The OSCAR CoARA Boost Project: an Open Science Community Fostering the Reform of Research Assessment

PUBMET2026
12 September 2026

Nataša Jakominić Marot

University of Rijeka, Croatia
Head of University Centre for Research and Innovation

Prof. Dr. Saša Zelenika

University of Rijeka, Faculty of Engineering, Croatia

Funded by the European Union

CC BY

Why Reform of Research Assessment (RRA)?

Traditional assessment

- Publication counts
- Journal-based metrics
- Narrow definitions of excellence



Responsible assessment

- Quality over quantity
- Transparency
- Equity
- Diverse research contributions
- Open Science

The challenge is no longer defining reform principles, but implementing them!

Funded by the European Union

OS Collaboration for Research Career Advancement and Policy Innovation at UNIRI and UCY (OSCAR)

- CoARA Boost Teaming project, December 2024 - December 2025
- **Project coordinator**: University of Rijeka (UNIRI), Signatory & Member of CoARA, CoARA Action Plan (January 2024); Member of WGs on Reforming Academic Career Assessment (ACA) and on Early- & Mid-Career Researchers (EMCRs); pilot partner in HE projects related to RA: OPUS and SECURE.
- **Project partner 1**: University of Cyprus (UCY), Signatory & Member of CoARA, AP to be developed within OSCAR; Leader of CoARA National Chapter Cyprus; pilot partner in HE projects OPUS and SECURE.
- **Project partner 2**: European Office Cyprus (EOC).

OSCAR aimed to implement Research Assessment Reform and Open Science through structured peer learning.

Funded by the European Union

OS Collaboration for Research Career Advancement and Policy Innovation at UNIRI and UCY (OSCAR)

Objectives:

- institutional change and fostering of advanced research culture;
- develop an effective CoARA AP at UCY based on UNIRI experience;
- integrate OS into research evaluations at both universities;
- advocate OS at the policy-setting level, support OS through university libraries;
- utilise research-on-research to validate and enhance RA practices;
- mutual transfer of knowledge & capacity building.

OSCAR
OPEN SCIENCE COLLABORATION

→ Institution- and context-specific testing

Funded by the European Union

Why OSCAR worked?

YUFE Alliance membership → Previous joint projects → Existing trust → Shared governance culture → Strategic alignment → Structured peer learning

- Collaboration already existed before the project started → trust → rapid reform deployment possible
- Short funding cycle → little room for building relationships from scratch → instant focus on implementation of activities.

Funded by the European Union

UNIRI before OSCAR

More than 15 years of reform experience

2010 → HR Excellence in Research

2021 → Open Science Policy

2022 → Early CoARA signatory

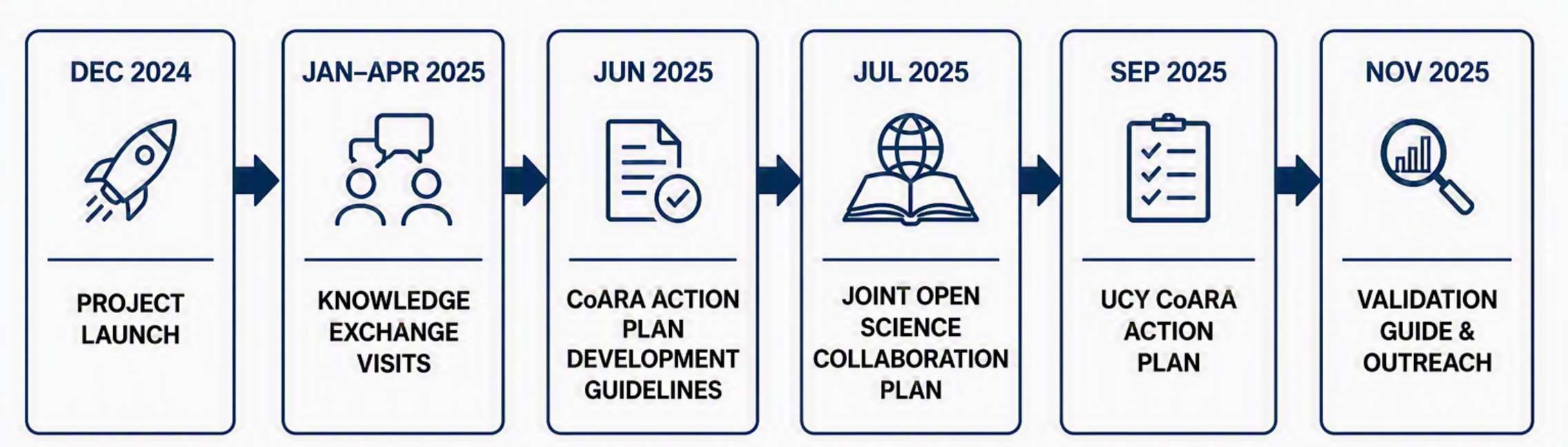
2024 → CoARA Action Plan 2024–2027

2024–2025 → Active participation in European reform projects

UNIRI's long-standing commitment to HRS4R, Open Science and responsible assessment → strong institutional knowledge base that could be shared through OSCAR → UNIRI acted as a reform *mentor* institution.

Funded by the European Union

OSCAR timeline



Each OSCAR activity produced a concrete institutional output, demonstrating how structured peer learning can accelerate RRA and OS implementation.

Funded by the European Union

Source: author, visuals created with assistance of AI (MS Copilot)

OSCAR Impacts and Added values

Impacts:

- Embedding **responsible assessment practices at UCY** using UNIRI's policy frameworks;
- **Applying UCY's scientific validation methods at UNIRI** as a testbed;
- Promoting a **cultural shift** towards **qualitative** and **fair research assessment** at both universities;
- Advancing **Open Science** principles to enhance **transparency and reproducibility;**
- Supporting **inclusive and high-quality research** through improved research assessment processes;
- Influencing **institutional** and **national policies** across Cyprus through EOC participation;
- **Capacity building for researchers, evaluators, and policy-makers** at UCY and Cyprus to implement and sustain the reform.

Added value:

- Comprehensive approach integrating simultaneously the OS principles at **organizational, policy-making, and educational levels;** by addressing these dimensions holistically, the potential to generate lasting change is maximized.
- Fostering of scientific validation and evidence-based evaluation methodologies. By rigorously assessing and refining assessment criteria and tools, outputs are not only impactful, but also **scientifically validated and adaptable to diverse institutional settings**.

Funded by the European Union

UNIRI - UCY Collaboration Model

UNIRI contribution	UCY contribution
CoARA implementation experience	Research-on-research expertise
HRS4R practices	Validation methodologies
Open Science integration	National policy engagement

Bidirectional knowledge transfer

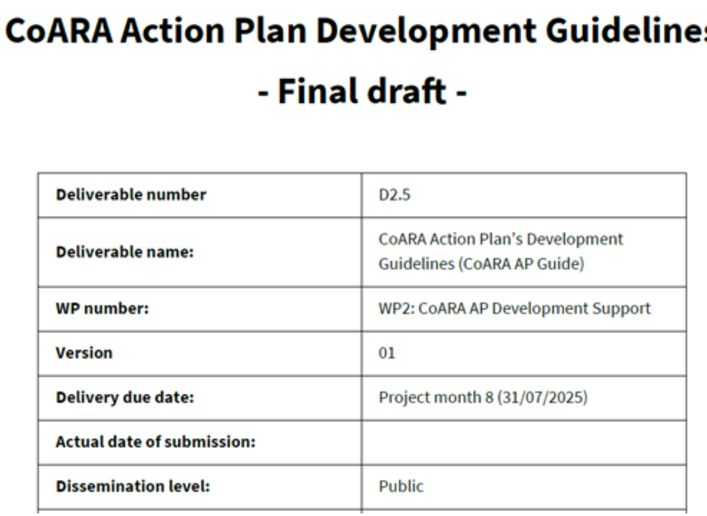
UNIRI ↔ University of Cyprus

Selected outputs:

- CoARA Action Plan Development Guidelines
- UCY CoARA Action Plan
- Libraries' Open Science Collaboration Plan
- Validation Framework

Funded by the European Union

Output 1: CoARA Action Plan Development Guidelines



CoARA Action Plan Development Guidelines

- Final draft -

Deliverable number	D2.5
Deliverable name:	CoARA Action Plan's Development Guidelines (CoARA AP Guide)
WP number:	WP2: CoARA AP Development Support
Version	01
Delivery due date:	Project month 8 (31/07/2025)
Actual date of submission:	
Dissemination level:	Public

- Practical, step-by-step guidance for developing institutional CoARA Action Plans;
- Structured methodology;
- Transferable framework;
- Openly reusable resource;
- Directly supported UCY Action Plan development.

The guidelines became one of OSCAR's most important outputs because they transformed implementation experience into a resource usable by other institutions.

Funded by the European Union

Output 2: UCY CoARA Action Plan



First comprehensive framework for responsible assessment reform at UCY.

Main characteristics:

- Open Science integration;
- Stakeholder engagement strategy;
- Phased implementation roadmap;
- Alignment with institutional priorities.

Rather than replicating the UNIRI approach, existing practices were adapted to local governance structures and national requirements.

Funded by the European Union

Output 3: UNIRI & UCY libraries Open Science Collaboration Plan



Libraries emerged as active reform actors.

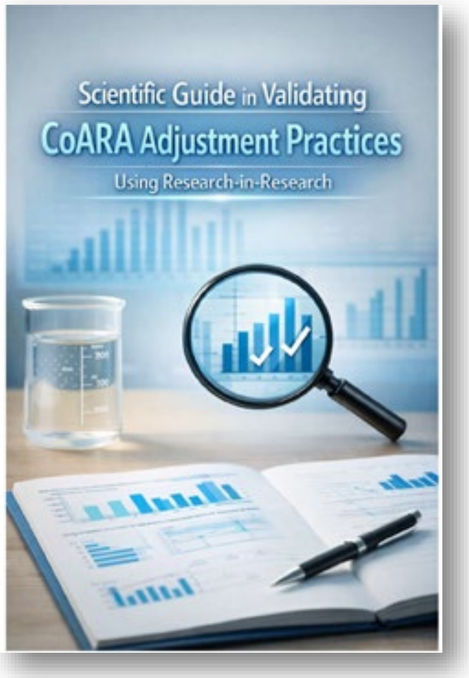
Libraries contribute through:

- Open Science training;
- Repository development;
- Data curation;
- Awareness raising;
- Community building.

One of OSCAR's most important lessons concerns the evolving strategic role of university libraries within Open Science and research assessment reform.

Funded by the European Union

Output 4: Validation Framework – Research-on-Research



Framework for:

- Indicator selection;
- Bias prevention;
- Feedback loops;
- Quality validation;
- Assessment monitoring.

→ Assessment reform itself requires evaluation.

The Framework offers a replicable methodology allowing institutions to assess the rigour, fairness and effectiveness of their own reform activities.

Funded by the European Union

Challenges and Tensions

Barriers:

- Limited project duration;
- Restricted flexibility;
- Legislative constraints;
- Resistance to change;
- Concerns about reduced objectivity.



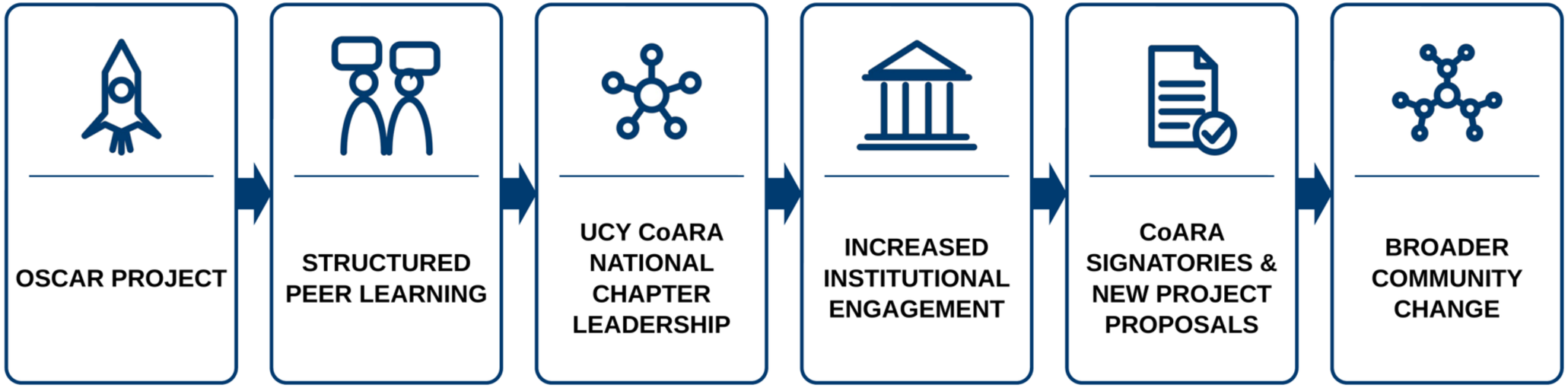
Enablers:

- Trust;
- Leadership commitment;
- Existing cooperation;
- Community engagement;
- Open communication.

- **Implementation is more challenging than policy adoption.**
- **Many challenges are cultural, not technical.**
- **Stakeholder engagement and communication = essential for overcoming resistance!**

Funded by the European Union

Impact beyond OSCAR → Effects Across the Ecosystem



OSCAR demonstrates how structured peer learning and openly shared resources can catalyse research assessment reform beyond the original project partnership.

- Neapolis University engaged
- European University Cyprus signed CoARA
- CYENS Centre of Excellence proposal
- Other CoARA Boost projects funded
- Openly shared outputs enabling reuse

Funded by the European Union

Source: author, Infographic created with assistance of AI (MS Copilot)

Lessons for the PUBMET Community

1. Peer learning accelerates implementation;
2. Context always matters → tailor the reforms;
3. University libraries are strategic reform partners;
4. Open resources enable reuse and adaptation;
5. Cultural change requires long-term commitment, understanding and an adequate pace.

→

Implementation pathways must remain flexible and context-sensitive.

OSCAR demonstrated both the value and limitations of transferring practices across institutional and national contexts.

Funded by the European Union

Conclusions

OSCAR demonstrates that:

- Responsible assessment can be operationalised if contextualised;
- Open Science and RRA are mutually reinforcing;
- Collaboration accelerates institutional learning;
- Shared tools support wider community change;
- Shared purpose and communities greatly facilitate the reform process;
- Cascade funding speeds up reforms and provides the needed incentives towards RRA.

→ Research assessment reform and Open Science are driven by collaboration and shared commitment.

Many tools already exist in the CoARA community. The challenge is selecting, adapting and implementing them within specific institutional environments!

Funded by the European Union

Thank you!

Nataša Jakominić Marot

natasa@uniri.hr

Saša Zelenika

szelenika@uniri.hr

Licensed under CC BY 4.0

Funded by the European Union