EVENT REPORT

RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH IN ACTION

2026

SCIENCE EUROPE

Shaping the future of research

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Event Report 'Responsible Research in Action'
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Lead Authors: Sean Sapcariu (Luxembourg National Research Fund), Jolanta Šinkūnienė (Research Council of Lithuania)

Co-Authors: Delwen Franzen (QUEST Center, Berlin Institute of Health at Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin), Verity Elston (University of Lausanne), Mariam Chichua (University of Padova), Hella Lichtenberg (DLR Projektträger), Malcom Macleod (University of Edinburgh), Lisanna Paladin (EMBL), Alicia Perez Saturnino (EMBL), Fiona Ramage (University of Edinburgh), Janina Schirmer (Wissenschaftskolleg Berlin), Mhairi Stewart (Museum für Naturkunde Berlin), Victoria Strudwick (University of Warwick), Beáta Kiltz (Hungarian Research Network), Marinus Fislage (World Health Summit), Lara Abel (University of Cambridge), Sadie Boniface (University College London), Emma Francis (University College London), Evgeny Bobrov (QUEST Center, Berlin Institute of Health at Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin)

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For further information please contact the Science Europe Office: office@scienceeurope.org

'Research cultures' is a well-established theme and strategic priority for Science Europe. Work in this area began with reflections on, and the definition of, shared values. It then expanded into concrete interventions that span support for diversity, the embedding of research integrity, and promotion of attractive research careers.

In 2025, Science Europe consolidated this work across policy topics into a unified Vision and Framework for Research Cultures that sets out eight long-term goals to guide all research stakeholders over the coming decades. It commits Science Europe to enabling action through community dialogue and collaboratively developing and implementing initiatives with research professionals, institutions, and policy stakeholders wherever possible.

As part of this commitment, the co-chairs of the Science Europe Working Group on Research Culture organised a two-day community workshop during the September 2025 Responsible Research in Action Unconference in Berlin, to help translate the Vision into practical action. This report summarises the workshop's discussions and structure, and recognises the contributions of the participants who co-designed actions to enact the Vision – outputs that will directly inform Science Europe's future activities.

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Introduction

On 23 and 24 September 2025, at the Responsible Research in Action Unconference, we organised a workshop entitled 'From Vision to Action – Towards an action plan to improve research culture'. A diverse group of 19 participants took part, including people from different parts of the research community: researchers, funders, publishers, institutional leadership, and career development staff.

The 2025 Science Europe Vision and Framework for Research Cultures formed the basis of the workshop. Based on Science Europe's continuous work on research cultures, it presents eight goals to guide individual and collective action to support knowledge advancement and the quality and impact of research. This report was used as a starting point to dig into the broad topic of research culture. The goal of the workshop was to, based on the vision, gather evidence and ideas towards the development of an action plan that would shift the current culture towards the vision.

To do this, we used a variety of collaborative and creative activities, including:

- **Trend Identification and Analysis:** Participants prepared for the workshop by looking at their own research environments, identifying signals and evidence that would suggest longer-term trends in research culture.
- **STEEPLE Analysis:** Participants performed a high-level contextual analysis, highlighting external and internal factors that would act as barriers, opportunities, or both for changing research culture.
- **Backcasting:** Using the individual vision statements from the Science Europe document as a starting point, participants described what this future would look like and worked backwards to develop concrete pathways to this perceived future.
- **Ideation of potential actions:** Participants synthesised all of their knowledge gained over the course of the workshop to develop the building blocks of potential actions that could be done across the research sector (and beyond) to drive research culture towards the vision.

All materials from the discussions and output of the activities were documented and collected by the co-chairs and shared digitally with the participants.

Full agenda of the workshop

Day 1

Looking Forward – Starting from observations in the present and building potential scenarios for the future

- Check-in/Introductory presentation *40″*
- Session 1: Environmental Scanning/ Trend Identification *70″*
  - Group work *25″*
  - Presenting in plenary *45″*
- Session 2: STEEPLE Analysis and Mapping *50″*
  - Group work *30″*
  - Presenting in plenary *20″*
- Session 3: Timeline Building and Trend Radar *70″*
  - Group work *50″*
  - Presentation in plenary *20″*
- Wrap-up/Reflection day 1/check out *20″*

Day 2

Working Backwards – Starting from the vision for the future, developing potential scenarios on how it can be reached

- Check-in for day 2 *20″*
- Session 1: Back-casting *70″*
  - Group work *50″*
  - Presentation in plenary *20″*
- Session 2: Action Plan Development – group work only *40″*
- Conclusion: Reflection and Feedback on the Workshop *30″*
  - Next steps and how to keep group involved
  - Feedback and reflection

After the workshop, the two co-chairs and the Science Europe office went in detail through the input and results of the workshop, in order to synthesise a set of challenges, opportunities and actions identified and prioritised by the workshop participants, both for this public report as well as the ongoing and future activities of the Science Europe Working Group on Research Culture.

Reflections and Takeaways on the Process

Overall, we feel that this workshop was one of the first concrete dives into the complex topic of research culture to be explicitly addressed in a European context by an international cross-disciplinary group. Participants showed a collaborative, collegial, and creative spirit, which helped facilitate the creation of a large number of ideas and input to inform a preliminary action plan towards the vision outlined in the Science Europe document. Another output was the awareness raising and the discussion between the participants themselves – each individual wrote a 'to-do' item to take home to improve their local research culture.

The participants felt the workshop was a positive, yet ambitious initiative that should be iterated upon, repeated, and carried forward. Feedback gathered from participants highlighted the intensity of the workshop – most participants felt overwhelmed by the sheer complexity of the topic but were grateful to have the time and ability to really think about research culture outside of their daily work. Furthermore, despite the fact that the majority of participants were from the UK and Germany, the diversity of perspectives, roles, and institutions represented in the groups was seen as a large added value – highlighting the need for discussions around research culture to involve different groups with different lenses. The participants also valued the honest and open discussion in the workshop, which allowed freedom of expression and all perspectives to be valued.

Upon reflection, the co-chairs found the workshop to be a highly valuable experience in gathering diverse perspectives and input around the topic of research culture, and the chosen activities fit well with the overall goals. To improve upon the process, the 'Backcasting' could merge with the 'Action Plan Development', to be given more time and centralised as the final stage in the process, as this was the activity that allowed the participants to develop ideas for actions. The 'Timeline Building' should be removed to give more time to the other activities, specifically to allow a deeper discussion and alignment around challenges and opportunities that arise during the STEEPLE Analysis.

While this format allowed for a workshop of 1.5 days, the overall agenda can be streamlined to fit in a single day by shortening the plenary discussion around 'environmental scanning' and replacing the 'Timeline Building' with 'Backcasting'. Annexes 2 and 3 of this report provide a proposed agenda and the material and prompts we used to run the workshop.

Outcomes of the Workshop

Below is a list of the challenges, opportunities, and potential actions identified through the workshop as of high consideration. This does not intend to be a comprehensive inventory of everything discussed, but rather a prioritised highlighting of commonalities and trends in the discussions and outputs of the group. This should serve as a starting point for further discussion; a foundation to build future initiatives and activities for moving towards an ideal research culture.

Challenges identified

The workshop participants identified nine central challenges for changing research culture in line with the vision document, listed below alphabetically without any order of priority. Each of these challenges were concerns or perceptions raised by members and are not necessarily based on available data.

- **Artificial Intelligence** – There is an increasing use of artificial intelligence tools in the research sector, tied with an unclear overview of how they are used as well as a lack of clarity/consensus on what constitutes responsible use.
- **Budget cuts, geopolitics, and populism** – Changing governments and ideologies (and geopolitical tension) lead to reductions in funding for research and for researcher support.
- **Climate sustainability** – There is a need for research itself to be more sustainable, and to act as a role model for other sectors.
- **Distrust in science** – Based on perception, there seems to be an increasing public scepticism in experts and evidence.
- **Ethical issues and conflicts of interest** – Due to narrow incentivisation and rewards systems in research as well as insufficient systems and processes that can manage them, there exist increased opportunities for and incentivisation of unethical practices.
- **Lack of resources, awareness, and commitment on research culture** – Research culture/environment are not seen as a priority, leading to toxic behaviour and other issues mentioned in other challenges.
- **Nature of the research process** – There is a lack of recognition/awareness that research takes time and has specificities compared to other sectors, but also different value propositions.
- **Research security** – There is increasingly reduced international collaboration and increased scrutiny due to increased risks of espionage and competition for strategic value of knowledge.
- **Talent loss, career precarity, and the exclusivity of the sector** – There is a reduction of people joining and staying in the research sector due to non-attractive working conditions and other issues, leading to lack of diversity, talent, and other reputational issues.

Opportunities identified

The workshop participants identified seven opportunities that can support the shift of research culture towards what is described in the vision document, listed below alphabetically without any order of priority. Each of these opportunities were ideas or perceptions raised by members, and are not necessarily based on available data.

- **All aspects of the research process are becoming more transparent** – There is a growing awareness of the role of transparency in good research practice and trust.

- **Ease and opportunity of digital infrastructure** – Technological advances enable easier accessibility, recognition, awareness raising, and other aspects of opportunity, as well as better coordination between disparate resources.
- **Greater co-operation between public research stakeholders** – Building better links between institutions, funders, infrastructures, and others in the research community will make a more effective sector.
- **High economic and social value of research and the research workforce** – The research sector has always been and will continue to be a driver for advancement and societal benefit, including building talent for other sectors.
- **Increased awareness in the community that we must build public trust in science** – Building trust with society through public engagement makes the system more resilient and improves the impact of research and co-ownership of knowledge.
- **Increasing proportion of workforce that cares about improving research culture** – Discourse around research culture is growing, and mobilising the research workforce (including early-career researchers) can lead to generational change in research culture.
- **Potential for societal value through greater co-operation between research and other sectors** – There is an increasing porosity of the research sector, which expands the talent pool as well as benefitting society in general.

Actions

The participants of the workshop were asked to prioritise the thirty actions identified through the synthesis of the workshop. As multiple actions were tied in this ranking exercise, they have been grouped in rank-based clusters that represent a group of tied actions. Table A (p. 8) presents the top three clusters (the actions in each clusters are ordered randomly and are not listed by importance or priority within their cluster).

High-level actions are structural changes that require more specific initiatives to enable, while specific actions are concrete changes that can be directly applied by stakeholders in the system. The list of actions in the top three clusters are evenly distributed between both types.

The prioritised list of recommended actions covers seven of the eight vision statements – only the statement on Academic Freedom is not represented – from the Science Europe Vision and Framework for Research Cultures:

1. "Careers in research are attractive, sustainable, and well-supported both publicly and privately."
2. "Research is embedded in society and seen as a shared endeavour where all domains/forms of knowledge production are valued, and everyone can play a role."
3. "Research systems are diverse and inclusive. They lead to a broad range of research ideas, as well as a diverse array of contributions."
4. "The research sector acts as a role model, setting examples of transparent, effective, fair, and sustainable policies and practices."
5. "All research is done at the highest levels of integrity and ethics, ensuring that research processes are trustworthy, and outputs must effectively contribute to knowledge advancement."
6. "The research system is collaborative and supportive, where everyone involved values each other for what they bring to the system."
7. "Research professionals and institutions have full academic freedom and autonomy to pursue their ideas, supported by adequate funding, infrastructure, and support mechanisms.
8. "Discussions on research cultures are considered an integral aspect of group, institutional, and international research endeavours."

Table A Prioritised list of Recommended Actions

Action	Level	Vision Statement
FIRST CLUSTER		
Stronger connections to other sectors	HIGH-LEVEL	*2 – Shared Endeavor*
Building stronger links between research and other sectors (e.g. industry/public sector/non-profits) for the purpose of diversifying careers, mobility of talent and knowledge, facilitating the valorisation and impact of research outputs and outcomes, improving public engagement in the research process, and so on.		
Evidence for the value of good research cultures	HIGH-LEVEL & SPECIFIC	*4 – Role Model*
Developing a data and evidence base to support research culture actions and advocacy.		
Uncertainty/rigour statements in applications	SPECIFIC	*5 – Integrity and Ethics*
Including a dedicated section to underline the proposed research process.		
Accountability & constructiveness in peer review	HIGH-LEVEL	*6 – Collaborative and supportive*
Developing a culture of peer review where comments are owned by their authors and focused on the content in a constructive way.		
SECOND CLUSTER		
Research culture statements in applications	SPECIFIC	*8 – Discussions on Research Culture*
Including a dedicated section for research culture in funding applications, as well as hiring and promotion processes.		
Making space for new talent	HIGH-LEVEL	*1 – Careers*
Ensuring career trajectories are not limited by a lack of senior academic positions.		
THIRD CLUSTER		
Ringfenced funding for research-enabling activities/roles	SPECIFIC	*3 – Diverse and Inclusive*
Ensuring that critical research-enabling activities are sufficiently supported with resources and funding.		
Citizen assembly for funding priorities	SPECIFIC	*2 – Shared Endeavor*
Establishing a democratic process to define funding priorities for research.		
Encourage discourse on research cultures	HIGH-LEVEL	*8 – Discussions on Research Culture*
Fostering dialogue at all levels on the concept of research cultures and its importance (e.g. conducting workshops, open discussions…)		
Reskilling experienced professionals for advisory and advocacy roles	HIGH-LEVEL & SPECIFIC	*1 – Careers*
Valuing the experience and expertise of retiring individuals by providing opportunities for them to contribute in alternative ways.		
Expanding the definition of good research practice	HIGH-LEVEL	*8 – Discussions on Research Culture*
Adding research culture and environment aspects to definitions and training in good research practice.		
Career development plans (and protected time) for all research-related roles	SPECIFIC	*3 – Diverse and Inclusive*
Creating a tool to enable career perspectives for people in research and giving space and motivation for them to work on it.		

Conclusion

This report synthesises and summarises the Responsible Research in Action workshop, through the perspective of the co-chairs as well as the participants. The challenges, opportunities, and actions described herein represent the thoughts and opinions of the individuals who took part in the workshop, and are an output of the diversity of roles, perspectives, and institutional types involved in the process.

Further work of the Science Europe Working Group on Research Culture will be informed by the results of this workshop, and we fully intend to continue developing initiatives to turn the Vision and Framework into tangible change that improves the research system. To that end, this report should serve as inspiration for readers in order to reflect, enable further discussions with diverse groups of stakeholders, and develop concrete actions to improve research culture in your own context.

ANNEX 1

Full List of Identified Actions

High-level Action Specific Action Both Levels

Action	Short Description	Addresses Vision Statement
Portfolio approach to contributions	Instead of author lists, using something like CREDIT taxonomy to denote contributions to research outputs	The research system is collaborative and supportive, where everyone involved values each other for what they bring to the system.
Stronger connections to other sectors	Building stronger links between research and other sectors (e.g. industry/public sector/ non-profits), for the purpose of diversifying careers, mobility of talent and knowledge, facilitating the valorisation and impact of research outputs and outcomes, improving public engagement in the research process, and so on.	Research is embedded in society and seen as a shared endeavour where all domains/forms of knowledge production are valued, and everyone can play a role.
Diversifying funding streams	Finding and utilising various/mixed sources of funding to support research activities (e.g. public/private funding, foundation/charities, and other sources)	Research professionals and institutions have full academic freedom and autonomy to pursue their ideas, supported by adequate funding, infrastructure, and support mechanisms.
360-Degree feedback in all proposals and appraisals	Ensuring opportunities to provide feedback vertically and horizontally, broadening assessment	The research system is collaborative and supportive, where everyone involved values each other for what they bring to the system.
Accountability in peer review + constructiveness	Develop a culture of peer review where comments are owned by their authors and focused on the content in a constructive way.	The research system is collaborative and supportive, where everyone involved values each other for what they bring to the system.
Opening of the research process	Making all aspects of how research is done more visible to everyone (in and out of research)	The research sector acts as a role model, setting examples of transparent, effective, fair, and sustainable policies and practices.
More funding opportunities for training in good research practice	Ensuring that enough resources are spent on developing quality researchers	Research professionals and institutions have full academic freedom and autonomy to pursue their ideas, supported by adequate funding, infrastructure, and support mechanisms.

Action	Short Description	Addresses Vision Statement
Greater mobility within research	Allowing opportunities to move between roles and domains within and between institutions	Research systems are diverse and inclusive. They lead to a broad range of research ideas, as well as a diverse array of contributions.
Public involvement in evaluations and decisions	Engaging the public both in peer-review exercises as well as priority setting	Research is embedded in society and seen as a shared endeavour where all domains/forms of knowledge production are valued, and everyone can play a role.
Sections for self-assessment/self-reflection in applications (as well as protected time)	Encouraging research staff to reflect on their activities and achievements to develop themselves and their careers	The research system is collaborative and supportive, where everyone involved values each other for what they bring to the system.
Better venues for neutral results	Expanding the offer for communicating non-positive results based on robust processes	All research is done at the highest levels of integrity and ethics, ensuring that research processes are trustworthy, and outputs must effectively contribute to knowledge advancement.
Making space for new talent	Ensuring career trajectories are not limited by a lack of senior academic positions;	Careers in research are attractive, sustainable, and well-supported both publicly and privately
Reskilling experienced professionals for advisory and advocacy roles	Valuing the experience and expertise of retiring individuals by providing opportunities for them to contribute in alternative ways	Careers in research are attractive, sustainable, and well-supported both publicly and privately
Expanding definition of good research practice	Adding research culture and environment aspects to definitions and training in good research practice	Discussions on research cultures are considered an integral aspect of group, institutional, and international research endeavours.
Public advocacy for the research process	Actively educating the public in the scientific process (warts and all)	Research is embedded in society and seen as a shared endeavour where all domains/forms of knowledge production are valued, and everyone can play a role.
Visits to research institutes (school visits)	Example of the above - bring school classes to interact with research groups	Research is embedded in society and seen as a shared endeavour where all domains/forms of knowledge production are valued, and everyone can play a role.

High-level Action Specific Action Both Levels

Action	Short Description	Addresses Vision Statement
Ringfenced funding for research-enabling activities/ roles	Ensuring that critical research-enabling activities are sufficiently supported with resources/funding	Research systems are diverse and inclusive. They lead to a broad range of research ideas, as well as a diverse array of contributions.
Citizen assembly for funding priorities	Establishing a democratic process to define funding priorities for research	Research is embedded in society and seen as a shared endeavour where all domains/forms of knowledge production are valued, and everyone can play a role.
Modeling/gamifying the research process	Making research accessible and understandable in a fun way to the public and other stakeholders	Research is embedded in society and seen as a shared endeavour where all domains/forms of knowledge production are valued, and everyone can play a role.
Awards for good research culture	Recognizing and spotlighting/rewarding contributions to positive research culture	Discussions on research cultures are considered an integral aspect of group, institutional, and international research endeavours.
Encourage discourse on research cultures	Fostering dialogue at all levels on the concept of research cultures and its importance (e.g. conducting workshops, open discussions, etc.)	Discussions on research cultures are considered an integral aspect of group, institutional, and international research endeavours.
Crowdfunding for positively evaluated research	Allowing the public to directly fund quality-controlled research proposals	Research is embedded in society and seen as a shared endeavour where all domains/forms of knowledge production are valued, and everyone can play a role.
Career path equivalency maps and models	Visualizing parallel career trajectories across roles and their links	Careers in research are attractive, sustainable, and well-supported both publicly and privately
Outreach statements for research outputs	Including a lay summary alongside all research outputs	Research is embedded in society and seen as a shared endeavour where all domains/forms of knowledge production are valued, and everyone can play a role.
High-level review report of cultures and careers	Commission a consultancy study on careers in and the cultures of the research sector, in order to highlight issues for policy makers	Discussions on research cultures are considered an integral aspect of group, institutional, and international research endeavours.

Action	Short Description	Addresses Vision Statement
Research culture statements in applications	Including a dedicated section for research culture in funding applications/hiring/ promotion	Discussions on research cultures are considered an integral aspect of group, institutional, and international research endeavours.
Evidence for the value of good research cultures	Developing an data and evidence base to support research culture actions and advocacy	The research sector acts as a role model, setting examples of transparent, effective, fair, and sustainable policies and practices.
Uncertainty statements in applications/rigour statements	Including a dedicated section to underline the research process	All research is done at the highest levels of integrity and ethics, ensuring that research processes are trustworthy, and outputs must effectively contribute to knowledge advancement.
Incentivizing transparency	Recognizing and rewarding actions that make research more open and transparent	All research is done at the highest levels of integrity and ethics, ensuring that research processes are trustworthy, and outputs must effectively contribute to knowledge advancement.
Career development plans (and protected time) for all research-elated roles	Creating a tool to enable career perspectives for people in research and giving space for them to work on it	Research systems are diverse and inclusive. They lead to a broad range of research ideas, as well as a diverse array of contributions.

ANNEX 2

Proposed Agenda for One-day Workshop

- **Check-in/Introductory presentation** **40”**
- **Session 1: Environmental Scanning/Trend Identification** **70”**
  - Group work *25”*
  - Presenting in plenary *45”*
- **Session 2: STEEPLE Analysis and Mapping** **50”**
  - Group work *30”*
  - Presenting in plenary *20”*
- **Session 3: Backcasting and Action Plan development** **90”**
  - Group work *60”*
  - Presentation in plenary and discussion *30”*
- **Conclusion: Reflection and Feedback on the Workshop** **30”**
  - Next steps and how to keep group involved *5”*
  - Feedback and reflection *5”*
  - Wrap-up/Reflection/check out *10”*

ANNEX 3

Environmental Scanning Prompt

Environmental Scanning Task: Observe the research ecosystems around you, and brainstorm a list of both weak and strong signals for what could be changing in research cultures

For "Environmental Scanning", the idea is to look around at what's going on in your research ecosystems for concrete signals of change.

- You could pay attention to your research group/unit, your institution, your country, or any other place you encounter things that could influence research cultures
- Use the eight vision statements from the Science Europe 'Vision and Framework for Research Cultures' document for guidance on what sorts of signals to look for.
- These signals should be concrete and tangible, something you can share with the group next week.
- These signals can be weak or strong – the idea is to really focus on your senses, looking for small things that could be signalling downstream change.
- For example: Do you hear people talking differently about metrics? Are there more incentives or activities fostering groups/collaboration vs. individuals? Is research being talked about more/less/differently in society? What are the concrete things you see/hear/experience?

Spend some time observing the world around you and trying to pick up these signals. Come to the workshop with a list of what you consider weak or strong signals of research culture change. If you need some guidance, there are some links below which dive deeper into the topic.

Resources on Environmental Scanning and Weak Signals (non-exhaustive, feel free to dive deeper if you'd like):

- https://pujaprakash.medium.com/how-to-scan-for-trends-197a3f3d4e85
- https://learn.marsdd.com/article/how-to-scan-for-weak-signals-of-change/
- https://www.sitra.fi/en/articles/what-is-a-weak-signal/
- https://www.sitra.fi/en/publications/weak-signals-from-the-future/#2-scanning-signals
- https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/publications/horizon-scanning-tips (a bit longer of a document)
- https://www.purposeandmeans.io/horizon-scanning-for-beginners-part-3-deciphering-weak-signals

Science Europe AISBL
Rue de la Science 14, 1040 Brussels, Belgium

Science Europe is the association of major research funding and research performing organisations in Europe.

Our vision is for the European Research Area to have the optimal conditions to support robust education and research & innovation systems.

We define long-term perspectives for European research and champion best-practice approaches that enable high-quality research for knowledge advancement and the needs of society.

We are uniquely placed to lead advancements to the European Research Area and inform global developments through participation in research initiatives where science is a strong and trusted component of sustainable economic, environmental, and societal development.

More information is available at www.scienceeurope.org

@scienceeurope.org
@ScienceEurope
Science Europe
@science-europe