

The Research Data Alliance in Norway

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Abstract

The Research Data Alliance (RDA) is a neutral international network aiming at promoting data sharing and data-driven research. The efforts of RDA are organized in a number of groups, including national nodes, where contributors work together to develop and adopt approaches that foster the uptake of standards and good practice of research data management through all stages of the data lifecycle. Since 2019, Norway has had its national RDA group.

This article gives a short introduction to the Norwegian RDA group. In section 1 we provide some background information about RDA. Section 2 describes the Norwegian RDA group, including its background and organisational structure, as well as past and future activities.

Keywords:

Research Data Alliance, Norway, research data management, data sharing, data-driven research, research support, best practice, networking, collaboration

1 The Research Data Alliance

1.1 Background and Description

The Research Data Alliance (RDA) was established in 2013 as a community-driven initiative spearheaded by the European Commission, the United States Government's National Science Foundation and National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the Australian Government's Department of Innovation. From the start, the goal of RDA has been to build the social and technical infrastructure to enable open sharing and re-use of data (About RDA, 2016). Issues that have been dealt with within the RDA framework include reproducibility, data citation, data preservation, data type registries, best practices for domain-specific repositories, metadata, and legal interoperability (The Research Data Alliance, 2021, p. 5).

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RDA has since its conception experienced a steady growth in number of members and outputs. As of February 2021, RDA has members from 145 countries amounting to 11 521 individual members, of which 68.8% are from Academia/Research, 14.1% from Government/Public Services, 4.9% from Small and Medium Enterprises, leaving the remaining 12.2% to IT Consultancy/Development, Large Enterprises, Policy/Funding Agencies, Press and Media, and Other (The Research Data Alliance, 2021, pp. 8–9). By profession, RDA members are researchers, librarians, IT specialists, consultants, students etc.

1.2 RDA Working Groups and Interest Groups

At the heart of RDA are groups where research data experts from different fields and countries meet to discuss and work out infrastructure dealing with different aspects of research data management throughout the lifecycle of data. RDA has two main types of groups, Interest Groups and Working Groups. **Working Groups** are established for a limited period of time (usually 18 months) to provide a platform where people can come together to develop and implement data infrastructure in the form of tools, policy, practices and products that are adopted and used by projects, organizations, and communities. **Interest Groups**, on the other hand, are not time-limited, and they deal with specific data-related problems and try to identify what kind of infrastructure needs to be built and adapted to solve these problems. Interest Groups may decide to establish a Working Group to focus on specific pieces of work (The Research Data Alliance, 2021, p. 17).

Much of the work by RDA Interest Groups and Working Groups is done asynchronously and coordinated and discussed in video calls, but twice a year RDA arranges a plenary meeting where the members come together to discuss ongoing work in existing groups or to initiate new groups.

RDA Outputs are the solutions and products developed by RDA Working Groups or Interest Groups. There are three sorts of outputs. The **RDA Recommendations**, which are produced by RDA Working Groups and are the official, endorsed results of RDA, are the ‘highest ranked’ output type. They have undergone formal phases of discussions and decision-making, and can be considered as formal “specifications” or “standards”. **Supporting Outputs** are more informal solutions, and may not be as clearly adoptable by organisations as the RDA Recommendations. They have undergone a community review, and may include different kinds of outputs (guidelines, brochures, white papers) that have an *informative* purpose, rather than directly solve a specific challenge. Finally, the **“Other” Outputs** are used to describe resources requested by a Working Group or Interest Group to be published on the RDA website, but have

received no level of endorsement. Examples of Other Outputs include workshop reports, published articles, survey results, etc.

1.3 National Groups

To promote the work and goals of RDA in national contexts, there have been established a number of National RDA Groups since 2016. The establishment of national RDA nodes in Europe was initiated through RDA Europe 4.0, which is an offshoot of the RDA globally and is co-funded by the European Commission under the Research and Innovation Framework Programme, Horizon 2020 (About RDA EU 4.0, n.d.). One of the aims of RDA Europe 4.0 has been to become an active and central part of the EU’s open science policy (n.d.), and to bring forward the RDA legacy in Europe.

As part of the effort, between 2018 and 2020, RDA Europe 4.0 initiated a series of open calls offering grants for the establishment of RDA Europe national nodes.

The aim of the national nodes is to represent their communities in RDA, and to promote engagement with RDA. National nodes act as a central contact point between national data practitioners and RDA globally, and by engaging a wide range of national stakeholders across domains, the nodes can work as a vital tool in ensuring national alignment with the Open Science developments at the European (and global) level. The establishment of national nodes is also a way of communicating and distributing information on – and raising the awareness of – RDA activities, events and funding calls, and to encourage the involvement and promotion of data management best practices, standards and solutions (About RDA EU 4.0, n.d.).

There are currently 25 national RDA groups, 21 of them in Europe (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom), three in the Americas (Brazil, Costa Rica, The United States), and one in Australia. These groups may be organized somewhat differently, but they are all dedicated to promoting RDA goals, outputs, and activities, and to translating them to and coordinating them in a national context.

2 RDA in Norway

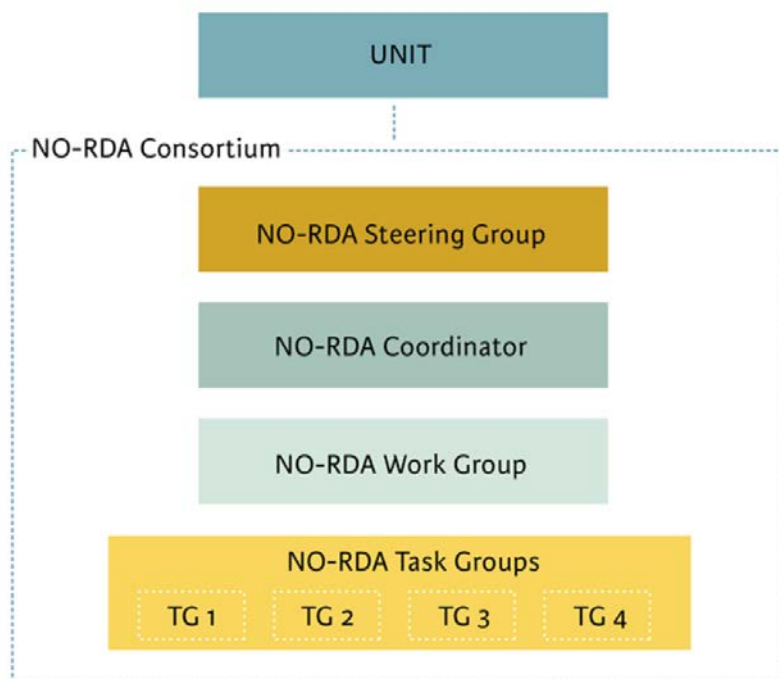
2.1 Background and Organisational Structure

The Norwegian RDA-node, which has been formally operative since May 2019, currently consists of a consortium of seven partners: University of Oslo (UiO),

UiT The Arctic University of Norway (UiT), NTNU – Norwegian University of Science and Technology, University of Bergen (UiB), Uninett Sigma2, Unit – the Norwegian Directorate for ICT and Joint Services in Higher Education and Research, and NSD – Norwegian Centre for Research Data. The aim of the node is to be an important platform for the fulfilment of national strategies for Open Science, the policy on Open Access to Research Data from the Research Council of Norway, and for active national and institutional participation in European funding programmes and open calls.

The node is organized as a consortium where all member institutions are represented. The consortium consists of three organisational levels: a *steering group*, a *coordinator* and a *work group* (which in turn consists of a set of operative *task groups*).

Figure 1. The current organisational structure of the Norwegian RDA node



The Steering Group is the top level of the node consortium and consists of high level representatives from the member institutions. The Coordinator (which has been NSD since the initiation of the node project) is responsible for the administration and coordination of the node activities. The Work Group consists of representatives with professional expertise in open science, research data management, and data sharing issues. The group is further divided into underlying Task Groups.

2.2 Past and Future Activities

During its first year (the project period was extended due to the corona virus and lasted from May 2019 to September 2020), in addition to supporting the implementation of RDA outputs and recommendations, the node focused on three main national priority topics: FAIR Data Stewardship, Data Management Plans and management of sensitive data in research.

The priority topics of the node have been integrated into many of the node activities during the project period, such as a national network train-the-trainers workshop in FAIR data curation, held at UiT in January 2020 (Conzett & Longva, 2020); a national webinar on “[Sensitive data and data management](#)”; and a national webinar on “[Open data, copyright and licenses](#)”, held during the Open Access week in October 2020.

Other activities include the publication of a national RDA adoption case story. Publishing an RDA case story is a way for RDA members who have adopted and implemented (parts of) RDA outputs or recommendations, to share their experience and lessons learned. The adoption story from the Norwegian node is about NSD’s adaptation of parts of the RDA DMP Common Standard for Machine-actionable Data Management Plans Recommendation (Miksa, Walk & Neish, 2019), one of the outputs of the RDA DMP Common Standards Working Group. The story is published in the RDA adoption story registry, as “NSD DMP – enabling long-term preservation and sharing of research data” (2020).

One of the most important outputs so far has been the establishment of a sustainability plan that ensures the continuation of the node after its first operative year and after the initial funding from RDA Europe. The sustainability plan is formalised through a Steering Document which contains a formalisation of the continuation of the current node consortium, and lays out plans on how to expand the node with new institutional members and how the node should be funded in the future. One of the main goals for the node in 2021 is to expand and to include more member institutions that can participate in all levels of the node.

The Project Plan for 2021, which is part of the Steering Document, is divided into several task groups. In addition to recurring tasks – like project coordination, training and outreach, and communication – there is one task assigned to the creation of a common national framework for open data competence, and one task focusing on building an authoritative national terminology for open science and research data management.

A common national competence framework can play an important part in the establishment of a set of competence and skill requirements for research support staff. The competence framework is connected to the task of building a

national terminology, and the node will contribute to the development of a common conceptual framework which can work as a basis for the development of an authoritative Norwegian terminology related to open science and research data management. The work will be based on the Language Council of Norway's guide for the development of terminologies. As part of the work the node is planning to cooperate with the Language Collections (*Språksamlingane*) at the University Library at UiB and will investigate whether there are opportunities for co-operation with the other Nordic countries, for example through Nordterm (n.d.).

The Norwegian RDA Group has currently 172 members, including researchers, administrative and support staff from universities, research institutes, funding agencies and other stakeholder organizations.

Become a member and join the Norwegian RDA group by signing up at <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/rda-norway>. You will be automatically subscribed to the group mailing list and will receive all RDA Norway updates.

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