FRDN Network Day 2025

Shaping the Future of Open Science in Flanders: Insights, Achievements and Aspirations

SUMMARY (PHOTO) REPORT

August 2025

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Introduction

On 22 May 2025, participants at the FRDN Network Day convened in the Herman Teirlinck building of the Flemish Government in Brussels—a pivotal gathering jointly organised by the Flemish Research Data Network (FRDN), the Flemish Open Science Board (FOSB) and the Department of Work, Economy, Science, Innovation and Social Economy (WEWIS). Under the banner “Shaping the Future of Open Science in Flanders: Insights, Achievements and Aspirations,” close to 100 delegates seized the moment to celebrate the completion of the first Open Science policy plan and to explore bold new directions.

Over the past five years, FOSB funding has underpinned transformative initiatives across Flemish research institutions: from the rollout of a Knowledge Hub community for data stewards to cross-institutional metadata standards and the development of the FAIRVault repository. During the Network Day, several Flemish research institutions showcased their achievements and ongoing policy implementations—each a testament to how Open Science can foster transparency, accelerate innovation, and strengthen societal impact.

Looking ahead, international experts shared their experience and perspectives on four key issues in Open Science: encouraging FAIR data sharing, building stronger communities around data stewardship as a career, tracking progress through meaningful indicators, and improving the underlying data infrastructure. Their input led to open, engaging discussions that helped shape ideas for the next phase of our policy work.

The Network Day in 2025, summarised in this report, was a celebration of what we have achieved so far. As we prepare the next chapter of Flanders' Open Science journey, this Network Day reaffirmed that our collective expertise—researchers, data stewards, policymakers, funders, project managers, IT professionals and legal experts alike—will be the engine that propels us forward.

Programme

The programme consisted of five main sessions

01 **FRDN Highlights**

We acknowledged the achievements of the network as a whole

02 **Institutions showcase**

Individual institutions demonstrated their own successful implementations of FOSB funding

03 **Federal and Flemish Open Science policy**

We learned about FedOSC and received an update on the forthcoming Flemish OS policy plan

04 **International experts**

We welcomed five experts on four topics: FAIR data sharing, data stewardship, Open Science KPIs, and infrastructure

05 **Group discussions**

We held parallel group discussions on these four topics in breakout rooms

A detailed overview of the programme is included in Appendix 1

FRDN Highlights 01

The morning sessions began with an introduction to the FRDN Network, followed by concise presentations highlighting the network's key achievements. These covered the main outcomes of the task forces, project groups, working groups and the Knowledge Hub during the past policy period.

Eline Deweirdt, network coordinator, officially opened the FRDN Network Day by welcoming participants and introducing the programme of the day. She then kicked off the first session with an introduction to the FRDN, outlining its mission and vision, history and governance—particularly for those less familiar with the network.

We dedicated the Network Day to the memory of **Joke Meeus**, who was a driving force in the first years of the FRDN

Evy Neyens, chair of the initial working group on metadata and standardisation, presented the network's first major achievement: the development of the **uniform metadata model** in 2020. Prior to this, Flemish research organisations followed fragmented approaches, which led to inconsistent metadata, limited discoverability, and barriers to data reuse. The introduction of the uniform metadata model addressed these challenges by enabling semantic harmonisation across Flemish knowledge institutions and aligning with international metadata standards. Additionally, the model supports the Open Science KPIs by offering a standardized approach to data entry.

Sara Decoster, chair of the working group Research Data Management (RDM) & Open Science, continued with an engaging and dynamic session on the **Open Science key performance indicators** (KPIs). Participants joined an interactive quiz testing their knowledge of the four KPIs—Open Data, Data Management Plans (DMPs), Open Access, and ORCID—with questions based on the latest metrics from 2023.

Jolien Berckmans, chair of the current project group DMP, provided valuable insights into the development of the **Flemish DMP template** and outlined a strategy for the future. The introduction of this uniform template helps researchers save time and effort, and ensures that researchers address the essential parts of their own DMP.

Ils De Bal, member of the project group Matchmaking, encouraged the participants to explore, use and enrich the Flemish **RDM Tools Experiences List** by sharing their own experiences with RDM tools. Developed by the project group, the list features more than 60 RDM tools and includes over 100 practical user experiences. Throughout the day, participants seeking information on specific tools had the chance to find experienced users, creating valuable opportunities to exchange knowledge and insights.

Ingrid Barcena Roig, chair of the working group Architecture, highlighted another key achievement of the network: the Architecture Plan and its accompanying **Data Infrastructure Matrix**, developed in 2021. This matrix offers valuable insights into the maturity of institutional data infrastructures at each phase of the research data lifecycle. The 2023 update demonstrates significant progress while also identifying critical gaps where further investment is required. Additionally, the matrix provides a clear overview of existing collaborations and co-creation efforts between institutions in the area of data infrastructure.

Finally, **Michiel De Vydt**, community manager of the Knowledge Hub (KH), and **Özgün Ünver**, member of the KH programme committee, presented the **Knowledge Hub** and highlighted its activities during the past policy period. This active and growing community—created for and by data stewards and RDM professionals supporting researchers in Flanders—organises Community Days three times a year and maintains an online forum for knowledge exchange and collaboration. It also features its own 'Knowledge Forces': focused teams working on specific topics such as the creation of a final DMP checklist; a glossary to accompany the Flemish DMP template; a monthly reading club; a catalogue of in-house course materials; and the development of an educational game.

Institutions showcase 02

The next session shifted the focus from network-wide achievements to accomplishments at the institutional level. The network partners presented their achievements using the PechaKucha presentation format: a presentation of 15 slides, each auto-advancing after 20 seconds.

Matheus Lourenço, VIB, presented ***"The Cornerstone of Open Science: Leading by Example through FAIR & Open Training"***. Recognising the need for clear guidance, effective communication, and accessible training on FAIR principles, the Training and Conference Team at VIB, in collaboration with (inter)national partners (ELIXIR, SciLifeLab, and NBIS), developed hands-on training materials that adhere to FAIR and Open Access principles themselves. Through leading by example, VIB aims to foster a culture of openness and encourage wider adoption of FAIR practices among researchers.

Marc Portier, VLIZ, presented ***"Inspirational Tales from Oceanography towards Open Science Interoperability"***. Using three compelling ocean images, the presentation illustrated key Open Science principles. Lessons from oceanography help build a future where data, like a well-maintained ecosystem, connects and advances researchers worldwide: (1) Everything is connected, (2) Keep it clean and factual, (3) Norms enable innovation.

Patricia Mergen, Meise Botanic Garden, presented ***"Challenges for Open Sciences in the Recent Context of Knowledge Security and Strategic Autonomy"***. The presentation highlighted the growing tension between Open Science and increasing regulations that restrict data sharing—often for valid reasons such as privacy, security, and geopolitical concerns. While FAIR principles offer a pathway forward without always requiring openness, new challenges like the EU AI Act and stricter security screenings are limiting international collaboration. The session aimed to raise awareness and spark discussion on balancing openness with knowledge security and strategic autonomy.

Sofie Meeus, Meise Botanic Garden, and **Emily Veltjen**, INBO, presented ***"Open Science achievements across the Flemish Research Institutes: Advancing Collaboration, Training, and Infrastructure"***, representing the six Flemish Research Institutes – ILVO (the Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food), INBO (Research Institute for Nature and Forest), Meise Botanic Garden, KMSKA (Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp), Flanders Heritage Agency and Flanders Hydraulics.

Key achievements focused on three areas: Training to support researchers through FAIR data workshops, RDM sessions, and Open Science Cafés; Support & Awareness, with initiatives like a DMP template for eDNA projects, "Ask-a-Datasteward" and "Ask-a-Lawyer" consultations, and an Open Science newsletter; and Infrastructure, with advancements including the creation of a CKAN data catalogue (INBO), upgrades to the DoeDat citizen science platform (Meise Botanic Garden), digitisation of auction catalogues and the digital disclosure of the Ensor archive (KMSKA). An internal call for projects launched across the VWI-institutes led to funded infrastructure upgrades, including expanding expertise on intellectual property and data protection and providing advisory support for Flanders Hydraulics on designing a security policy framework and implementing FAIR principles. These efforts showcase how collaboration and targeted investment can advance Open Science across diverse research fields.

Steven Geirnaert, Flemish Department for the Environment and Spatial Planning, presented ***"FAIR Government Research"***. He shared their journey to enhance the application of Open Science and FAIR data principles. Building on years of publishing research via their website and the FRIS portal, they recently completed a project to improve the quality, accessibility, and internal alignment of research data and metadata. The project introduced standardised processes, tools, training, and an internal awareness campaign across teams and divisions. As a result, the organisation has become more data-aware, and its research assets are now more findable and accessible. The presentation covered the project's approach, challenges, outcomes, and next steps to fully embed these practices.

Kevin Leonard, UGent, presented ***"The Journey to Open Science at Ghent University"***, highlighting how their Open Science team supports researchers throughout their academic journey. From personalised feedback on data management plans to providing training, tools, and facilitating collaboration and peer support through the GhentCORR community, the team offers tailored guidance at every step. They also assist with publication strategies, offer an open journal platform, advise on data repositories, and provide curation support for depositing data in the Ghent University Research Data Zenodo community. The presentation emphasised the importance of human-centred support in fostering a culture of Open Science.

Jolien Berckmans, Nicky Daniels, Ulrike Kenens and **Hanne Vlietinck**, UHasselt, presented ***"Data Stewards in the Making: Insights from our Professional Development Journey"***. Data stewardship is an emerging profession with evolving practices and no standardised educational pathways – particularly in Flanders. Continuous learning is essential in this rapidly changing landscape. Professional development combines individual initiatives, such as attending conferences and webinars, with peer collaboration across institutions. The FRDN Knowledge Hub plays a key role in facilitating knowledge exchange and informal training. At Hasselt University, data stewards have pursued various training opportunities, including Skills4EOSC, the Data Steward certificate course (University of Vienna), the OpenAIRE Bootcamp, and others. The presentation reflected on these initiatives, sharing key takeaways, strengths, and how they improved support for researchers.

Dieuwertje Bloemen, KU Leuven, presented ***"600 years of data? Let's focus on the last five"***. Celebrating KU Leuven's 600th anniversary, the presentation highlighted major advancements in research data management over the past five years, largely supported by Flemish Open Science Board (FOSB) funding. This funding enabled the recruitment of additional data support staff across central services. Key achievements include the development of a DMP monitoring tool, with about 700 DMPs annually being reviewed, and a broad range of RDM services such as "book-a-data-manager" and DMP implementation visits. KU Leuven also built an integrated data infrastructure, including tools like ManGO for data management and RDR for data publication, with seamless connections to platforms like GitLab and OSF. Training offerings have expanded to cover data protection and metadata across disciplines. All efforts are coordinated through an RDM Competence Centre, reflecting significant progress in embedding Open Science and RDM at the university.

Federal and Flemish Open Science policy

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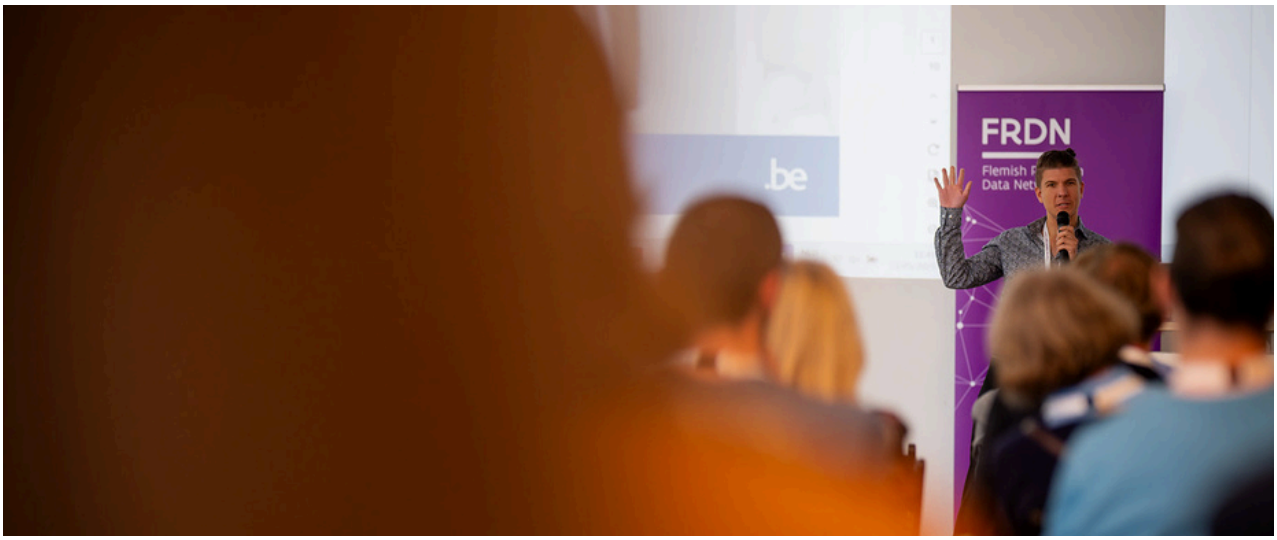
After the presentations on the achievements of the network and its institutions over the past five years, it was time to look ahead. We heard about developments at the federal level and explored the future of Open Science policy in Flanders.



Sam Kauraunne, FedOSC, presented ***"Federal Open Science Cloud (FedOSC): Building Federal Open Science Infrastructure***". Launched in April 2024, the FedOSC project is a major initiative to strengthen Open Science and FAIR data management within Belgium's federal research landscape. Supported by the Federal Recovery and Transition Plan, FedOSC focuses on developing technical infrastructure, expanding data stewardship, improving data discoverability, and supporting strategic Open Science approaches.

Key efforts include upgrading DMPOnline.be and the Orfeo repository, creating a metadata catalogue, implementing persistent identifier (PID) services, and organising targeted training. Through close collaboration between Belnet, Belspo, and the Federal Scientific Institutions (FSIs), FedOSC strives to establish a sustainable Open Science framework that respects Belgium's institutional diversity while maximising research visibility and impact.

Annelies De wael, Department of Work, Economy, Science, Innovation and Social Economy, provided an overview of how Open Science will be integrated into the future Flemish science policy, with her presentation ***"Open Science and its role in the future Flemish science policy"***. The presentation began with an explanation of the current organisation of the Flemish Research and Innovation (R&I) policy and its connection to the broader "Flemish acceleration" strategy, which aims to boost productivity and competitiveness through innovation.

A new governance structure was introduced in March 2025 to support this system-based approach, involving stakeholders from research institutions, industry, and government. Five thematic trajectories guide the implementation: research valorisation, access to funding, research infrastructures, regulatory simplification, and specific support for universities of applied sciences and arts.

Within this framework, the future of Open Science is taking shape. Discussions by the Flemish Open Science Board (FOSB) and recent evaluations of the 2019-2024 policy plan are laying the foundation for the new Open Science policy (2026-2030), with confirmed continued funding.

Key priorities include a strong focus on FAIR data, enhanced support for data infrastructure, formalised collaborations between institutions, and improved recognition of researchers' Open Science contributions. Open access will also be more explicitly embedded. Annelies emphasised that this is still a work in progress and encouraged ongoing collaboration to further develop the next Open Science policy plan.

Four Open Science topics: international inspiration & breakout sessions

04
05

During the afternoon sessions, international speakers shared their perspectives on Open Science developments in their respective countries, focusing on one of four key themes: Stimulating FAIR data sharing, data stewardship, Open Science KPIs, and Open Science infrastructure.
Following these international inspiration sessions, participants engaged in smaller breakout discussions on the same topics. These interactive sessions provided an opportunity to reflect, exchange experiences, and explore the relevance of the presented approaches within the Flemish context. The outcomes of these group discussions are summarised in the chapter Outcomes.

Stimulating FAIR data sharing

Anneke Zuiderwijk (TU Delft, The Netherlands) presented ***"Stimulating FAIR and open research data sharing: Turning good intentions into real impact"***, addressing the practical challenges and opportunities of sharing research data in line with the FAIR principles. Drawing from case studies in fields such as epidemiology and astrophysics, she illustrated that researchers' willingness to share or reuse data often depends on disciplinary culture, privacy concerns, and the extent to which data sharing is recognised and rewarded. Zuiderwijk emphasised that smart data management plans and AI tools can make data sharing easier and more effective. Her key message was the need to move beyond policies and focus on practical implementation, where research organisations, funders, and policymakers each have a critical role to play in supporting researchers.

Data stewardship

Aoife Coffey (Sonraí, Ireland) introduced ***"Sonraí. Irish Data Stewardship Network"***, an initiative dedicated to developing data stewardship skills across Ireland. Sonraí has established a national network of data stewards with a focus on professionalisation, skills development, and raising the visibility of the data steward role. Over the past two years, Sonraí has actively engaged with the data community, identified needs, and produced important reports on training and professionalisation. In 2025, Sonraí will be formally integrated into Ireland's national open research infrastructure. One of its first initiatives will be the development of a microcredential course in data stewardship, forming the foundation for future training programs.

Open Science KPIs

Marita Kari (National Open Science and Research Coordination, Federation of Finnish Learned Societies, Finland) presented ***"Open Science Monitoring in Finland"***, detailing Finland's national model for monitoring Open Science and research. Developed through co-creation with the research community and its organisations, the model features indicators that have been refined and expanded over time, in consultation with stakeholders. Kari shared results from the 2022 and 2024 monitoring rounds, which achieved exceptional response rates (over 90%), supported by strong communication strategies and user-friendly reporting through the Research.fi portal. The model has proven to be a valuable tool for tracking open science progress and fostering engagement across the Finnish research landscape.

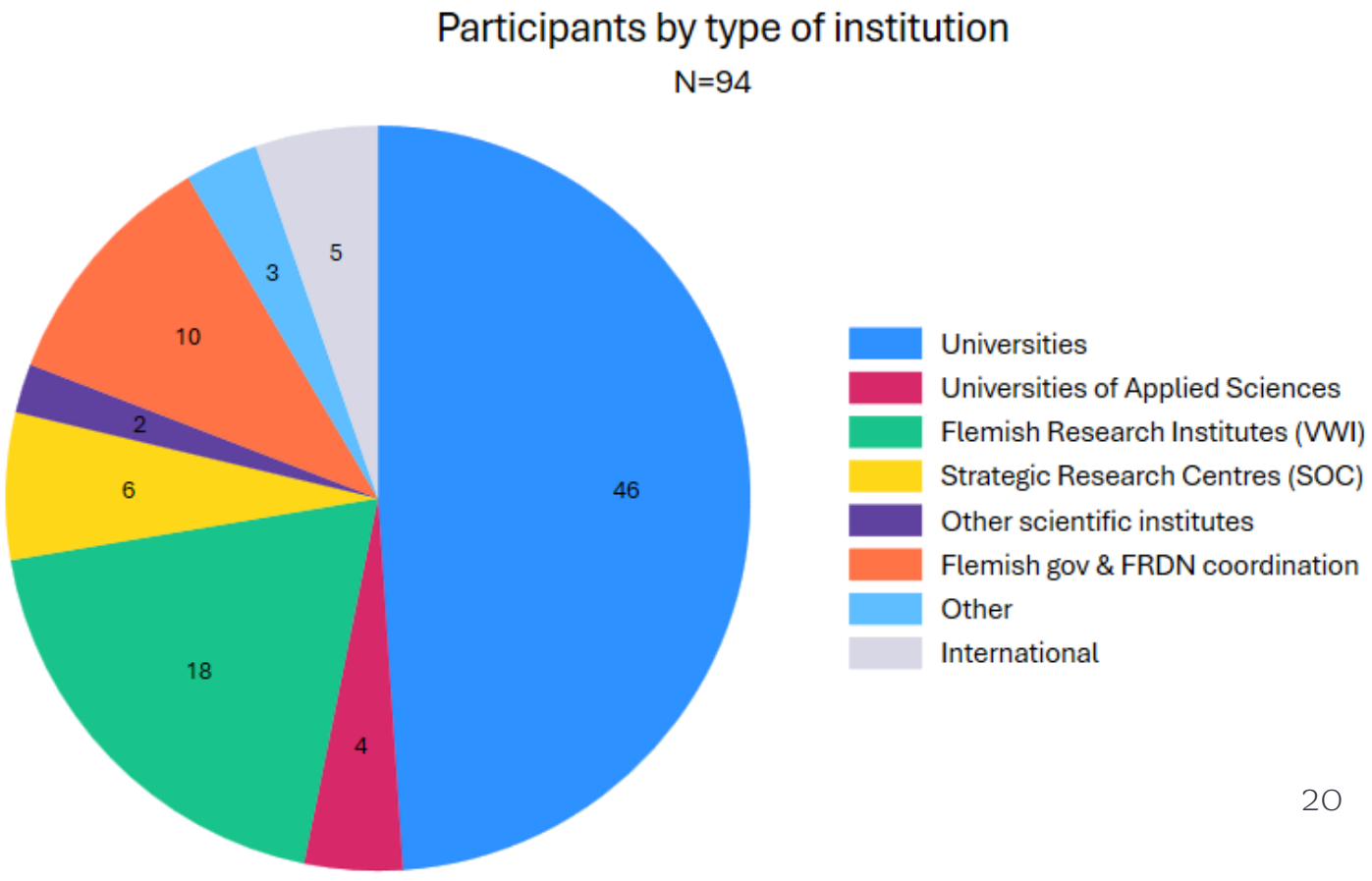
Open Science infrastructure

Laurents Sesink (SURF, The Netherlands) gave the presentation ***"Open Science Infrastructure"***, highlighting the role of SURF, the national ICT cooperative of Dutch education and research institutions, in advancing Open Science. He emphasised that the transition to Open Science is primarily a cultural shift that requires collective action. SURF supports this transformation by providing IT services, sharing knowledge, coordinating collaborations, organising collective purchasing under the best conditions and by driving innovation. Through its 'innovation zones', SURF brings together stakeholders to collaboratively address complex challenges, including open research information, open scholarly communication, and FAIR data. Sesink outlined SURF's ongoing efforts, initial results, and the challenges and priorities that lie ahead.

Sven Bingert (GWDG, Germany) added to the infrastructure discussion with his presentation ***"Persistent Identifiers"***, stressing the importance of persistent identifiers (PIDs) for ensuring the long-term accessibility and trustworthiness of research data, particularly for future (re)use by researchers and AI systems. He provided an overview of national and international PID initiatives and services that are currently in development or operation. While PIDs are already widely used in scholarly communication, Bingert emphasised that further coordination and sustainable implementation are essential to ensure reliable and consistent data identification over time.

Participants

The FRDN Network Day welcomed 94 participants. All sectors of the research community were represented. Half of the participants came from Flemish universities, and a significant proportion represented Flemish Research Institutes (VWI). In total, 20 of the 36 partner institutions were present at the event. The majority of the participants were actively engaged in Open Science as part of their daily work responsibilities, including roles such as data stewards and curators, policy officers, university library and research coordination staff, trainers, and ICT personnel. Additionally, individuals involved in research, valorisation, research funding, government services and citizen science were also in attendance.



Outcomes

Presentations and posters

All posters and presentations, presented at the Network Day 2025, are openly available on Zenodo and easily accessible through our website. An overview of the presentations and posters can be found respectively in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 of this report.

Based on the presentations and posters, we can conclude that Flemish research institutions share a strong commitment to advancing RDM and Open Science through collaboration, integrated infrastructures, and practical tools that promote FAIR principles. Efforts focus on creating interoperable resources, developing data repositories and metadata systems, and embedding Open Science practices into daily workflows, supported by training, tailored disciplinary support, and community-building to foster cultural change.

Collaboration and infrastructure development remain central themes, reinforced by tools, platforms, and matchmaking efforts to share experiences, while the active Knowledge Hub drives community engagement and practical initiatives for data stewards and RDM professionals. Secure and ethical data handling, legal compliance, and balancing openness with intellectual property concerns are key challenges addressed through innovative projects and partnerships. Additionally, citizen engagement, participatory approaches, and the use of AI are increasingly embraced to democratise research, enhance data accessibility, and drive transparency, accessibility, and innovation within the Flemish research ecosystem.

Looking ahead, the forthcoming Flemish Open Science policy will build on these efforts and challenges, aiming to further strengthen infrastructure, enhance collaboration and recognition for Open Science contributions, ensuring sustained progress through coordinated governance and funding.

Discussions

Stimulating FAIR data sharing

In this session, participants discussed current institutional practices, barriers and potential incentives to FAIR data sharing. While data sharing is increasingly integrated into institutional policies (such as those of the universities), data sharing still faces barriers, especially around issues of credit, ownership, and control. In short, progress remains possible. For example, a participant from KMSKA noted that restoration projects often produce valuable datasets, but disputes still frequently arise over authorship and ownership. Proactively addressing such issues through thoughtful DMPs is seen as an effective way to prevent conflicts.

Inspired by the presentation by Professor Anneke Zuiderwijk (who unfortunately was unable to join this session), we reminded ourselves that we can use three analytical levels to identify barriers and potential solutions: at the cultural level of research disciplines (macro), at the level of research organizations (meso), and at the level of individuals (micro). We mainly focused on the micro and meso level. First, we asked whether age is meaningfully associated with the willingness to share data, as the literature reports conflicting findings. Our own anecdotal evidence also points in different directions. On the one hand, younger researchers tend to express fewer complaints about Open Data and DMPs, likely because they have been trained with OS principles straight from the start of their PhD training. On the other hand, some participants also noted that younger researchers without long-term job security are actually focused on publishing articles rather than publishing datasets. At the same time, it was observed that if we succeed in bringing about the culture shift whereby Open Science is rewarded more, the added value of publishing an additional dataset may actually be greater for younger researchers than for their more senior counterparts, who often already have extensive publication records.

At the meso-level, all participants agreed that promoters, research group leaders, and senior researchers play a crucial role in fostering Open Science practices. This naturally led to a discussion on whether institutional data stewards are sufficiently effective in reaching researchers—and their group leaders—through information sessions and training. One participant noted that attendance at training sessions on research infrastructure remains relatively low. At VUB, a new initiative was recently introduced in which researchers who distinguish themselves as Open Science trailblazers can receive bonus funding.

Next, the group discussed whether stimulating the demand side of Open Data—by encouraging data reuse—could, in turn, help promote data sharing practices. One participant shared that, at their institution, students take a course in which they are asked to reproduce a published finding using the accompanying dataset. However, students often find this task notoriously difficult.

The session also emphasized the importance of providing practical tools and clear guidance for both students and researchers on how to publish data in line with the FAIR principles. Trusted repositories—such as RDR at KU Leuven—were highlighted as essential for streamlining the data publication process and ensuring compliance with FAIR standards. At the same time, institutions like INBO are exploring the option of hiring dedicated data publishing staff to better support researchers in navigating these challenges.

Ultimately, the session emphasized the need for ongoing dialogue around data ownership, incentives, and training to ensure that the transition to more open, FAIR data sharing practices becomes the standard across research institutions.

Data stewardship

The session brought together a range of data stewards who highlighted the diversity and complexity of their roles. A common theme was the challenge of visibility and recognition: despite their broad responsibilities—ranging from raising awareness and providing training to reviewing Data Management Plans (DMPs)—many researchers remain unaware of the support available. There is also a persistent misunderstanding about the scope of the data steward's role, often confused with direct data management.

Participants emphasised the importance of being proactive, approachable, and persistent in their interactions. Informal outreach, regular communication, and embedded presence within faculties or departments have proven effective, though resource-intensive. Several institutions reported positive results from pilot consultancy services, though uptake and funding remain challenging.

There was consensus on the need for institutional change to embed RDM practices more deeply, including clearer role definitions, better training for researchers, and more consistent recognition of data stewardship. While mandatory DMPs are increasingly used as a tool to engage researchers, there was scepticism about whether mandates alone improve quality or engagement.

Overall, the session underscored that data stewards play a vital yet often underappreciated role in supporting responsible research practices. Their success is closely tied to cultural change, institutional support, and the perceived value by researchers.

Open Science KPIs

The session focused on the future of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) within the context of Open Science and research practices, with participants acknowledging both the potential and challenges of measuring progress effectively. A key takeaway was the concern that current KPIs often focus too narrowly on outputs, particularly academic publications, without capturing the broader, qualitative aspects of Open Science (OS) and Research Data Management (RDM). This focus on quantifiable metrics, such as Open Access (OA) publication rates or data sharing, can inadvertently undervalue important efforts, such as creating infrastructure, fostering a research culture, or supporting colleagues.

Participants voiced the need for KPIs that align better with the evolving practices in Open Science, recognising that researchers should be incentivised for behaviours that contribute to a more open and collaborative research environment. While there is a drive to measure the success of OS initiatives, many institutions are still grappling with how to balance effective reporting with avoiding excessive administrative burden on researchers. There is also a call for more nuanced, descriptive metrics that reflect actual progress in research practices, rather than simplistic numerical targets.

The discussion also highlighted the need to expand the scope of KPIs to include not only academic research but also the societal impact of research, particularly for institutions like Universities of Applied Sciences or non-university research bodies. This diversification would allow KPIs to capture the full spectrum of Open Science practices, including non-academic contributions.

Several institutions also shared their experiences with existing Open Science models and frameworks, such as Norway's Open Science Assessment Model (OSCAM) and Finland's approach to incentivising Open Access publishing, which could serve as useful references. However, a recurring challenge was the tension between institutional priorities and the researchers' needs. Many felt that while KPIs are important for tracking progress, they should be simplified, based on existing infrastructures, and used as proxies for desired behaviours. Rigid targets may incentivise compliance, and target chasing rather than meaningful action.

Ultimately, the session underscored the need to rethink KPIs to better reflect the complexity of Open Science and data stewardship efforts. Moving forward, institutions must work together to develop more adaptable, qualitative measures that foster a culture of open, responsible research while ensuring that researchers are properly recognised for their contributions.

Open Science Infrastructure

The goal of this session was to discuss RDM infrastructure, based on some of the earlier talks, in preparation of the upcoming policy plan for the next four years. The input from this session would be used as input.

Digital sovereignty

The first question was how to organise RDM infrastructure the best way in an already rich but distributed landscape. In this discussion, we soon discovered the topic of digital sovereignty: we all depend a lot on a few key organisations for a lot of our services (e.g. GitHub). How do we avoid that some organisations can set any price they want, or, in the current international context, servers abroad shut down?

The principle ‘Open Source first’ can help to keep power in our own hands. The concept of decentralised services, like e.g. Mastodon servers, can also provide more autonomy.

We also talked about redundancy. To some degree, redundancy in services may make us as a community more robust. On the other hand, it is less efficient for every institute to buy or create their own infrastructure. Therefore, sharing services can often be a good idea. The question is on which level—international, federal, local...—services should be organised: a difficult question, especially in the political context of Belgium.

In the end, we concluded that there needs to be a balance between decentralisation and centralisation, and wherever we work together, a good governance structure is key. And whenever you decide on using certain infrastructure, it’s important to decide on an exit strategy.

AI infrastructure

Participants noted that AI also requires (or is) infrastructure, and that this topic was remarkably absent from most talks. While it requires big investments, some participants argued that we should not just let the big players on the market play a role. GPT-NL, a Dutch Large Language model, was given as an example of European AI infrastructure.

PID infrastructure

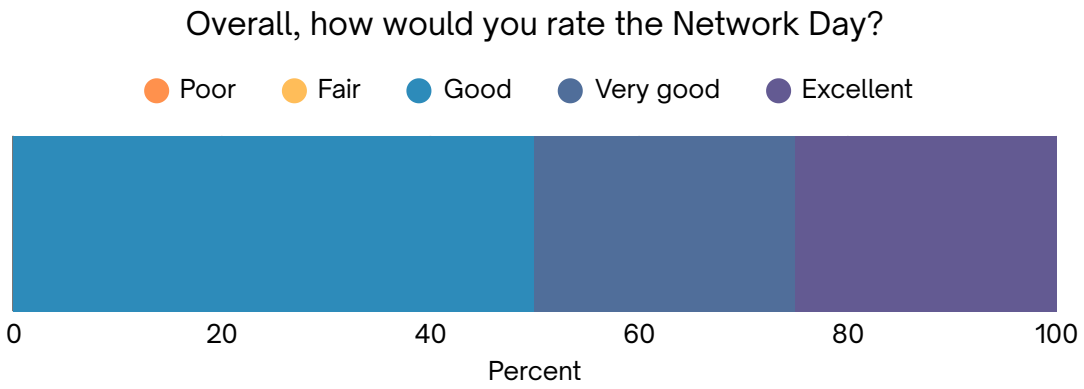
Later, the discussion shifted to the topic of PIDs. While many institutions already have a system for assigning DOI’s, participants remarked that there are some different new use cases that could benefit from PID infrastructure. For example, giving research infrastructure like instruments or research software a PID could greatly improve reproducibility.

During the discussion, it became clear that there are multiple flavors/systems of providing PIDs. We lingered a while on the problem of persistence. When we use PIDs provided by an organisation, it’s important to know that these stay available long-term, and that it’s clear what ‘long-term’ means. Therefore, we concluded that a good policy is needed.

Evaluation of the Network Day

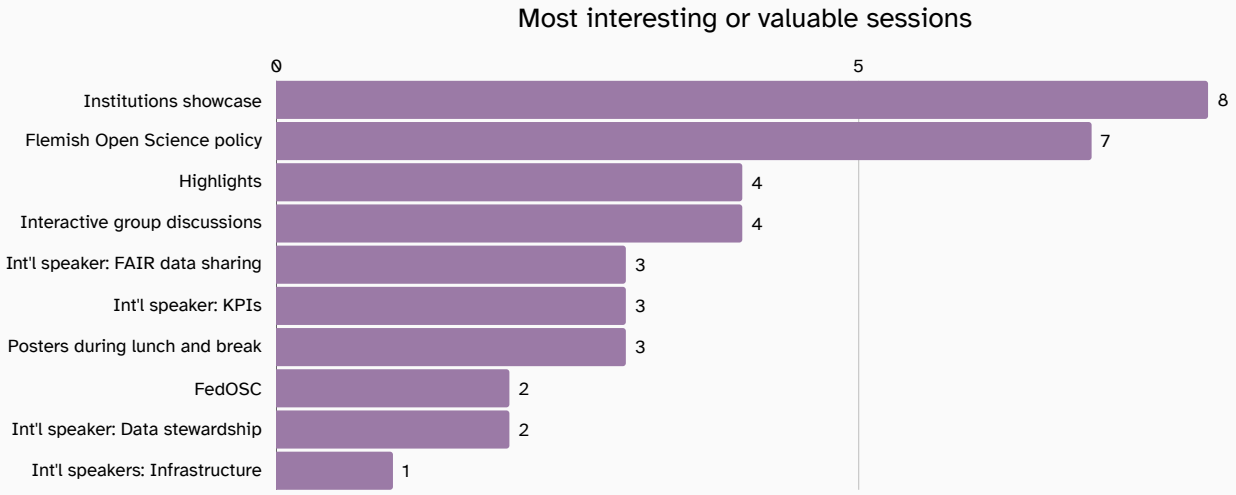
Participants were invited to complete an evaluation form to share their feedback on the Network Day. The QR code linking to the evaluation form was provided in the programme booklet during the event, and a reminder was sent by email afterwards. Only 16 responses were received, so the results should be interpreted with caution. Additionally, the members of the Coordination Hub discussed the strengths and areas for improvement of the event during their weekly meeting.

By the participants



Participant feedback underscored the event's overall success: none rated the Network Day below "good". Eight attendees judged it "good", four deemed it "very good", and another four awarded it "excellent".

In the evaluation form, participants were invited to select up to three sessions they found the most interesting or valuable. The sessions highlighting the achievements of the network partner institutions was highly appreciated, as was the session on the role of Open Science in the Flemish science policy. Feedback on the international inspiration sessions was more mixed.



Participants were also invited to describe further their experiences and give suggestions for future events. In general, participants appreciated the relevance and quality of the content presented during the event, particularly the international speakers. However, several recurring suggestions emerged to improve the overall experience.

The most common point of feedback was that the programme was too full, with too many consecutive presentations and not enough time for interaction, networking, and questions. Many participants expressed a desire for more space in the schedule to engage with speakers, explore posters, and connect with peers. Several noted that the opportunity to ask questions, especially to international speakers, was missing, and more interactive sessions would have been valuable.

The Pecha Kucha format, which limited speakers to 20 seconds per slide, was generally not seen as successful. While it encouraged concise and fast-paced presentations, some presenters experienced increased preparation pressure, and the format did not always enhance the clarity of the presentations. The session showcasing international examples was described as interesting but too dense without a break, making it difficult to fully absorb the information. Several attendees suggested that more could be done to support presenters in preparing their talks, such as offering clearer guidelines or coaching to ensure consistent quality across sessions. Poster sessions were seen as a missed opportunity: there was no dedicated time to visit the posters properly, and the overlap with lunch and coffee breaks meant many participants did not have the chance to explore them in depth. Suggestions included scheduling fixed time slots for poster presenters to stand by their posters and eliminating the poster prize to focus on knowledge sharing rather than (friendly) competition.

Finally, some participants also emphasised the importance of going beyond familiar topics within the research data management (RDM) community, and encouraged more in-depth, forward-looking discussions.

Rest assured that we will take your feedback into account when planning future Network Days!

Evaluation by the Coordination Hub

Overall, the feedback from the Coordination Hub was in line with that of the participants. The Coordination Hub agreed that the event offered strong content, but the programme was too dense, leaving insufficient time for interaction and networking. The PechaKucha format was appreciated by the Coordination Hub, as it ensured concise presentations and helped keep the schedule on track.

However, the interactive discussions—some moderated by Coordination Hub members—did not provide much new or in-depth information. A more focused format and a more creative, out-of-the-box approach could be beneficial in the future. Regarding timing, the breaks were too short, and there was limited opportunity for questions, particularly for the international speakers. Still, the overall engagement and enthusiasm at the event point to a strong (renewed) foundation to build upon for future editions.

Acknowledgements

We would like to sincerely thank all the speakers, poster presenters, and participants for their valuable contributions, inspiring presentations, and active engagement throughout the FRDN Network Day.

A special thanks goes to the organising committee (Maria-Rose Eves Down, Veerle Van den Eynden, Michiel De Vydt and Eline Deweirdt), the Coordination Hub members (Eline Deweirdt, Michiel De Vydt, Sara Decoster, Ingrid Barcena Roig, Elisa Maes, Ulrike Kenens, Annelies De wael), as well as to the moderators and note-takers of the breakout sessions (Michiel De Vydt, Maria-Rose Eves Down, Sara Decoster, Ingrid Barcena Roig, Jan Mertens, Elisa Maes, Jef Scheepers, Annelies De wael).

We also gratefully acknowledge the support of the Flemish government and our partner institutions, whose commitment to fostering Open Science and research collaboration continues to drive this important work forward.

Appendix 1 – Programme

09:20 – 10:20	FRDN Highlights
10:20 – 10:50	Institutions showcase (part 1)
10:50 – 11:10	Break with posters
11:10 – 11:40	Institutions showcase (part 2)
11:40 – 12:00	Federal Open Science Cloud (FedOSC)
12:00 – 12:20	Open Science and its role in the future Flemish science policy
12:20 – 13:15	Lunch with posters
13:15 – 15:00	International inspiration
15:00 – 15:15	Break with posters
15:15 – 16:15	Interactive discussions in smaller groups
16:15 – 16:40	Groups report back
16:40 – 16:50	Closing remarks and poster award
16:50 – 18:00	Reception

Appendix 2 – Presentations/speakers overview (1/2)

Speaker(s)	Institution(s)	Title
Eline Deweirdt	FWO/FRDN	FRDN – Context and governance
Evy Neyens	UHasselt	Uniform metadata standard
Sara Decoster	KU Leuven	Key Performance Indicators
Jolien Berckmans	UHasselt	Data Management Plan
Ils De Bal	Department WEWIS	Matchmaking
Ingrid Barcena Roig	KU Leuven	Data Infrastructure Matrix
Michiel De Vydt & Özgün Ünver	FWO/FRDN & VUB	The Knowledge Hub: Highlights since the start
Matheus Lourenço	VIB	The Cornerstone of Open Science: Leading by Example through FAIR & Open Training
Marc Portier	VLIZ	Inspirational Tales from Oceanography towards Open Science Interoperability
Patricia Mergen	Meise Botanic Garden	Challenges for Open Sciences in the recent context of knowledge security and strategic autonomy
Sofie Meeus & Emily Veltjen	Meise Botanic Garden & INBO	Open Science achievements across the Flemish Research Institutes: Advancing Collaboration, Training, and Infrastructure
Steven Geirnaert	Department for the Environment and Spatial Planning	FAIR Government Research
Kevin Michael Leonard	UGent	The Journey to Open Science at Ghent University

Appendix 2 – Presentations/speakers overview (2/2)

Speaker(s)	Institution(s)	Title
Jolien Berckmans, Nicky Daniels, Ulrike Kenens & Hanne Vlietinck	UHasselt	Data Stewards in the Making: Insights from our Professional Development Journey
Dieuwertje Bloemen	KU Leuven	600 years of data? Let's focus on the last five
Sam Kauranne	Belnet	Federal Open Science Cloud
Annelies De wael	Department WEWIS	Open Science and its role in the future Flemish science policy
Anneke Zuiderwijk	TU Delft (The Netherlands)	Stimulating FAIR and open research data sharing: Turning good intentions into real impact
Aoife Coffey	Sonraì (Ireland)	Sonraí. Irish Data Stewardship Network
Marita Kari	National Open Science Secretariat (Finland)	Open Science Monitoring in Finland
Laurents Sesink	SURF (The Netherlands)	Open Science Infrastructure
Sven Bingert	GWDG (Germany)	Persistent Identifiers

Appendix 3 – Poster overview (1/4)

Author(s)	Institution(s)	Title
Lucy Amez[1], Elisa Maes[1], Sara Decoster[2], Johan Philips[2], Kylie Cortebeeck[2], Myriam Mertens[3], Inge Van Nieuwerburgh[3], Pieter Spooren[4], Hanne Poelmans[5], Eline Schoeters[5], Ulrike Kenens[5], Linde Tuybens[4], Danielle Gilliot[6], Nele Robberechts[6]	VUB[1], KU Leuven[2], UGent[3], UAntwerpen[4], UHasselt[5], VLIR WG RDM & OS[6]	(Almost) 10 Years of VLIR WG RDM-OS
Nicky Daniels[1], Jacob Laureyns[2], Kevin Leonard[3], Myriam Mertens[3], Philippe Moens[1], Ine Moerman[2], Jone Paesmans[4], Jef Peeters[5], Sybren Slegers[4], Linde Tuybens[6] & Thomas Van de Velde[3]	UHasselt[1] , Möbius[2], UGent[3], VUB[4], KU Leuven[5], UAntwerpen[6]	FAIRVault. An Interuniversity Project On Creating A Restricted Access Data Archive
Ingrid Barcena Roig, Dieuwertje Bloemen, Johan Philips, Kim Sterckx, Veerle Van den Eynden	KU Leuven	Development of an Integrated Lifecycle of RDM tools
Siham Benramdane, Linde Tuybens, Dunya Nasser, Niels Vervoort	UAntwerpen	Open Science Policy & Support @ UAntwerpen
Laura Standaert	UGent	Engaging researchers to document and share research activities at Ghent University
Paula Oset Garcia, Myriam Mertens, Stefanie De Bodt	UGent	GhentCORR: Building a peer community for Open and Reproducible Research at Ghent University

Appendix 3 – Poster overview (2/4)

Author(s)	Institution(s)	Title
Evelien Dhollander, Kevin Leonard, Myriam Mertens	UGent	From Idealism to Pragmatism: The Data Curation Journey at Ghent University
Jone Paesmans, Özgün Ünver, Thijs Devriendt, Edo Martens, Lucy Amez & Elisa Maes	VUB	VUB's journey towards Open Science
Özgün Ünver	VUB	"No Data" to Manage? Think Again!
Hoang-Son Pham, Amr Ali-Eldin	UHasselt	Predicting the Tendency Toward Open Science in Flemish Research Projects
Jolien Berckmans, Nicky Daniels, Ulrike Kenens, Hanne Vlietinck	UHasselt	Assessing the Impact of Research Data Management
Jolien Berckmans, Nicky Daniels, Ulrike Kenens, Hanne Vlietinck	UHasselt	The Journey of Research Data Management and Open Science at Hasselt University: Achievements and Future Directions
Hanne Vlietinck, Ils De Bal, Jef Scheepers	FRDN PG Matchmaking	RDM-tools Experiences list
Kim Sterckx, Hanne Vlietinck et al.	Knowledge Force *Course Materials*	RDM Course materials
Jolien Berckmans	UHasselt	Swipe right for the sake of science! Find your perfect match in our Open Science curriculum

Appendix 3 – Poster overview (3/4)

Author(s)	Institution(s)	Title
Maarten Trekels[1,2], Patricia Mergen[2,3], Emily Veltjen[4], Aaike De Wever[4], Ann Van Baelen[5], Nathalie Poot[5], Bert Demarsin[5], Kenneth Bauters[6], Chantal Dugardin[6], Kenzo Milleville[6], Steven Verstockt[6], Leen Vandepitte[7], Liselot Breyne[8], Kris Hostens[8], Maartje Van Frankenhuijsen[9], Nico Van Aerde[9], Maarten Vanhove[10], Tom Artois[10], Frederik Leliaert[2]	Stellenbosch University[1], Meise Botanic garden[2], Royal Museum for Central Africa[3], INBO[4], KU Leuven[5] UGent[6], VLIZ[7], ILVO[8], ITG[9], UHasselt[10]	DiSSCo Flanders: Enhancing access to Flemish collections through integration with DiSSCo
Koen Van Daele, Maarten Vermeyen	Flanders Heritage Agency	Atramhasis – an online editor to create, maintain and consult controlled vocabularies and thesauri
Steven Cerpentier, Hilde Buffel, Hans Depickere, Frank Luykx	Flanders Hydraulics	Improving FAIRness and developing a data security policy at Flanders Hydraulics (FH)
Ellen Van Assche, Ann Bogaerts, Sofie De Smedt, Sofie Meeus, Maarten Trekels, Mathias Dillen	Meise Botanic Garden	Unlocking heritage through Open Science: digitising biodiversity and beyond with DoeDat
Sofie Meeus[1], Emily Veltjen[2]	Meise Botanic Garden[1] INBO[2]	Open Science: a legal perspective

Appendix 3 – Poster overview (4/4)

Author(s)	Institution(s)	Title
Aaike De Wever, Jens Polspoel, Jo Loos	INBO	Pilot INBO Datacatalog
Aaike De Wever, Raïsa Carmen, Maria-Rose Eves Down, Emily Veltjes, Julie Callebaut	INBO	Open Science Targets: INBO's approach to increase quality and transparency throughout the research cycle
Manou De Sutter, Sakina El-Haruati, Ingrid De Pourcq	KMSKA	James Ensor Projects KMSKA. His writings and his paintings.
Manou De Sutter, Sakina El-Haruati, Ingrid De Pourcq	KMSKA	Digitisation and automated transcription of historical auction catalogues
Annelies Duerinckx, Jef Van Laer, Karen Verstraelen	Scivil	Building Bridges for Better Citizen Science: Citizen Science Highlights form Scivil
Annelies Duerinckx[1], Steve Bers[1], Karen Verstraelen[1], Jef Van Laer[1], Isaak Vandermaesen[1], Sven Speybrouck[1], Michiel Vaes[2], Carina Veeckman[2], Neena Singh[2], Pieter Duysburgh[2]	Scivil[1] imec-VUB-SMIT[2]	Amai!: Empowering citizens to engage with AI innovation
Yves Sagaert, Filotas Theodosiou	VIVES	Demand forecasting with AI using limited historical data
Jan Ooghe	KU Leuven	VSC – supporting your research – what, where and how