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**SUPER MoRRI – Scientific understanding and provision of an  
enhanced and robust monitoring system for RRI**

## **D7.6 Executive Summary of the Third Annual Event**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research funders have not been spared from ongoing debates about *better* ways to govern the science system. Even more so, their power position, granted by their role of being the principal actors distributing funds to researchers, has put particular emphasis on the logics that govern critical funding practices, such as identifying and supporting 'best' research, defining and operationalising research priorities in the light of global societal challenges or responding to movements and transformative practices such as open science.

To understand how charged this debate currently is, it suffices looking into the numerous initiatives and actors that are currently engaging in defining, debating and agreeing on issues around (responsible) research assessment, an integral part of funding practice: The European Commission recently finalised an agreement on reforming research assessment, in which research funders are key stakeholders. Science Europe, representing 34 European funders, issued its recommendations on research assessment based on consultation with its members and beyond. The Global Research Council group of funders, which has its working group on responsible research assessment, collaborated with the Research on Research Institute on a recent study of the changing role of funders in responsible research assessment. These initiatives build on prior community-driven efforts to improve researchers' assessment, including DORA and the Leiden Manifesto.

It was in this light that we, the SUPER MoRRI consortium, invited research funders, research performing organisations and policymakers from various European countries asking a central question: what does it take to create a responsible research funding culture in science? Through presentations, moderated discussions and more focused break-out sessions, this question was tackled through three vistas: experimentation and piloting actions in research funding organisations, governing research(er) assessment from the perspective of research performing organisations, and finally the political responsibility funding organisations have.

The discussions elicited a number of insights pertaining to the recommendation that indeed funders have a key position of agency, but political responsibility cannot be attributed to these actors alone. Instead, funders and funded (and, frankly, all stakeholders to the research system) have the responsibility of making visible the assumptions inscribed in the contemporary dominant categories of research funding practice and reimagining them.

Furthermore, an epistemic tension between what knowledge counts as good evidence surfaced in discussions relating to pilots and experiments, stressing that more systematic approaches to the creation of evidence are required to meet the epistemic standards of 'robust' evidence for research funders and policymakers in science.





# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Scope and objectives of the deliverable

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The purpose of this deliverable is to provide a concise description of the Third SUPER MoRRI annual event which took place virtually on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 2022. This executive summary provides background information regarding statistics of the event, brief descriptions of the presentations, breakout sessions and discussions that were presented throughout the event. The deliverable also includes a brief description of the underlying rationale for the organization of the event.

## 1.2 Structure of this deliverable

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Consistent with the executive summary of the Second SUPER MoRRI Annual Event 2021, this deliverable will continue with a brief description of the purpose and approach of the 2022 event. Chapter 2 describes various practical considerations that arose during the organization of the annual event. Here, the agenda of the 2021 annual event is included. Chapter 3 includes brief descriptions of various presentations that were given during the annual event with a focus on the lessons to be learned from these components of the annual event. Chapter 4 concludes with the main learnings, which are projected to implications for ongoing activities within SUPER MoRRI.

## 1.3 The purpose of the SUPER MoRRI annual event

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As written in the SUPER MoRRI Description of Work (DoW), the annual events primarily serve as an opportunity to present the state of affairs of the SUPER MoRRI project to a diversity of stakeholders for whom this information is relevant.

In the case of the 2022 event, with its central theme of responsible research funding, the primary stakeholders whose practices the event scrutinized relate to research funders. Of course, and in line with the rationale of democratized approaches such as RRI, the stakeholders that were invited (mainly) included a diverse mix of European science policymakers, researchers actively conducting research on or interested in responsible research funding (representing research performing organisations (RPOs); ranging fields from social to natural science), as well as, of course, research funders from different European research funding organisations (RFOs).

Amongst the stakeholders that were present, SUPER MoRRI enjoys recognition concerning the importance of the work that is being conducted, as was mentioned multiple times during the event by a variety of attendees. This stresses the larger thematic context in which SUPER MoRRI relates to, as issues are not only being studied, but also actively intervened in. In this light, SUPER





MoRRI is positioned in the current and ongoing debates concerning research assessment, monitoring and evaluation and more.

What became visible during the annual event is that the SUPER MoRRI project serves as an important platform facilitating the ongoing dialogue (and debates) across actors with different views on e.g. what the right way of doing responsible research funding entails. This mediating function, we stress, should be maintained and made sustainable beyond the project's lifetime.

Additionally, the stance the project (and its representatives) take(s) in these debates, and the proximity to other movements, actors and organisations that are concerned with similar issues produces the normative standpoint that allows SUPER MoRRI to take on the issues that it scrutinizes, as e.g., the ongoing work regarding the creation of a community involving funded projects of the *Science with and for Society* program (as part of WP7) comes with particular anchor points of what *good* research is and how it is to be done (RRI).

In this sense, the SUPER MoRRI project does not only facilitate dialogue across the community, but also actively (and critically) reimagines and intervenes in the themes it is scrutinising through gathering, translating, evidencing and other project activities. It is in this context that this description of the Annual Event needs to be read, as this double role influences the choices made and hence the questions that are being asked.

## 2 GENERAL PRACTICAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE ANNUAL EVENT

### 2.1 Preparation and recruitment

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The Annual Event 2022 was organised by the team at CWTS from Leiden University, starting about four months in advance with drafting the concept for the event in line with the ongoing streams of work and interests of the SUPER MoRRI project. One key activity that has influenced the decision by the CWTS team to focus on Responsible Research Funding was the completion of the SUPER MoRRI Research Funders Study where the learnings could cross-pollinate the agenda and refined answers to emerging question could be retrieved; as well as the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation's report "Towards a reform of the research assessment system"<sup>1</sup>, which already fed into the event with particular problematisations in the interlinkage between research funding and research assessment, and created momentum for discussing such themes.

#### 2.1.1 Recruitment of Participants

In order to ensure participation, some key strategies for recruitment and involvement of the participants had to be defined. As described above, the decision to focus on research funding

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<sup>1</sup> [Towards a reform of the research assessment system - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/00000000-0000-0000-0000-000000000000)





organisations and their practices given both the ongoing debates around research assessment and the completion of the SUPER MoRRI research funding organisation study (RFO study) was in itself a strategic move. It allowed to capture the momentum and, at a time of high visibility, hinge onto and contribute to the debates with the project's work in mind.

The second strategy was to use the already-existing network of SUPER MoRRI for dissemination of the event. In particular, the event invitations were purposefully directed to individuals that we knew were part of the desired participants that the event aimed for. This has been achieved by mobilising the following SUPER MoRRI communities:

- International Satellite Partners: the international satellite partners were key to the second annual event 2021, representing countries and carrying knowledge from their respective science systems into the discussions from the Americas, Asia-Pacific, Africa and Europe (see D7.4). To get an international orientation and contribute with perspectives that stem from beyond European research funding logics for ensuring relationality, the International Satellite Partners were approached to not only join the event, but also to recruit other participants (see appendix 1.1 for the invitation).
- Country Correspondent Network: Crucial to this year's recruitment strategy was the involvement of the Country Correspondent Network. This network of representatives from all member states allowed for personalised invitations to (national and regional) research funders in their respective countries in their local language. For this, an invitation letter was attached to the communication to the country correspondents for reference (see appendix 1.3 for communication to CCN).
- Respondents of the SUPER MoRRI RFO study: The second role that the Country Correspondent Network had was the communication to and involvement of specific research funding organisations in their respective country in relation to the research funding organisations study led by SUPER MoRRI. The Network was thus asked to also establish direct contact with the respondents and invite them, as stakeholders who already have had committed to the activities of SUPER MoRRI, to further their commitment (see appendix 1.2 for invitation to the respondents).
- Finally, a more general audience comprised of followers on social media (Twitter and LinkedIn specifically), as well as notes during the SwafS ecosystem meetings of SUPER MoRRI ensured a broad scope of invitees. Given that the registration of the event itself happened on a public online platform, the accessibility (and therefore the freedom to partake) was never limited to any group in particular. This also increased the number of researchers present who had an interest in the theme discussed or engage in different ways with science studies.

The third strategy that was followed concerned the format. Due to the considerable diversity of potential actors, their multiple (physical) localtions, professional commitments and more, we chose to host the annual event virtually; allowing for easy access and more flexibility than a physical event where participants not only have to travel to, but also arrange and make time for such commitment.

Finally, another recruitment strategy that was applied for all of the above mentioned groups was personalisation. The materials used to communicate the event, ranging from invitation letters and





emails to the descriptions and notification emails of the event on the online registration service, were specified depending on their target audience. We believe that this, whilst it is a strategy that requires high investment of resources for a comparatively small sample of people, has proven rather efficient, because the commitment of the actors who eventually could be engaged was durable.

With these strategies, a total of 71 people registered for the event from 16 different countries from Europe, Asia and North America. They represented a broad mix of policymakers, researchers and funders from both nationally and regionally operating organisations. During the event, active participants ranged between approximately 35 and 50 at different points in time of the event.

### *2.1.2 Creating a common basis for deliberation*

In view of the different groups of actors addressed, the problem we faced was to ensure a common understanding of the problems that the event tackles, their background, the rationale for collective discussion and make sure that there is transparency in the stakes that the different actors at hand have in relation to responsible funding practices (and what it takes). The background is that with such diversity (geographical, political, cultural), the practices around research funding are likely to be very different (in fact, this was one of the learnings from the RFO study). This is why this common basis for deliberation had to be established first.

To this end, the SUPER MoRRI team collectively wrote a discussion paper that elaborates on the ongoing tensions, the agreements, disagreements, the stakes and actors who partake in this debate. The discussion paper is provided in the appendix 1.4.

Said discussion paper helped not only to create a common ground, but also served as a basis for discerning the questions we wanted to raise in the event internally. Finally, this paper was circulated twice amongst the registered participants of the SUPER MoRRI Annual Event (once about one and a half weeks in advance of the event, and once two days before the event, in order to also reach the newly registered participants). Furthermore, the discussion paper was published on the Annual Event page<sup>2</sup> on the SUPER MoRRI website.

### *2.1.3 Recruitment of Speakers*

Recruiting relevant speakers was achieved via 1) the personal networks of SUPER MoRRI partners and previous collaborations/partnerships, as well as 2) by directly contacting one of the members of the core group in the drafting of the EC report on reforming research assessment introduced in 2.1.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://super-morri.eu/event/responsible-research-funding-annual-event-2022/>





#### 2.1.4 (Online) Venue / Data handling

The technical infrastructure that made possible the hosting of this event was based on the following elements: the video conferencing platform Zoom that allows for the host to (re)distribute control for also communicating a joint effort by the SUPER MoRRI partners and possibly technical assistance for people who have issues. Also, this platform allows for simple creation and access of break-out groups and is licensed by Leiden University, therefore complying with all of the requirements posed by Data Protection Regulations. Coupled with a registration infrastructure provided by Eventbrite, where initial registration emails, privacy statements and declarations, but also tracking of registrations and GDPR-compliant retrieval of contact details for the purpose of the event, was provided, it was possible for the SUPER MoRRI team to ensure a seamless user journey from initial contact to informed registration to active participation.

This proposed architecture and its data handling and protection was double checked by the privacy officer at the Faculty for Social Sciences at Leiden University and contact details were made available for any participant with questions to reach out and inquire. The data handling and protection concept that participants subscribed to by registering on Eventbrite can be found under Appendix 1.5.

#### 2.1.5 Limitations

Given the virtual format and, presumably, online-meeting-fatigue, not all registered participants showed up. This led to an ad-hoc decision to merge two of the initially planned four breakout groups to provide enough input by participants for fruitful discussions. In particular, breakout group two was put together with breakout group three given the large thematic overlap.

## 2.2 The Third SUPER MoRRI annual event agenda

Finally, the detailed programme can be found below. Whilst Erich Griessler (Institute for Advanced Studies in Vienna, Austria) was the overall moderator during the presentations, the collective effort becomes quite clear, as most of the SUPER MoRRI consortium and external expert invitees were hosting the panels and individual sessions (e.g. Dr. Wolfgang Kaltenbrunner for the breakout group on narrative CVs).

| Time (CEST)      | Partner(s)                              |                                  | Activity   |
|------------------|---|----------------------------------|--|
| 10:00 – 10:10    | <u>Ralf Lindner (Fraunhofer ISI)</u>    |                                  | Kick-off: Objective of the day, thanks to participants, setting the mood for discussion <i>and a common goal</i> |
| 10:10-10:20 (+5) | Moderator: <u>Erich Griessler (IHS)</u> | <u>Stephen Curry (DORA)</u>      | What does responsible research funding look like?  |
| 10:25-10:35 (+5) |   | <u>Marta Agostinho (EU-Life)</u> | Excellence in research evaluation: perspective of research institutes  |





| Time (CEST)        | Partner(s)  | Activity   |
|--------------------|---|--|
| 10:40-10:50 (+5)   | <u>James Wilsdon (RoRI)</u>                             | Experiments with responsible research funding        |
| 10:55-11:05 (+5)   | <u>Sean Sopcariu (Luxemburg National Research Fund)</u> | Narrative CVs, incentivizing RRI efforts             |
| 11:10 – 11:30      | <i>Individual reflections + tea- and coffee break</i>   |  |
| 11:30 – 12:15      | <u>Group 1: Inge van der Weijden (CWTS)</u>             | Breakout group 1 on theme Stephen                    |
|                    | <u>Group 2: Carolina Llorente (UPF)</u>                 | Breakout group 2 on theme Marta                      |
|                    | <u>Group 3: André Brasil (CWTS)</u>                     | Breakout group 3 on theme James                      |
|                    | <u>Group 4: Wolfgang Kaltenbrunner (CWTS)</u>           | Breakout group 4 on theme Sean                       |
| 12:15 – 13:00      | <i>Lunch Break</i>                                      |  |
| 13:00 – 13:10 (+5) | Moderator: <u>Richard Woolley (Ingenio)</u>             | Responsibility in research funding in Europe         |
| 13:15 – 13:50      | <u>Erich Griessler (IHS)</u>                            | Online: Discussion, reflections of local discussions |
| 13:50 – 14:00      | <u>Ingeborg Meijer (CWTS)</u>                           | Closing  |

### 3 DESCRIPTIONS AND LESSONS

Research funders have not been spared from ongoing debates about *better* ways to govern the science system. Even more so, the power position granted by their role of being the principal actors distributing funds to researchers has put particular emphasis on the logics that govern critical funding practices, such as identifying and supporting ‘best’ research, defining and operationalising research priorities in the light of global societal challenges or responding to movements and transformative practices such as open science.

To understand how charged this debate currently is, it suffices looking into the numerous initiatives that are currently engaging with defining, debating and agreeing on issues around (responsible) research assessment, an integral part of funding practice: The European Commission recently finalised an agreement on reforming research assessment<sup>3</sup>, in which research funders are key stakeholders. Science Europe, representing 34 European funders, issued its recommendations<sup>4</sup> on research assessment based on consultation with its members and beyond. The Global Research Council group of funders, which has its working group on responsible research assessment, collaborated with the Research on Research Institute on a

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.eua.eu/news/922:reforming-research-assessment-the-agreement-is-now-final.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.scienceeurope.org/our-resources/position-statement-research-assessment-processes/>





recent study<sup>5</sup> of the changing role of funders in responsible research assessment. These initiatives build on prior community-driven efforts to improve researchers' assessment, including DORA<sup>6</sup> and the Leiden Manifesto<sup>7</sup>.

It was in this light that we, the SUPER MoRRI consortium, invited research funders, research performing organisations and policymakers from various European countries asking a central question: what does it take to create a responsible research funding culture?

The event also provided a space for reimagining what responsibility in research funding is, how this can be achieved and what it takes to achieve it whilst having the stakeholders who partake in and maintain the system and its present practices.

### 3.1 An analytical lens: reclassifying the dominant categories of research funding

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*Debunking* is no alien word in the field of science and technology studies and comes in many forms. Here, we will talk about it as a move of *reclassification*. In this report, it serves as a lens to read the results of the Annual Event and the arguments that were aired. In essence, it relates to a long tradition of the field to make things visible that are taken for granted; often in the context of knowledge production practices (especially controversies) and technological contexts<sup>8</sup>. Here, we will take this notion to understand the movements that are ongoing in European research funding and how these movements (re)shape the field.

It helps to think of *dominant categories* of research funding, such as the standard academic CV or aggregate metrics in the context of research(er) assessment - which are under scrutiny by the current movements. Condemned for valuing a publication-driven assessment of research(ers) and luring evaluators to using such proxies for 'quality', these categories are argued to being callous towards fair and transparent research(er) assessments, and subsequently callous toward what is understood as 'good research' as such<sup>9</sup>.

Lurking in the everyday infrastructures of research funders, these *technical categories* do not only hold considerable power over researchers, but also perform what is deemed worthy by evaluators<sup>10</sup>. Much in the spirit of Bowker and Star's *Sorting Things Out*, these movements thus

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<sup>5</sup>[https://rori.figshare.com/articles/report/The\\_changing\\_role\\_of\\_funders\\_in\\_responsible\\_research\\_assessment\\_progress\\_obstacles\\_and\\_the\\_way\\_ahead/13227914](https://rori.figshare.com/articles/report/The_changing_role_of_funders_in_responsible_research_assessment_progress_obstacles_and_the_way_ahead/13227914)

<sup>6</sup> <https://sfdora.org/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.leidenmanifesto.org/>

<sup>8</sup> Latour, B. 1987. *Science in Action. How to follow Scientists and Engineers through Society*. Harvard University Press

<sup>9</sup> Strinzel, M., Brown, J., Kaltenbrunner, W. et al. Ten ways to improve academic CVs for fairer research assessment. *Humanit Soc Sci Commun* 8, 251 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-021-00929-0>

<sup>10</sup> Abildgaard, M. S., Birkbak, A., Jensen, T. E., Madsen, A. K., & Munk, A. K. (2017). Playgrounding Techno-Anthropology. *EASST Review*, 36(2). <https://easst.net/article/playgrounding-techno-anthropology>.





not only render these ‘potent and invisible’ (1999) categories visible for public scrutiny<sup>11</sup>, but also reclassify these categories of research funding.

Under this light, it can be argued that the annual event was an act of both: *making the invisible (categories) visible* and a contribution to the *reclassification of the dominant categories*. The former by providing a public space for dominant categories to stand trial, the latter by the aforementioned act of reimagination and the participants’ deliberative engagement<sup>12</sup>.

## 3.2 Results

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In the following pages, we will present each part of the annual event separately, after which conclusions will be drawn that reflect on the collective picture.

### 3.2.1 What does responsible research funding look like?

One of the points that Stephen Curry made during his presentation that reflects on the funders’ role of driving the research assessment reform, is implied in the introduction to the 2019 EC report on ‘The Future of Scholarly Publishing and Scholarly Communication’<sup>13</sup>:

*“Researchers, communities and all organisations, **in particular funders**, have the possibility of improving the current scholarly communication and publishing system: they should start by bringing changes to the research evaluation system”*

Whilst this statement does not capture what changes are implicated, there is a clear demarcation about the different role that funders play in the science system, in particular in contrast to actor groups whose actions are, as opposed to funders’, ranked or metricised. From this point of departure, Curry reflects on the freedom they enjoy in relation to their responsibilities for driving the reforms ongoing in research assessment to define both opportunities and challenges for them.

Curry stresses that it is important for funders, given their position of power, to acknowledge the intersections between research assessment, developments in open science, and equity and carry these new developments into their (new) practices of research assessment, next to communicating and incorporating these into the ongoing reforms.

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<sup>11</sup> Bowker, G. C., & Star, S. L. (1999). *Sorting things out: Classification and its consequences*. The MIT Press.

<sup>12</sup> Brand, T., & Blok, V. (2019). Responsible innovation in business: a critical reflection on deliberative engagement as a central governance mechanism. *Journal of Responsible Innovation*, 6(1), 4–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23299460.2019.1575681>

<sup>13</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Future of scholarly publishing and scholarly communication* : report of the Expert Group to the European Commission, Publications Office, 2019, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/836532>





Calling for a reconsideration of Gibbons' 'science's new social contract with society'<sup>14</sup> by underlining that the way (i.e. how) research is done matters as much as the research outputs (such as papers or other academic publications), Curry argues that:

- funders should strive to set standards and to influence research culture, but do so in consultation with researchers; thereby fostering a values-based research culture that is open and inclusive. Examples that were discussed that represent such standards include narrative CVs
- funders should open up assessment practices – to provide a clearer picture of the mix of quantitative and qualitative information that is used in decision-making, and by being transparent building trust with the researchers that are being assessed
- leading researchers and management should focus on rewarding teams instead of individual researchers and take a hard line on bullying and harassment
- more cross-pollination should be happening across funders by e.g. sharing case studies of good funding practices independent of journal impact factors and other publication-driven assessment 'shortcuts'<sup>15</sup> (a point that will occur more often throughout the event).

Indeed RFOs are perceived as powerful organisations; this is something that has been noted by participants of the breakout group concerning this presentation. This power seems to be especially condensed on their research assessment practices. Legitimately, however, the participants asked whether this recognition also exists on the funding-side.

This criticism, or concern, illustrates very well what Boker and Star call the 'potent and invisible'<sup>16</sup> categories (of research funding) and their call to make 'the invisible visible'. That is, if research funders assess research(ers) by using (powerful) metrics that discriminate between e.g. 'high-impact' and 'low-impact' without *questioning* it, they run the risk of becoming complicit to rather irresponsible practices of research(er) assessment that are, arguably, in need of reclassification.

Such reclassification, however, is not an easy undertaking either, as another discussion that was sparked through Curry's presentation shows; this time concerning narrative CVs.

According to Strinzel et al.<sup>17</sup> academic CVs address the arguably most central document in the communication of academic track records (especially with evaluation purposes). Its structure performs what is important (i.e. what academic success looks like) and valued. The authors warn that researchers are "being judged upon inadequate proxies such as their seniority and renown, the number of papers they have authored, the impact factor of the journals, in which these papers were published, and their accumulated citations" (2021) rather than the quality of their work. They make a good case for narrative CVs, arguing that they have the potential to diversify

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<sup>14</sup> Gibbons, M. (1999). Science's new social contract with society. *Nature*, 402(6761 Suppl), C81-4. <https://doi.org/10.1038/3501157>

<sup>15</sup> Strinzel, M., Brown, J., Kaltenbrunner, W. et al. Ten ways to improve academic CVs for fairer research assessment. *Humanit Soc Sci Commun* 8, 251 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-021-00929-0>

<sup>16</sup> Bowker, G. C., & Star, S. L. (1999). *Sorting things out: Classification and its consequences*. The MIT Press.

<sup>17</sup> Strinzel, M., Brown, J., Kaltenbrunner, W. et al. Ten ways to improve academic CVs for fairer research assessment. *Humanit Soc Sci Commun* 8, 251 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-021-00929-0>





research careers and making research(er) assessment fairer and more transparent. However, what was also noted during the discussion it is important to consider that narrative CVs and their uptake by research funders in assessment practices needs harmonisation on both sides: the reviewer and the applicant, stressing again Curry's point that funders must collaborate with researchers to change the dominant practices of research funding.

### 3.2.2 *Excellence in research evaluation: perspective of research institutes*

Marta Agostinho's presentation, as a representative of 15 organisations in the life sciences, reflected on notions of excellence in relation to the reforms taking place in research evaluation. Indeed Agostinho stresses one of the key points that repeatedly occurred during the presentations and the discussion: namely that research funders have a 'lion's stake in setting the tone and pace'.

As member of the core group representing the diversity of the European research community in the drafting process of the 'agreement on reforming research assessment'<sup>18</sup>, Agostinho drew from both this experience and her position amidst the 15 research institutes to explore a number of ideas on how funding bodies and research institutions can move forward in supporting responsible research evaluation together.

The story that she told was that of how EU Life institutions conduct research(er) assessment for purposes of, for instance, promotion or recruitment. Reflective and critical of the implications of conducting evaluation in particular (different) ways, the organisations attached to the cluster defined and agreed upon principles that require both qualitative approaches and bibliometric measures being used in evaluations, following and aligning their institutional evaluative logics to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment<sup>19</sup> and the Leiden Manifesto<sup>20</sup>. Here, Agostinho shared part of the discussions that happen internally about the criteria and indicators the organisations use to promote junior principal investigators, raising the concern that it is not sufficient to e.g. only count the numbers of supervised doctoral students or post-docs; and that additionally there should be an inclusion of qualitative data that describes the quality of such supervision in the evaluation (and subsequently informing the decision of promoting). Also mitigating what de Rijcke and Muller (2017) describe concerning the performative nature of such quantitative indicators becoming targets and goals for research to strive towards; in this example to increase the amount of supervision and therefore potentially risking supervision quality<sup>21</sup>.

Furthermore, the institutes share good practices about how they recruit and promote researchers in the individual organisations and actively negotiate and scrutinise indicators used. One such indicator is that of research quality, where the organisations actively included diversity and

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<sup>18</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/process-towards-agreement-reforming-research-assessment-2022-jan-18\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/process-towards-agreement-reforming-research-assessment-2022-jan-18_en)

<sup>19</sup> Bladek, M. (2014) DORA: San Francisco declaration on research assessment. *College and Research Libraries News* 75(4): 191-193 + 196. <https://crln.acrl.org/index.php/crlnews/article/view/9104>. Accessed July 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Hicks D, Wouters P, Waltman L, de Rijcke S, Rafols I (2015) Bibliometrics: The Leiden Manifesto for research metrics. *Nature* 520:429–431

<sup>21</sup> Müller R, de Rijcke S (2017) Thinking with indicators. Exploring the epistemic impacts of academic performance indicators in the life sciences. *Research Evaluation* 26:157–168





equality indicators to be considered an implied dimension of good research in their research activities and their assessment.

Arguably, all these initiatives and considerations form parts of a wider debate about questions of definition: what is scientific success? What is good science? The learning from the story that Agostinho shared is to remain critical and reflective and to make the space available for being so, making, in the words of Bowker and Star (1999), the invisible visible that performs what is valued by science and therefore also what is not.

Lastly, further points that stand in direct relation to the story of research assessment at EU Life, are concerned with:

- the making of space for diversity in academia; directly relating to issues of rewards and recognition in the context of rewarding teams of researchers rather than individuals, often senior, representatives of said groups, such as infrastructure specialists, science communicators and more, but also an appreciation for diverse characters: “from alpha males of science to the alphabet of science”<sup>22</sup>
- the recognition that reduced and uncertain funding of science is responsible for extreme competition and stretches on research assessment
- the importance of research on research to foster a culture of piloting and thus be able to make evidence-informed decisions regarding, for instance, institutional changes
- the funding of continuation of efforts to address a particular issue (hire for change)

### 3.2.3 *Experimentation and evidence for responsible research funding*

A prominent theme that emerged out of the discussions and presentations, and indeed a theme that can be described as a ground swell of research activities in the responsible research funding domain is that of *experimentation*. Already in the previously described presentations, ideas of experimentation are ubiquitous: narrative CVs, funding continuation (hire for change) or piloting as a modus of experimenting more generally – all are concerned with (some kind of) experimentation.

James Wilsdon’s presentation explored this notion explicitly; departing from criticism saying that: “it is easy to advocate for certain changes to the system (e.g. more narrative CVs! More lotteries!) without necessarily designing robust methods of evaluating such interventions”. The thinking is that as the need for changing dominant (and, as elaborated earlier, callous) research funding practices arising, attention is put on experimentation and designing interventions from a moral-ethical normative stance. However, Wilsdon argues, there must be more emphasis on the intersection between evidencing and changing funding practices in terms of systematic testing of what works and what does not. This quote by Sir John Kingman, reflecting on his time as Chair at UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), illustrates this point in the context of UK science policy:

*“If I look back on many years of involvement in political decision-making and policy-making*

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<sup>22</sup> Marta Agostinho, a quote from a meeting about inequalities in science





*around science, innovation and R&D, I am struck by how much of it tends to turn on gut feel of the individuals involved, than on hard evidence and analysis. This is ironic, because good science is all about testing hypotheses against data, empirical results and facts.”<sup>23</sup>*

One provocative question that can reframe this statement in relation to funding is whether responsible research funding is possible at all *without* robust evaluation and experimentation. Thus continuous questioning and the reimagining of something that works *better* (what ever this may mean in any given context), becoming a status quo, as such systematic learning can be used to test and evaluate not only research funding processes themselves, but also serve as an anchor point for finding new approaches that can, potentially, be deemed *responsible*. Following quote encapsulates this statement:

*“The beauty of experimentation is that you don’t need to stick to one solution: you can compare multiple approaches – and **test** which one is best.”<sup>24</sup>*

This very fitting statement comes from RoRI – the Research On Research Institute, in which Wilsdon is involved in -, and was recently published carrying the name “The Experimental Research Funder’ Handbook”<sup>25</sup>, which offers practical steps for research funders to engage in experimentation and takes seriously the recommendations Wilsdon has communicated in his presentation.

Finally, some further points that were raised in both the discussion and the presentation:

- Experiments with research funding are growing in scale and ambition, but still lack many features that would make them robust experimental studies with defined baselines and controls.
- Across European funding organisations there is evidence accumulated to support randomisation and other experimental methods of evaluating research(ers) and distributing funds.

### 3.2.4 Responsible Research Assessment: Implementation and Reflection

Finally, Sean Sapcariu’s presentation allowed for contextualising the points raised by Wilsdon in a practical setting, in the daily life of a research funder that not only engages in experimentation, but also tries to implement the changed practices into the existing infrastructures of research

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/events/sir-john-kingman-reflections-on-his-time-as-ukri-chair/>

<sup>24</sup> [www.rori.figshare.com/articles/report/The\\_experimental\\_research\\_funder\\_s\\_handbook\\_final\\_version\\_/19459328](http://www.rori.figshare.com/articles/report/The_experimental_research_funder_s_handbook_final_version_/19459328)

<sup>25</sup> See footnote 19. An initial version of this Handbook was published as a working paper in December 2021, and formed the basis of a two-day workshop, attended by around twenty-five research funders - a mix of public funding agencies and private foundations. Their reflections informed this final version, published in June 2022, alongside the launch of RoRI’s second phase. It will also influence the design of a next wave of funder experiments that RoRI aims to undertake with its partners over the next two to five years (description from annotated source).





assessment at funding organisations. The ambitions for change are similar. There is a desire to develop a more open and diverse research culture, of which research assessment and funding, as we have elaborated in the introduction, are an essential part of. The problem becomes quite clear in a quote by Marc Schiltz, the Secretary General of the Luxemburg funder FNR:

*“When we talk to researchers and ask about their recent achievements (i.e. successes): it shouldn’t be that they published two articles in Nature, but rather the nice science they have done and their contribution to the community and broader public.”*

Also here, just like the presentations by the other speakers have underlined, the problem of research assessment can be described in it being too publication-driven and the artefacts that the system are comprised of indeed are performing this way of defining success and thus valuing a particular kind of research (output). Also similarly, Sapcariu stresses, there is a perception by the research community that the responsibility for changing the research culture lies primarily on the side of funding bodies<sup>26</sup>; recognising that this responsibility, on the funder’s side, has to be dealt with.

At FNR, ‘dealing with’ and ‘experimentation’ came in form of implementing narrative CVs in their research assessment. As a point of departure, they took The Royal Society’s resumé for researchers and added space for a personal statement, research vision, motivation for career and work, as well as space to outline career progression, including breaks and related non-research activities. Finally, after implementation, testing and asking for feedback, a selection of points were raised by researchers and reviewers that have participated in an application (or review) process including narrative CVs:

- Applicants generally appreciated the narrative format
- More guidance has to be given by funders for applicants on how a narrative CV should be built, used and what purpose it fulfils
- A vast majority of reviewers found narrative CVs useful in the process of evaluating a proposal

Finally, the next steps include a continuing effort in experimenting in a more expanded manner, conduct comparative analyses and applying the principles that underlie this change to other parts of the research evaluation process, for instance rethinking reporting and the alignment between proposals in relation to actual outcomes of projects.

Conclusively, and in discussion, research funders do recognise the issues with the dominant categories that order contemporary research funding practices. Even more so, there is a moral consciousness about designing this process as fair, balanced, and contributing to improving the research culture in academia. However, experimenting is costly regarding resources, and time has to be made available for such reimaginings to accumulate into evidence worthy of penetrating the daily practice of research funders and funded.

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<sup>26</sup> <https://cms.wellcome.org/sites/default/files/what-researchers-think-about-the-culture-they-work-in.pdf>





## 4 CONCLUSION

### 4.1 Reclassifying dominant research funding categories - a collective endeavour

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There is ample of agreement amongst the (European) scientific community that research funders have a key position of agency in supporting changes supporting responsible research funding. Given the work of research funders, most of the debate gravitates around research assessment practices and their design. Changing such processes, however, should not be put into the hands of research funders only. Funding and funded - that is, evaluators, researchers, communicators, funders, policymakers – are responsible for making visible the assumptions inscribed in the current funding practices and reimagining them in more responsible forms - together. To that end, initiatives and projects such as SUPER MoRRI, DORA, work done by the Research on Research Institute and many more are essential for facilitating the collaboration across the stakeholder groups. Nonetheless, common spaces for discussion need practical, accompanying actions of collaboration, for which events, such as the Annual Event, attempted to provide.

### 4.2 Systematic experimentation: creation of robust evidence for policy change

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Reimagination, in the context of changing funding practices, largely happens in forms of experimentation. Simultaneously, the logic of knowing in the field of science policy takes the form of evidence; for justifying what otherwise can 'only' be imagined as improved or better ways of doing science. One could thus argue that experiments are required to hold up against standards of evidence. Whilst design, implementation and evaluation of pilot projects is a form of experimentation, more systematic approaches of creating evidence through experimentation are required, where data is made available and replicability made easy through provision of resources and exchange. Such elaborated forms of experimentation, however, demand more resources and the willingness by institutions to dedicate time for tinkering with new approaches. To guide experimentation we recommend funders to consult "The experimental funder's handbook", that was recently published by the Research on Research Institute<sup>27</sup>.

## 5 CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUPER MORRI

The learnings captured by the Third Annual Event on Responsible Research Funding will be published in the form of a blogpost on the SUPER MoRRI website. Furthermore, they will feed into discussions concerning the Design Working Group on the central deliverable of SUPER MoRRI, the design and development of a monitoring system for responsible research and innovation, of which funding is an integral element.

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<sup>27</sup>

[www.rori.figshare.com/articles/report/The\\_experimental\\_research\\_funder\\_s\\_handbook\\_final\\_version\\_/19459328](http://www.rori.figshare.com/articles/report/The_experimental_research_funder_s_handbook_final_version_/19459328)





Furthermore, these insights feed into the contextualisation of the research funder's organisation study conducted by SUPER MoRRI next to the research performing organisation's study that is currently ongoing. The results from the latter study will help to more clearly define in what ways collaboration across funders and the funded can be considered productive in the settling and studying of the debates surrounding responsible research funding and research assessment.

Additionally, SUPER MoRRI will continue to collaborate and provide a space for deliberation regarding the debates surrounding responsible research and innovation, with particular focus on the role SUPER MoRRI plays with regard to the Horizon 2020 Science with and for Society 14 programme.

The presentations by the speakers can be accessed via the Third Annual Event page on the SUPER MoRRI website<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> <https://super-morri.eu/event/responsible-research-funding-annual-event-2022/>





## 6 APPENDIX

### 1.1: Invitation to the International Satellite Partners



**Invitation to SUPER MoRRI's Annual Event 2022 on Responsible Research Funding**

Dear <invitee>,

What are the barriers, compromises, opportunities and limits of responsible research funding in today's research and innovation system?

As stakeholders in the science system, it is our responsibility to stay receptive to the currents of transformation of research cultures. As we know from last year's SUPER MoRRI Annual Event, the notion of responsibility has surfaced many questions regarding its monitoring and evaluation.

This year, we would like to invite our community to gather around questions concerning the *funding of responsible research*. Specifically, we ask research funders, policymakers and researchers what barriers exist to funding responsible research, what compromises are made and where the limits of responsible research funding are in the research and innovation system.

You are warmly invited to join this year's event on **Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> of April 2022, 10:00-14:00hrs (CEST)**.

Feel free to register via the following link: <https://bit.ly/35NGLWc>

The point of departure is a European study, led by SUPER MoRRI, about changing patterns of funding responsible research. A discussion paper that summarises the key issues, keynote presentations, and moderated break-out groups will summit at a collective discussion, where the goal is to critically discuss how notions of responsibility challenge the position of research funding organisations and how to navigate this transformation.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Kind regards,

SUPER MoRRI Team|





## 1.2: Invitation to respondents of SUPER MoRRI RFO study



**Subject Line: Invitation to SUPER MoRRI's Annual Event 2022 on | Responsible Research Funding**

Dear <invitee>,

What are the barriers, compromises, opportunities and limits of responsible research funding in today's research and innovation system?

As a participant of the SUPER MoRRI study on existing practices for supporting societally responsible research cultures across research funding actors, you contributed not only to this event, but also to the discussions that will take place. Naturally, the SUPER MoRRI team would appreciate your presence, which is why you are warmly invited to the SUPER MoRRI Annual Event 2022. The (online) event will take place on:

**Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> of April 2022, 10:00-14:00hrs (CEST).**

Feel free to register via following link: <https://bit.ly/35NGLWc>

This year, we would like to invite our community to gather around questions concerning the *funding of responsible research*. Specifically, we ask research funding actors, policymakers and researchers what barriers exist to funding responsible research, what compromises are made and where the limits of responsible research funding are in the research and innovation system.

The point of departure is the study in which you participated. A discussion paper that summarises the key issues, keynote presentations, and moderated break-out groups will summit at a collective discussion, where the goal is to critically discuss how notions of responsibility challenge the position of research funding organisations across Europe and how to navigate this transformation.

**We are looking forward to your participation and engagement.**

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Kind regards,





### 1.3: Invitation to the partners of the Country Correspondent Network (Banner removed for formatting purposes)

**Subject Line: Invitation to Annual Event 2022 on RFO study**

Dear <invitee>,

**What are the barriers, compromises, opportunities and limits of responsible research funding in today's research and innovation system?**

Following our common effort to conducting the RFO study across Europe, we thought about deepening our insights gained by devoting the SUPER MoRRI Annual Event 2022 to questions gravitating around responsible research funding. Specifically, we ask research funders, policymakers and researchers what barriers exist to funding responsible research, what compromises are made and where the limits of responsible research funding are in the research and innovation system.

As part of the Country Correspondent Network, you contributed not only to this event, but also to the discussions that will take place. Naturally, the team would appreciate your presence. The (online) event will take place on:

**Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> of April 2022, 10:00-14:00hrs (CEST).**

Feel free to register via following link: <https://bit.ly/35NGLWc>

**Please forward the message**

You will find two files attached. One is a draft invitation text for the Research Funding Organisations *that you engaged for the study* (file name: 20220302\_AnnualEvent\_invitation\_RFO\_respondents).

The second attachment is a draft invitation text for *other* Research Funding Organisations that you know of in your specific country context (file name: 20220302\_AnnualEvent\_invitation\_RFO\_invitation).

*We would like to ask you to forward these invitation messages to them, as they play an important role in carrying the discussions into practice. Please let us know which organisations you have invited by the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2022.*

**Important note**

As SUPER MoRRI, we are concerned about our respondents' data protection (see chapter 11 in the document 'Protocol for the Country Correspondent Network Study of Research Funding Organisations'). Thus, we want to *preserve our respondents' anonymity* during the entirety of the event. This is why I want to ask you to contribute carefully in the discussions that may arise during the Annual Event. Do not, under any circumstance, share sensitive information or knowledge that could expose a respondent's identity.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Kind regards,





#### 1.4: Discussion paper to create a common basis for deliberation (1/3)



Discussion Paper for SUPER MoRRI Annual Event 2022

## Responsible research funding futures

Financial investment in research and researchers is at the heart of debates about public support for R&I systems and their value for society. The role of research funding organisations (RFOs) is crucial in this regard. As the principal actors distributing competitive funds for science and innovation, RFOs confront a dynamic environment and a constant need to monitor performance and improve outcomes.

Right now, we could argue that research funders are in the hot seat, expected to straddle some critical demands and expectations, including:

- Identify and support the best research.
- Define or operationalise missions to fund research and innovation that will, in the medium and longer-term, contribute to addressing global challenges
- Respond to urgent knowledge-focused crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic
- Address doubts about the legitimacy and authority of science in the face of mounting evidence of the prevalence of questionable research practices (QRPs) and outright fraud
- Support an opening up of research culture to better reflect the diversity of society
- Adopt responsible assessment methods that minimise the use of reductionist metrics, undermine entrenched privilege, and reduce the influence of unconscious and other forms of bias in the awarding of research grants
- Respond to transformative policies and practices, such as open science

The RFO landscape is also increasingly heterogeneous. Large Research Councils and other types of national public funding agencies continue to be prominent and influential, often with strong links to





#### 1.4: Discussion paper to create a common basis for deliberation (2/3)

values of prestige and recognition in scientific communities. Private and public foundations of varying scales and funding objectives, some operating with global reach, are increasingly important actors who collaborate and learn from each other. The autonomy of these organisations to choose their funding targets and set criteria for funding is a crucial source of innovation.

In Europe, the influence of the European Commission's successive framework programmes for R&I funding cannot be underestimated, either. However, neither should we overlook the emerging role of public administrations at the regional level, which are also increasingly setting up and administering their research funding programmes. At this level, funders can more easily match their funding priorities to regional policies and strategies. More importantly, they often support applicants who narrowly missed cut-offs for highly competitive funding at European or national levels. This support can keep research careers alive.

Additionally, numerous initiatives are currently engaging with the challenge of responsible research assessment. The European Commission recently launched a [Report](#) and a [process](#) for an agreement on reforming research assessment, in which research funders are key stakeholders. Science Europe, representing 34 European funders, issued its [Recommendations](#) on research assessment based on consultation with its members and beyond. The Global Research Council group of funders, which has its working group on responsible research assessment, collaborated with the Research on Research Institute on a [Study](#) of the changing role of funders in responsible research assessment. These initiatives build on prior community-driven efforts to improve researchers' assessment, including [DORA](#) and the [Leiden Manifesto](#).

However, while it is important to consider the ways of implementing responsible research assessment processes are relevant, other relevant questions may be raised when shaping responsible funding futures:

- Which voices should be heard in framing research funding priorities?
- What expectations should funders have regarding the transparency and integrity of research methods funded by their grants?
- How can funding instruments be designed to value a broader range of contributions to science and society?
- Which stakeholders should contribute to the design and targeting of funding instruments?
- Should research funders mainly seek to shape research culture through internal processes and procedures, or should they also actively influence grantees and stakeholder organisations?
- Should research funders promote Open Science? How?

These challenges identified above and these questions can open up tensions between the perceived interests of funders' key political and scientific stakeholders, for example, between prioritising scientific excellence or societal impact or between using established forms of scientific reward and recognition and or experimenting with new approaches to valuing contributions to research and innovation.





#### 1.4: Discussion paper to create a common basis for deliberation (3/3)

Furthermore, while facing so many questions and possibilities in approaching responsible practices, funders are forced to prioritise their efforts based on available resources (financial, human, or infrastructure). Limitations call for strategic planning, cumulative prioritisation, and a necessary reflection: when should RFOs operate independently, and when should they focus on addressing gaps they might notice in the broader funding system?

In thinking about the potential for responsible funding futures, we need to be aware that there are no uniform solutions or answers. Every RFO is embedded in a unique set of authority relations with administrative and political actors, and also in stakeholder relations with scientific communities, public sector research organisations, industry, and more. RFOs, therefore, have different opportunities and barriers to advancing responsible funding.

Therefore, the key question for this forum goes beyond 'what is the vision for responsible research funding futures?' But also 'what does that vision look like for my organisation?'

| TIME (CEST)   | ACTIVITY  |
|---------------|---|
| 10:00 - 10:10 | <i>Kick-off by Ralf Lindner (Super MoRRI)</i>   |
| 10:10 - 11:10 | <i>Stephen Curry - San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment<br/>Marta Agostinho - EU-Life<br/>James Wilsdon - Research on Research Institute<br/>Sean Sapcariu - Luxemburg National Research Fund</i> |
| 11:10 - 11:30 | <i>Individual reflections during tea break</i>  |
| 11:30 - 12:15 | <i>Moderated breakout groups about panellists' themes</i>   |
| 12:15 - 13:00 | <i>Lunch Break</i>  |
| 13:00 - 13:15 | <i>Richard Woolley (Super MoRRI): Responsibility in Research Funding in Europe</i>  |
| 13:15 - 13:50 | <i>Moderated discussions and reflections: What now?</i>   |
| 13:50 - 14:00 | <i>Ingeborg Meijer (Super MoRRI): Outlook</i>   |

Link to the meeting: [Join Zoom Meeting](#) or dial in via [zoom.us](#) with following details:

Meeting ID: 692 2833 5232  
Passcode: 6VuWU\*7B





## 1.5: Data protection concept and statement (before registration a in confirmation email)

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### **Dear participant,**

Thank you for registering for the SUPER MoRRI 3rd Annual Event on Responsible Research Funding. You can find the programme, as well as a text outlining the key observations that will be central to our discussions here:

[https://super-morri.eu/download/178/annual-events/5400/supermorri\\_discussionpaper\\_annualevent2022.pdf](https://super-morri.eu/download/178/annual-events/5400/supermorri_discussionpaper_annualevent2022.pdf)

The video-conference will be hosted by the Leiden University on Zoom. Below, you can find the details for dialing in:

<https://universiteitleiden.zoom.us/j/69228335232?pwd=bmR2R3hJdkhzbWFmT0FlbzI6a2ZSUT09>

Meeting ID: 692 2833 5232

Passcode: 6VuWU\*7B

Zoom is an online video conference software. You can download it through following this link: [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us)

### **Consent**

By having received this email, you can assume that your registration was processed correctly and that you have agreed to the declaration of consent in the check-out section on Eventbrite. Find the conditions below for your review. If you wish to recant your agreement, please contact the organisers by replying to this email. You may also deregister on Eventbrite if you desire.

#### Participation

Risks of participation in an online webinar should be negligible, but you might share sensitive opinions or confidential information inadvertently. Participation is always voluntary: you may choose not to respond to any question or to discuss a particular topic, and you can leave the debate at your will.

#### Storage of personal data

During the course of the event, personal data will be collected by means of observation and group discussions. This data will only be used for the activities relating to SUPER MoRRI, and will not be made accessible for any third party. Personal data do not contain the names or addresses of participants and will be edited for full anonymity before being processed. For questions about data, please contact [privacy@fsw.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:privacy@fsw.leidenuniv.nl).

#### Audiovisual material

The session will be recorded and SUPER MoRRI may use stills or videos in public forums, conferences or on websites to inform about the project. Participants may keep their cameras off and may demand the removal of their own contributions from websites and public forums by simple request (email [a.amanatidis@cwts.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:a.amanatidis@cwts.leidenuniv.nl)). Subject to technical feasibility, SUPER MoRRI agrees to remove the requested items without delay.

#### Code of Conduct

Participation in SUPER MoRRI is meant to be as agreeable and pleasant as possible, and participants must agree to the following rules:

- Any forms of racism and discrimination are strictly banned.
- SUPER MoRRI may not be misused for political, religious or advertising purposes.
- Infringements of copyright laws are not permitted.
- Participants' conduct should always be appropriate and never offensive or depreciating.





- Participants will abstain from taking pictures or recording the event.

#### Consent

After having stated these general conditions and rules, we thank you in advance for your participation in the event. By proceeding with the registration, you declare understanding and consenting to the conditions and rules above, releasing SUPER MoRRI and any of its associated or affiliated institutions, their directors, officers and agents from all claims of every kind on account of such use.

Best,

**Anestis Amanatidis**

**On behalf of the SUPER MoRRI Team**

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## **SUPER MoRRI**

Scientific Understanding and Provision of an Enhanced and Robust Monitoring system for RRI

**Horizon 2020, Science with and for Society Work Programme 2018-2020, Topic: SwafS-21-2018**

**Grant Agreement Number: 824671**

