

FAIR in European Higher Education

A key deliverable from the FAIRsFAIR project is the development of a FAIR data competence framework to support the uptake of FAIR data principles and practice by higher education institutes. This is in line with the recognition at institutional and European level of the clear need for better training of researchers and students in Open Science and, more closely related to EOSC, in the development of research data management skills and competencies.

A groundbreaking study undertaken by FAIRsFAIR partners during the first year of the project surveyed the current research data management landscape in tertiary institutes across Europe.

The resulting report, [D7.1 FAIR in European Higher Education](#) describes the research methodology, tables and discusses the findings, and presents the recommendations which will underpin further work in this area.

Who took part in the study?

90 survey responses received from universities in 26 countries and from two focus groups with 50 participants, from professional profiles including university rectors and vice-rectors, university libraries and information services, data management services, graduate schools and training programmes, research administration and infrastructure staff, and national or regional RDM initiatives & programmes.

Findings

DO UNIVERSITIES HAVE HIGH AWARENESS OF FAIR PRINCIPLES?

A clear majority answered that the awareness is highest among professional and support staff, as well as among the institutional leadership. Researchers and early-stage researchers are perceived to have lower awareness, while students are generally seen as least aware of the FAIR principles.

DO UNIVERSITIES HAVE FAIR RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT POLICIES?

Provision for FAIR is specifically covered in just over one quarter of the policies of respondents. The majority of universities (60%) have a policy on research data management, keeping in mind that respondents to this survey are typically those already engaged in this field. Other surveys with a broader purview have in recent years reported



that about one-third of universities have a research data management policy in place).

The elements most often included in the research data management policies as mandatory aspects were data storage (55%), data management planning (54%), and data protection (47%).

WHAT TYPE OF SUPPORT IS PROVIDED BY UNIVERSITIES TO MAKE DATA FAIR?

More than three quarters of respondents indicated that they provide training for researchers (80%) and have a dedicated section of the institutional website for research data management (80%). When it comes to specific aspects of FAIR practice, about two thirds of the HEI respondents to this question stated that they have provisions for supporting compliance with legal and ethical requirements and the FAIR principles (64%) as well as for publishing FAIR outputs on their own or recommended repositories (59%).

WHAT ARE THE TOP ACTIONS TO SUPPORT UNIVERSITIES TO DEVELOP & IMPLEMENT FAIR DATA POLICIES?

The survey results identify three leading ways for the project to provide support in this regard. Respondents mainly see opportunities for FAIRsFAIR to train professional and support staff in the area of research data management (64%), to improve the availability of tools and resources to inform universities about research data management (49%) and to train researchers in FAIR research data management in specific domains (46%). Other support opportunities are also recognised by respondents, albeit to a lesser extent, such as include sharing of good practices and peer learning across institutions (39%).

Recommendations

The three main areas of focus are detailed below.

- [Download your own copy of the summary infographic](#)
- [Read the full report on Zenodo](#)

