



# Ambassador Strategic Concept

Advocating and Promoting Open Science  
Throughout the Alliance

March 31, 2023

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## 1. Introduction

Open Science improves the productivity, quality and responsiveness of research, which is why it is a priority of the European Commission (European Commission 2023). Even though Open Science is on the rise in many disciplines and countries, there is still much space for Open Science to become the common way of doing research in terms of, for instance, Open Access publications or sharing research data (Ministry of Higher Education and Research 2021; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2018; Santoro 2022).

One way of disseminating the advantages of Open Science and encouraging its spread is an ambassador program. An ambassador's function is to promote particular interests (Fisher-Buttinger and Vallaster 2008), promote particular interests (Fisher-Buttinger and Vallaster 2008), increase awareness, to serve as a credible spokesperson who encourages a change in attitude and behaviour through positive word-of-mouth and can, through their network, reach target groups which would otherwise be hard to reach (Andersson and Ekman 2009). Ancona and Caldwell (1988) summarize ambassadors' actions into five aspects: developing communication channels, informing, coordinating, negotiating and influencing. Ambassadors can be active in many different areas. They can promote brands (Müller 2018; Schmidt and Baumgarth 2018; Vallaster and De Chernatony 2006), organisations (Van Zoonen et al. 2018; Van Zoonen, Van der Meer and Verhoeven 2014) or places (Andersson and Ekman 2009; Chancellor, Townson and Duffy 2021).

Likewise, promoting research approaches like Open Science through ambassadorship is a common practice. Open Science ambassador programs have been implemented by universities (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven 2023; Maastricht University 2023), journals (eLife Sciences Publications 2022), publishing companies (Wiley 2023), PhD networks (European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers 2023; Max Planck Society 2023) or European funded initiatives (ENLIGHT 2023; EOSC Pillar 2023).

To advance the awareness and support of Open Science across ERUA, we aim to establish a Re:ERUA Open Science Ambassador programme. In the following, we will first present the aim of the programme in more detail. Second, we will outline the ambassadors' profiles, before we delineate our procedure of establishing the Re:ERUA Open Science Ambassador programme.

## 2. The Re:ERUA Open Science Ambassador Programme

The Re:ERUA Open Science Ambassador programme pursues three objectives: catalysing or advancing the institutional Open Science development at the respective ambassador's university, promoting Open Science at the respective ambassador's university and beyond and networking with Open Science ambassadors from the other ERUA universities. As all concepts and plans, this ambassador concept faces certain risks with regards to its implementation. These risks will be addressed in the last subchapter.

### 2.1. What Is the Aim of the Re:ERUA Open Science Ambassadors?

#### 2.1.1. Catalysing or Advancing the Institutional Open Science Development

The Open Science ambassadors shall catalyse, in case there is no Open Science activity or structure yet, or advance, in case Open Science activities or structures exist, the Open Science development at their university. This implies initiating and maintaining contact with relevant departments (e.g., rectorate, library) and committees to advocate the Open Science development within the university. An example of an outcome of this intrauniversity advocacy may be an Open Science policy.

#### 2.1.2. Promoting Open Science

The Open Science ambassadors shall create awareness of and increase the support for Open Science at their university and possibly beyond. The concrete scope of activities shall be discussed with the ambassadors, in order to ensure compatibility with their schedule and interests and to give ambassadors the possibility to develop own ideas. To fulfil their tasks, the ambassadors will be equipped with access to knowledge, promotion material and lists of potential contact persons.

One activity which ambassadors will in any case pursue is giving advice on Open Science to diverse target groups (e.g. researchers of all experience levels, students). Along these lines, the ambassadors could offer consultation sessions on Open Science-related questions, share the Open Science Fundamental Course (Deliverable 5.4) and support their advice with promotion material, such as flyers. Furthermore, the ambassadors could either take part in events in which Open Science is underrepresented, in order to raise visitors' awareness, or in events in which Open Science plays a key role. For instance, the ambassadors could give

presentations on Open Science-related topics during the Open Access Week and give interested people the opportunity to approach them. In terms of communication, the ambassadors shall use different channels to ensure an optimal extent of dissemination (e.g. website, email, social media, personal communication). Additionally, the Open Science ambassadors shall gather concrete experiences and case studies which are suitable to convey the advantages of Open Science. The ambassador shall use these experiences and case studies in their promotion activities (e.g., researcher X used researcher Y's data to publish paper Z), so as to ensure that the matter does not remain too abstract.

If the ambassadors have enough capacities, they may also expand their activities beyond their university to reach a broader academic network. The ambassadors could, for instance, report about their activities and share their experiences on relevant platforms, such as panel discussions at conferences and via publications.

### 2.1.3. Networking with Open Science Ambassadors from Other Universities

The Re:ERUA Open Science ambassadors shall not act only separately, but also pursue joint efforts with their peers at the other ERUA universities. All ambassadors will share experiences and best practices in order to learn from each other. In case one university's ambassador cannot help with a specific issue which arose at their university (e.g. because it is a discipline-specific question), the ambassador shall consult another university's ambassador who may be able to solve the issue (e.g. an ambassador with an academic background equal or similar to the discipline the question is related to). In order to provide an opportunity for networking and sharing experiences, all Re:ERUA Open Science Ambassadors meet 2-3 times a year. These meetings are held predominantly virtually with occasional physical meetings if possible. Representatives from the Re:ERUA WP5 team will be present during the meetings, in order to assess how the ambassadors' efforts are going and whether there are issues which need to be addressed by the Re:ERUA WP5 team. Apart from these regular meetings, ambassadors shall be in contact on an occasional bilateral basis, whenever an ambassador colleague's support is needed, for instance, as described above, if an ambassador needs help solving a discipline-specific issue.

### 2.1.4. Implementation-related Risks

As academic environments vary both within and across countries, the concept's implementation is bound to vary from institution to institution and there is little we can do

about that in the conceptualization phase. Moreover, the respective ambassador's success is bound to depend considerably on individual aspects like their charisma, communicative skills or recognition within the respective academic environment. It is therefore paramount that ambassadors are selected carefully.

If unsuitable ambassadors are chosen – or, if it is impossible to find any volunteers at a respective member institution – this institution may not be able to keep up with its peers with regards to raising its members' awareness of Open Science. Therefore, the spread of Open Science-related practices is likely to be comparatively limited as well. However, this is a point where synergies within the alliance can come into play: If other institutions manage to find suitable ambassadors, their expertise in Open Science can also be used to the benefit of other alliance members.

## 2.2. Who Shall Be the Re:ERUA Open Science Ambassadors?

To encourage the Re:ERUA Open Science Ambassadors' success, we deem the following ambassador profile useful.

Each ERUA university shall appoint one or more ambassadors, preferably researchers or influential support staff. There is also the possibility to create tandems of researchers and support staff. The ambassadors shall represent different disciplines and have knowledge about and experience with Open Science, especially regarding the core topics Open Access, Open Data and Open Educational Resources. The ambassadors shall be committed to their role until September 2024. If the ambassador is well-received and enjoys their role, the commitment may exceed September 2024. The Re:ERUA WP5 team will evaluate ambassadors' accomplishments in 2024, in order to decide whether a continuation of the programme is necessary and feasible.

## 2.3. How Do We Proceed?

In order to establish the Re:ERUA Open Science Ambassador programme, diligent preparation is essential. As a first step, the Re:ERUA WP5 board members search for and contact suitable researchers and support staff at their institutions. The potential candidates will be contacted individually. In the recruitment process, it is crucial to emphasise the benefits associated with the role as Re:ERUA Open Science Ambassador, for instance increased possibilities to network with researchers from other European universities which may have the potential for

research cooperation, the increasing importance of non-publication-related activities in career development, a heightened visibility at their own institution, which may help, for instance, new professors trying to attract students to attend their courses. The Re:ERUA WP5 board members will also show possible content and potential activities that could be associated with the ambassadors' role. Moreover, the Re:ERUA WP5 board members will emphasise that the potential candidate will become part of a multidisciplinary network of ambassadors, in order to convey that the potential candidate does not need to feel responsible for or knowledgeable of every other discipline besides their own. As mentioned above, there is the possibility to pair researchers and academic support staff in the form of a tandem.

Once the Re:ERUA Open Science Ambassadors have been recruited, their training-the-trainer program begins. First, the Re:ERUA WP5 team will have three meetings with Open Science experts on the three topics Open Access, Open Data and Open Educational Resources, which shall constitute the focus of the ambassadors' activities. After the first meeting, they will be provided with a YouTube link to the Open Science Fundamental Course (Deliverable 5.4) so they can watch up on Open Science-related matters. In these three meetings, the Open Science experts will provide in-depth knowledge about the three core topics and give ambassadors a chance to ask questions. The ambassadors will also be sensibilised to discipline-specific differences, for instance that researchers with a humanities background may feel that Open Science, especially research data management, may not apply to them. Second, the Re:ERUA WP5 team will provide the ambassadors with promotion material.

After the preparations, the UKON Re:ERUA WP5 team will organize a virtual or in-person kick-off meeting with all ambassadors. During this kick-off meeting, the ambassadors will get to know each other, exchange their motivations and experiences, especially with regard to the different disciplines they represent, as well as their ideas as to how to promote Open Science. After this kick-off meeting, the Re:ERUA Open Science Ambassador programme is officially launched. Each ERUA university will communicate the news, including information on the university's ambassador, throughout their channels (e.g., website, social media).

In the course of time, there will be constant contact between the ambassadors and the Re:ERUA WP5 team in order to discuss and coordinate progress and activities. There will be regular virtual meetings (2-3 times a year) with all ambassadors and the WP5 team during which ambassadors report about their activities and share best practices or challenges. The UKON Re:ERUA WP5 team will summarize the realization of the ambassador program as well



as ambassadors' activities, outcomes and learnings in the Ambassador Activity Report (Deliverable 5.9).

### 3. Conclusion

Open Science is becoming more and more important, but many university members of different functions, levels and disciplines lack awareness of Open Science and the advantages it entails. The Re:ERUA Open Science Ambassador program equips the ERUA universities with competent Open Science representatives who act as contact points that provide a low-threshold opportunity to both learn more about Open Science and to actively promote Open Science within the institutional structures as well as among peers and other target groups.

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