



A flood of data set for Amsterdam

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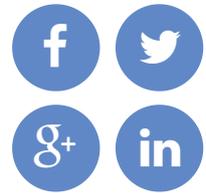
The RDA's primary goal is to enable better sharing of research data. How does the organization seek to achieve this?

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"There has been huge growth in the digital sector in recent years and forecasts for the future show further increase. The RDA can contribute in this area by offering both solutions to deal with the associated data challenges and people with new skills and expertise," says Hanahoe.

There are a number of different challenges related to sharing research data, depending on whether you look at it from a technical or disciplinary point of view. The RDA tries to tackle both, as well as the associated social and cultural barriers. Due to its huge global dimension (members come from 87 countries), much of the RDA's work is virtual. The organization provides the framework, tools, and facilities to help overcome the barriers to data sharing via [its collaborative web platform](#) and its biannual face-to-face plenary events, which are three-day working meetings for existing and new

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members to come together and get things done.

The Amsterdam meeting is the fourth such event since the RDA's launch in March 2013 and we expect over 500 people to join us there.

In today's digital world it is vital that we make good on public and private investments in research, so as to ensure that the work scientists are doing is shareable and re-usable by others, not only to solve challenges, but also to identify new challenges and solutions. Personally, I think [Neelie Kroes, vice-president of the European Commission responsible for the Digital Agenda](#), summed it up well when she said: "Open access to scientific results and data is a great way to boost science, boost the economy, and enable new techniques and collaborations between disciplines. Really it's quite simple: it's about ensuring you can see the results you've already paid for through your taxes. And we have set up the Research Data Alliance (RDA), so scientific data infrastructure can be fully interoperable, and so sharing data becomes even simpler".

Why is the RDA important for Europe?

Europe is one of the main drivers and founders of RDA. Together with the Australian government, through [the Australian National Data Service \(ANDS\)](#), and [the US National Science Foundation](#) and other US agencies, the European Commission has been facilitating and encouraging this initiative from the start. We know that while unemployment in Europe is still a problem, employers are desperately seeking people with digital skills. There has been huge growth in the digital sector in recent

years and forecasts for the future show further increase. The RDA can contribute in this area by offering both solutions to deal with the associated data challenges and people with new skills and expertise.

So, with the RDA Fourth Plenary Meeting now only a few weeks away, what progress has the organization made since the last event in Dublin, Ireland?

Well, the working groups are now progressing towards delivery of their first outputs, with four groups set to showcase them in Amsterdam: [Data Foundation and Terminology](#), [Data Type Registries](#), [PID Information Types](#), and [Practical Policy](#). In addition, we have seen over 600 new members in the past six months, bringing the current total to over 2,200. I think it is important to highlight that, as long as they agree to our [basic principles](#), anyone can become a member of the RDA. Through the organization, members can work on whatever problem is important to them - they just have to be able to demonstrate that it advances data sharing.

So, the event isn't just for those working in academia then, right? What does it offer for those working in industry?

Data practitioners come from many groups; it's not just academia that has a stake in this field.

Organizations of all types can join up as [organizational members](#) and industrial players have many ways of interacting with the RDA, especially through involvement in the working

groups. Over recent months we have been working to better understand the role that start-ups and industry can play in the RDA, including what we can offer them. We've been talking to some interesting associations with impressive SME networks. They see the business opportunities associated with building bridges between multidisciplinary data sets and how this can ultimately lead to growth and more jobs.

And how about policymakers, too?

Policymakers are also a big and essential part of the RDA. The organization interacts closely with policymaking bodies and facilitates information exchange. For example, RDA Europe is currently working on a policy report principally for European policymakers, due out in December, on how sharing research data can yield knowledge, jobs, and growth.

Will there be any specific support for early-career researchers to attend this month's event?

Yes, this event has quite considerable support for early-career researchers. We started an EU program of support for the last event in Dublin, where we helped over 20 researchers attend and support the meetings of the working and interest groups. In Amsterdam, we will repeat the EU program and augment it with visibility and networking opportunities for the prize winners to showcase their research activities. Furthermore, the RDA US is supporting a group of interns and

fellows to attend the event. All of these people will gain new insights into the wonderful world of the RDA and discover how they can interact throughout their careers.

Finally, what sessions are you personally most looking forward to attending?

As a director of an SME, I am particularly looking forward to [Monday's session on industrial perspectives](#), as it is another step towards engaging industrial stakeholders in the RDA. Tuesday's presentation on the RDA's outputs will also be on my schedule, since it is the generation of usable and implementable outputs that is the core business of the RDA. There are so many things happening that it can be difficult to choose what to attend, especially as there are also [nine co-located events taking place before and after the plenary meeting](#), thus making it a true week of research data in Amsterdam. I look forward to meeting many of you there.

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