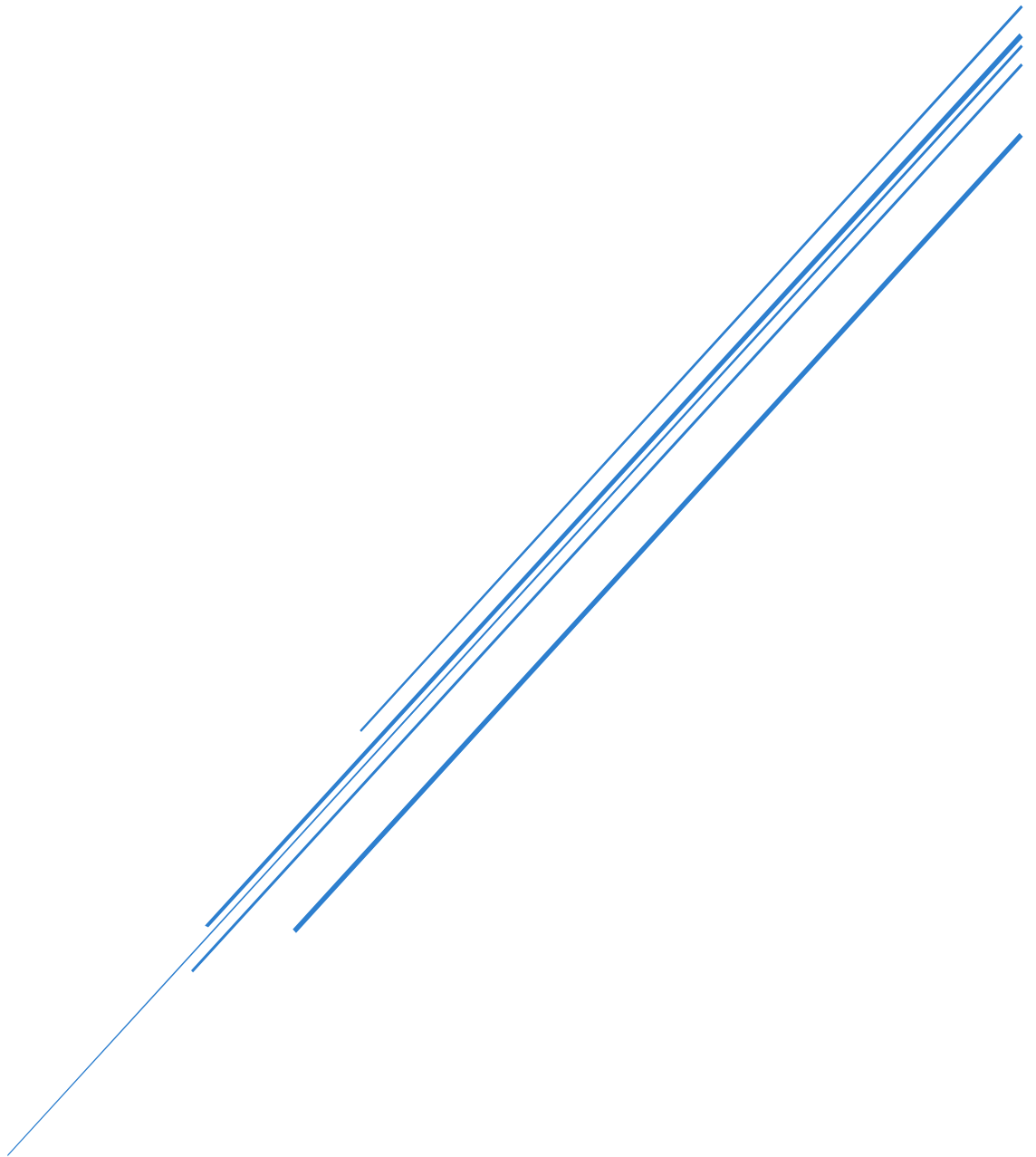


UEFISCDI ACTION PLAN FOR COARA

2025-2028



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Introduction

About UEFISCDI

The Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI) is the main funder for competitive research in Romania and a policy adviser for science, innovation and higher education policies, under the ultimate authority of the Ministry of Education and Research (MEC). As a funding agency, UEFISCDI supports exploratory and applied research, in all branches of science and the humanities, and it funds research projects on a competitive basis. The Agency's prerogatives in the research area pertain to the implementation of the majority of Programmes under the [National Research, Development and Innovation Plan](#) (PNCDI IV), which is the main instrument for implementing the [National Strategy on Research, Innovation, and Smart Specialization for 2022–2027](#).

The agency is a member of different European associations (e.g Science Europe, EARTO), offers support to SME's through EUREKA, EUROSTARS, and supports the Romanian participation to the Horizon Europe Programmes, by hosting the NCP unit. Over the years, UEFISCDI has established various strategic partnerships and cooperation agreements with several European research organizations (National Science Foundation – NSF, Swiss National Science Foundation – SNSF, L'Agence Nationale de la Recherche – ANR, EEA Financial Mechanism – Norway Research Council & The Icelandic Centre for Research - RANNIS), in order to facilitate the access of Romanian researchers to pan-European projects.

When it comes to CoARA, the Agency was one of the early signatories of the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (September 2022), as it always strives to improve its practices in this sense, and to act as a bridge between different European and international initiatives and research communities in Romania. Currently, representatives of UEFISCDI are part of two CoARA Working Groups.

The **core principles** underlying the work of UEFISCDI:

1. **Trust and transparency:** Information concerning our activities, including related to research assessment are made publicly available; we evaluate project proposals both at national and international levels, facilitating communication between evaluators and applicants, and offering the latter the right to rebuttal; we always encourage direct communication and feedback;
2. **Professionalism:** our specialized human resources, continuously trained and connected to different initiatives at European and international levels, are willing to innovate and transpose into projects and ideas a multitude of perspectives;
3. **Efficiency and reduction of administrative burden:** we have a unitary approach regarding communication with beneficiaries and reduction of administrative burden in the public funding of research, development, innovation through the use of the UdiManager platform www.uefiscdi-direct.ro, developed by the institution's IT team.
4. **Internationalization:** we always bring to the fore topics that later become of international interest, fact which gives us the position of a regional hub for scientific events that have become a European standard such as Bologna Process Researchers' Conference (2011; 2014) and Diaspora in scientific research and higher education (2008, 2010, 2012, 2016).
5. **Equal opportunities and performance:** through dialogue, transparency and visibility of results, we ensure equal opportunities for financing performance regardless of age, gender, institutional affiliation and geography. Projects are funded exclusively on a competitive basis.

Process for elaborating the Action Plan

The development of the UEFISCDI Action Plan for CoARA was based on a comprehensive and collaborative institutional process that involved: 1. a review and mapping of current practices and activities; 2. several internal consultation meetings with representatives from different relevant departments within the Agency. The aim was to see and discuss where we are at now in relation to the four core commitments of ARRA and identify what we wish to achieve in the coming years.

We wish to thank all those who have dedicated their time to identifying our actions and priorities on this matter.

Further, the Action Plan is structured as follows

- a section that summarizes the main elements that were already introduced or are to be introduced in the spirit of ARRA;
- a section that describes additional actions that we are currently implementing or that we are going to implement, including as part of different projects we are part of (Horizon Europe projects, projects funded through structural funds, and other).

Summary of main elements (to be) introduced in accordance with ARRA

New CV format

Since 2024, UEFISCDI has introduced a new format for its CV template, a narrative CV that will also be extended to future calls, where appropriate.

Within this there is also a dedicated section that allows applicants to specify potential career breaks they have taken, together with the reasons for it. In the coming years we will explore possibilities of providing more guidance information on this topic for both applicants and reviewers.

New format for outputs list and limited number for outputs

Again, for a number of funding calls, UEFISCDI has already introduced a new format for outputs list, that allows applicant researchers to include only a limited number of research results. By doing so, we wish to increase the focus on scientific excellence, impact and the output's relevance for the proposed project (which will need to be explained by the applicant), rather than on quantity. In the future, we wish to extend this practice to other calls also.

Moreover, when applying for a funding call, applicants are not limited to a predefined list of research outputs and activities, and receive only few examples in this sense, leaving them room to provide information regarding a broad variety of results and activities that they consider most relevant. In this way, we also acknowledge the differences that can exist between research disciplines.

Research Data Management

Since 2024, applicants for certain funding calls are asked to describe the practices for Research Data Management they are going to use during project implementation in line with FAIR principles. Should their proposals be funded, they will need to provide a Data Management Plan within the first 6 months of implementation. This requirement is included under the Implementation criterion, and it will be extended to other funding calls, where appropriate.

Open Science practices

Similar to the case of Research Data Management, applicants from certain calls are asked to describe how Open Science practices will be addressed, in accordance with the specificities of the latter. This requirement is included under the Implementation criterion, and it will be extended to other funding calls, where appropriate.

Gender equality, inclusion and diversity dimensions

In all funding calls, applicants are asked to describe how gender equality, inclusion and diversity dimensions are to be considered during the implementation process.

Moreover, they also need to provide the web link to the Gender Equality Plans for all partner institutions.

Reduce the focus on JIF and H-index

For certain funding calls, we do not ask for information such as Journal Impact Factors or the H-index. In the coming years, we will explore the possibility of making this the standard practice.

Blueprint for research impact

High on our agenda is developing a blueprint that illustrates how we, as a funding agency, understand the different forms of research impact. The blueprint will be used to inform all funding calls, including in relation to research assessment processes, and it will be disseminated broadly.

Guidance on appropriate and inappropriate uses of quantitative indicators

In the coming years, we also aim to develop, as part of ongoing projects, a set of guidelines regarding appropriate and inappropriate uses of quantitative indicators that will address, in a coherent manner, the evaluation of researchers, research organizations and proposals. This will be integrated into funding calls, as part of evaluation guidelines.

Continuously improve our assessment processes

We are committed to continue improving our research assessment processes by systematically reflecting on the lessons learned from each funding call. Through this iterative process, we strive to align our assessment mechanisms with the evolving research assessment practices at European and international levels.

Activities being implemented as part of different projects and other supporting actions

- raising awareness on responsible research assessment and open science practices through different types of online and face to face events organized at national and international levels. In time, we have organized different such events, both online and in person, and we will continue to do so every year. One recent example in this sense is the International Conference [Rethinking Research Assessment](#), that we have organized in November 2024 in Bucharest, and which reunited approximately 100 relevant experts from Europe, from the European Commission, CoARA, Science Europe, the OPUS project, research performing and research funding organizations, researchers and representatives of the research community in Romania, and other;

- develop and test a template for a revised researcher profile for our [BrainMap](#) platform, which currently has over 64000 registered researchers, members of academia, technical personnel and other types of personnel activating in RDI. The template will also include an Openness Profile¹ section as a mechanism to improve recognition of, and reward for practicing open science practices. The template is expected to include a broader diversity of contributions to, and careers in research in line with ARRA commitments and will be tested in dedicated workshops held with researchers (2025), to find out what works best at national level;²
- raise awareness on the wide diversity of research careers in and outside academia through dedicated informational materials and leveraging different communication and dissemination channels;
- collect and share best practices on recognition and support of diverse research careers, by conducting a short study to identify best practices in this regard and disseminating to broader audiences;
- monitor reforms in research assessment criteria at national level for negative and unwanted effects; identify structural and administrative barriers to reform to research assessment systems;
- collect and share best practices on reforming existing research assessment systems;
- raise awareness, as well as collect and share best practices on Research Comp and transversal skills and competences for researchers;
- raise awareness at national level on the revised Charter for Researchers³;
- provided guidance documents on Open Science and research data management;⁴
- work on the development and testing, together with academic and research communities, of different scenarios and mechanisms for performance based research funding mechanisms addressed to higher education institutions (2024-2027). The activity will also try to explore together with representatives from universities and the broader research community potential ways in which ARRA commitments can be reflected within proposed mechanisms and scenarios;⁵

¹ Knowledge Exchange Openness Profile - used as reference - <https://www.knowledge-exchange.info/event/openness-profile>

² Project [GraspOS](#) - *Next Generation Research Assessment to Promote Open Science* (funded by the EU, under the Horizon Europe programme)

³ The last six activities are currently being implemented as part of our pilot within the [SECURE](#) project - *Sustainable Careers for Researcher Empowerment* (funded by the EU, under the Horizon Europe programme). The resulting materials will be made available on our website and on Zenodo.

⁴ Project [OPUS](#) - *Open Universal Science* (funded by the EU, under the Horizon Europe programme). Our activities in this project have also supported the integration of the requirements regarding Open Science and Research Data Management practices as part of the evaluation process for a specific funding call. Further, these requirements might be extended to other funding calls UEFISCDI is managing, where relevant.

⁵ Project [Romania on the 2030 Horizon: Increasing international relevance through the internationalization of higher education](#) (funded through structural funds under the Education and Employment Programme)

- map the competences needed for Open Science and a new research culture⁶;
- Supported the organization of pilot courses dedicated to PhD candidates, an initiative of the UNESCO Chair on Science and Innovation Policies from [SNSPA](#), on topics related to research culture and research assessment, open science practices and policies, including regarding uses of different journal and publication based metrics (2022-2024). This will also continue in the future;
- elaborated [The White Book of the Transition to Open Science](#) (2023).

*Our approach is based on a system view, as we strive to provide permanent attention to ensuring coherence between different levels and forms of evaluation - assessment of projects, of researchers and research teams, research units and organizations, well aligned with trends and practices at international level.

Further references

- The National Strategy for Research, Innovation and Smart Specialization 2022-2027 <https://www.mcid.gov.ro/transparenta-decizionala/strategia-nationala-de-cercetare-inovare-si-specializare-inteligenta-2022-2027/>
- The National Plan for Research, Development and Innovation 2022-2027. <https://www.mcid.gov.ro/transparenta-decizionala/planul-national-de-cercetare-dezvoltare-si-inovare-2022-2027/>
- The White Book of the Transition to Open Science 2023-2030. <https://www.open-science.ro/resurse/the-white-book-of-the-transition-to-open-science>

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⁶ Project [Adapting the educational offer to the demands of the labor market by basing policies in the field on data](#) (funded through structural funds under the Education and Employment Programme)