assessment systems

Rewarding Performance: Options for Institutional Research  
Funding in Universities, University of Bucharest

17 November 2025

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AGORRA, Research on Research Institute (RoRI)

# AGORRA

**Partnership:** Meta-researchers, funders, and research councils working together to understand and improve national research assessment systems globally

## **AGORRA aims to:**

- Summarize and compare national assessment systems
- Track changes and evolution over time
- Provide a global perspective on research assessment practices

**LINK:**



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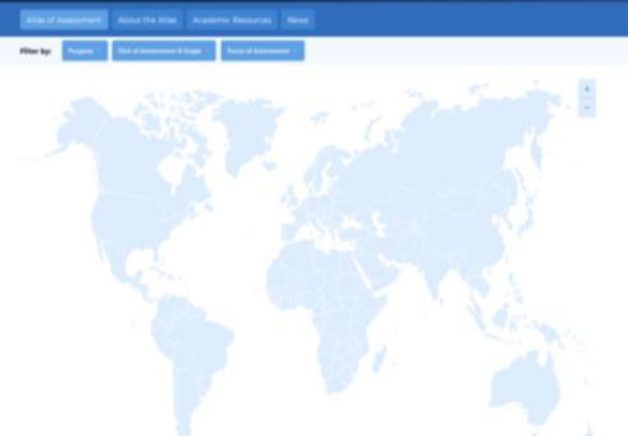
# A new typology of national research assessment systems: continuity and change in 13 countries

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## The RoRI Atlas of Assessment

A global map of national research assessment systems



## *The RoRI Atlas of Assessment*

A platform offering  
expertly curated and  
quality-assured data on  
national research  
assessment systems from  
around the world

# Overview

- Introduction
  - The purpose of the study
  - Our definition of relevant national systems
- The thirteen countries involved so far
- The typology
  - Overview
  - Specific dimensions
- Final thoughts

# Our definition of relevant national systems

- *National research assessment and funding systems* have been defined as:
  - “organised sets of procedures for assessing the merits of research undertaken in publicly funded organisations that are implemented on a regular basis, usually by state or state-delegated agencies” (Richard Whitley, 2007)



# Our definition of relevant national systems

- We use Whitley's broad definition because *funding can be detached from assessment and vice versa* in the national systems.
- We include performance-based research funding systems. They can be more precisely defined as:
  - “national systems of research output evaluation used to distribute research funding to universities” (Diana Hicks, 2012)



## Our definition of relevant national systems

- We use Whitley's broad definition because *funding can be detached from assessment and vice versa* in the national systems.
- We include performance-based research funding systems. They can be more precisely defined as:
  - “national systems of research output evaluation used to distribute research funding to universities” (Diana Hicks, 2012)
- But we also include:
  - National research assessment systems with other purposes than funding allocation.
  - Other types of public research organizations.
- Not included are:
  - Local institutional systems for recruitment, promotion and internal resource allocation
  - Assessment of grant proposals by external funding organizations

## Background and context

- Our work continues an important tradition of comparative analysis of national research assessment and funding systems (Geuna and Martin, 2003, Whitley, 2007, Hicks, 2012, Debackere et al., 2018, Zacharewicz et al., 2019, Sivertsen, 2023).
- We extend this tradition with:
  - A more global outlook covering all continents
  - Collaboration with country-specific experts
  - A dynamic perspective by creating a monitor to trace and discuss changes and trends over time
  - The AGORRA aim of strengthening the evidence base for research assessment reform



# The 13 Countries



# Overview

## ■ Introduction

- The purpose of the project
- Our definition of relevant national systems
- Background and context
- Methods

## ■ The thirteen countries involved so far:

- Their national research assessment and funding systems
- Our expert collaborators

## ■ The typology

- Overview
- Specific dimensions

## ■ Further work

# An overview of the typology

## ■ Four core aspects:

1. Assigned purpose
2. Unit of assessment and scope
3. Focus of the assessment
4. Effects on funding and reputation

## ■ Four additional aspects:

5. Methods
6. Type of performance-based institutional funding
7. Formative versus summative
8. Governance

# 1. Assigned purpose

(with examples illustrating the variation)

- Systems may differ according to their primary purpose:
  - a) Funding allocation and reputation
    - *Examples:* Colombia, Italy, Norway (indicators), Poland (algorithm), UK.  
Only reputation: Australia, India, China (Double First-Class).
  - b) Accountability
    - *Examples:* Chile (CAN), China (CAS), UK
  - c) Organizational learning and strategic development
    - *Examples:* Argentina (PEI), Australia (EI), Netherlands, Norway's national disciplinary evaluation
  - d) Statistics and overview of research activity
    - *Example:* Norway's publication indicator
  - e) Promotion of individual researchers
    - *Examples:* Argentina (CONICET), Brazil (CNPq), China (elite researchers), Mexico
  - f) Accreditation
    - *Example:* Chile

## 2. Unit of assessment and scope

- Systems may collect information about and assess:
  - a) Disciplines across organizations
  - b) The organization as a whole
  - c) Units within the organization/Research groups
  - d) Individual researchers
- The scope may be including all eligible candidates representing the unit of assessment or a certain selection among them.
- The level of assessment may differ from the level of funding. Both need to be categorized.
  - As an example, the United Kingdom assesses the quality of research of units of assessment within the organizations while the outcome influences the funding of the organization as a whole.

### 3. Focus of the assessment

- Systems may focus on and collect evidence from different aspects of research performance:
  - a) Scholarly outputs
  - b) Scientific impact (citations)
  - c) Societal interaction (collaboration and co-creation, public engagement, impact cases, technology transfer)
  - d) Competitive grants
  - e) Organizational performance
  - f) Research culture
  - g) Performance of individuals
  - h) Other

## 4. Effects on funding and reputation

- Systems can determine:
  - a) Funding and reputation
  - b) Only reputation
  - c) Other significant effects (e.g., salaries)
- The relative importance and strength of the influences can be weighted (Strong-Medium-Weak).

## 5. Methods

- Methods may differ in how peer-review and/or expert advice are organized and in how and to what degree the assessment is informed by data and indicators.
- The types of indicators and their data sources may also differ.
- The relative importance of each specific method can be weighted.



## 6. Type of performance-based institutional funding

- Systems that affect institutional funding directly may appear in three main types:
  - a) evaluation-based funding (the use of peer review and expert panels),
  - b) indicator-based funding (direct use of performance indicators),
  - c) and funding contingent on performance agreements between the funder and the individual research organizations.

## 7. Formative versus summative

- Different purposes may result in different main directions for the assessment.
  - a. A formative evaluation learns from the past and looks forward for serving organizational learning and strategic development.
  - b. A summative evaluation looks at past performance, checks whether goals or expectations have been reached, and serves decisions and/or resource allocation.
- Where these directions are combined, the relative importance of each can be weighted. An example is the three purposes that are stated for the REF in the UK in 2029:
  - 1. “Inform the allocation of block-grant research funding to HEIs based on research quality;
  - 2. provide accountability for public investment in research and produce evidence of the benefits of this investment;
  - 3. provide insights into the health of research in HEIs in the UK”.

## 8. Governance

- Governance is about how the systems are designed, implemented, and organized on a continuing basis with distributed responsibilities. Systems may differ according to:
  - a. The role of the agency responsible for operating the system and its relations to government on one side and the research organizations on the other. Systems tend to be under formal control of a central government agency or an arms-length body like a research council.
  - b. The involvement of and collaboration with the national academic community in the design, implementation, management, and evaluation of the system.
  - c. The transparency and predictability of the methods and results (High-Medium-Low).
  - d. Mandatory vs. voluntary vs. incentivized participation

# FINAL Thought

- Are we experiencing a performance 'paradigm shift' in national assessment and funding systems?
- Early to tell
- Signs of 'layering' of three paradigms:

## 1. Professional-disciplinary evaluation

Academic departments operated with relatively high levels of autonomy, relying on internal disciplinary standards to guide decision-making around hiring, promotion, and internal allocation of resources

## 2. Excellence and competition

Excellence was compared across areas of research. "We will fund the best, and the funded will get more". Increasing use of bibliometric indicators and performance-based funding.

## 3. Responsible research assessment (RRA)

The focus of assessment moves towards promoting a broader range of priorities, equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), improving research culture, open science, team science and other forms of collaboration, and addressing societal challenges and missions

# THANK YOU!

LINK:



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