

National discussion event on the Research Data Alliance at CSC, Espoo
Notes
31 March, 2016

RDA and Finland – exploring open data opportunities

Outputs from the 7th RDA Plenary

The Research Data Alliance (RDA) builds the social and technical bridges that enable open sharing of data. The RDA vision is ‘researchers and innovators openly sharing data across technologies, disciplines, and countries to address the grand challenges of society’.

RDA Europe organized a national discussion event at CSC – IT Center for Science Ltd. on 31st March, 2016. The purpose was to present RDA’s latest outputs concerning e.g. research data sharing and reuse. Additionally, it was discussed how to implement and adopt these outputs in the Finnish research community. Similar national events have been organized in Finland regularly after RDA plenaries, in order to engage the Finnish community and to promote uptake of RDA outputs on national level.

The meeting started with Irina Kupiainen’s (CSC) general overview of RDA 7th Plenary, held in Tokyo in early March. Altogether seven RDA recommendations/outputs and 11 RDA output adoption cases were presented during those days. Over 370 participants from 33 countries joined the Plenary and multiple RDA working and interest group meetings took place. The objective of the RDA Plenaries is to gather together international experts working with research data to share their experiences and best practices and to develop new recommendations on research data sharing.

The new RDA outputs and recommendations focus on e.g. data bibliometrics, data publication services and data repositories. There is also growing interest among a wider community in using RDA work as valuable input: for example OECD, as well as CODATA/ICSU and The World Data System (WDS) have adopted or built their work on some of the RDA outputs, which indicates a high quality. Some of the previously endorsed outputs are also in an ICT standards evaluation process of the European Commission. Additionally, an introductory research data science curriculum has also been presented by CODATA and RDA, including various research data related training courses. For more information about RDA outputs, see Irina Kupiainen’s presentation slides.

Legal interoperability – comment on a RDA deliverable

In the second part of the meeting, the discussion was focused on RDA Legal Interoperability interest group, and Jessica Parland-von Essen from CSC reflected on the draft recommendations of the interest group from the national point of view. Similar work is ongoing in the Finnish Open Science and Research Initiative, under the working group Metadata for Rights Management. The basic idea is that the more open the data is, the easier things are, but from the legal point of view there are many things to consider.

Especially the question about the ownership of data is crucial, and it raised a lot of discussion also during the event: what are the rights and responsibilities of data providers and data users? How open should the publicly-funded research data be? Who has the right to decide about access to different data sets? Hence, common principles, training and support are indeed needed and more focus should be put on how research principles, e.g. data management and data citation are taught to researchers and also to students in universities. In Finland, the National Digital Library project and Open Science

and Research Initiative are considering these questions. However, there still exists an urgent need for better nationwide data management policy, and what we need is a clear process which acknowledges the freedom of research. The overall view was that RDA could be a useful forum for these discussions.

National perspective on RDA outputs

Eeva Kaunismaa from the Ministry of Education and Culture presented her views on the linkages between national and international research collaboration. Based on e.g. a recent study on Nordic countries, Finland has taken right steps. Kaunismaa also presented the Finnish Open Science and Research Roadmap 2014-2017. Increasing the social impact of research and highlighting its benefits for the society are key issues in developing open science policies and methods.

Kaunismaa stated that the nature of science and of conducting research is changing rapidly, and global context, including phenomena such as openness, digitalization and multi-disciplinarity, is affecting Finnish research community and research policy framework as well. Hence, the international interoperability of research has to be promoted and more focus should be put on the opening of research data also to international research purposes. National developments in research have to be connected to global activities, policies and best practices, in a way that gives competitive advantage to Finnish research. RDA is providing valuable tools to overstep this gap between national and international research as it provides a forum for global discussion, sharing experiences and developing common recommendations.

Supporting open data policy in University of Turku

Jukka Rantasaari presented the emerging data policy of Turku University (UTU) which has taken some influence from the University of Helsinki's data policy, as well as from UK examples and ATT work. The UTU data policy functions as a starting point for openness of data and data management. Consequently, the university will provide new services, training and support together with the University of Turku Graduate School (UTUGS) in implementing the principles. Moreover, the media visibility of university's data and international developments are carefully followed.

Under UTU data policy they will examine what kind of reward practices has been applied to evaluate academic crediting. The objective is that opening of research data will be credited in a way that is suitable for UTU. The broader social aspect of research data is also taken into account since UTU will create a process which enables to identify possible business opportunities for using research data. Since the data policy was prepared in autumn 2015, all final indicators or monitoring systems haven't been decided yet. It was suggested during the meeting that since the ownership of data raises various questions, describing the responsibilities of researchers in universities' data policies would be useful since there are a lot of responsibilities concerning data and storing it.

RDA and Finland

A broad discussion about the roles of different actors in Finnish research community took place in the meeting. The role of universities in promoting open data and open access principles is of course crucial but the question around funding and recognizing open data efforts needs to be answered. What is needed is the creation and implementation of universities' own data policies, a process that also needs to be supported at the governmental/national level. Moreover, RDA and its outputs can be utilized in developing these organizational policies around research data. Attention was also brought to the question of research collaboration between universities. For example the hardware used in research are very expensive, so joint efforts in acquisition of this equipment would be cost-effective and it would benefit also inter-organizational collaboration. On the other hand, the human factor – policy-related, cultural and skills issues should not be forgotten, as the technical challenges are usually easier to overcome.

Additionally, more attention should be placed on RDA outputs implementation process at the national level. For instance, Open Science and Research Initiative (ATT) could begin to systematically investigate RDA outputs and plan how to make good use of them. Overall, the main conclusion of discussion was that RDA could be linked more clearly with national initiatives and research actors, and RDA Europe outputs adoption and participation in RDA plenaries for Finnish actors should be funded and supported. Raising awareness of RDA in different channels is likewise important.

The possibility of a national forum for sharing thoughts and experiences on adopting RDA outputs was raised at the end of the meeting. Currently there is no official channel where actors could share their best practices when it comes to open research data, and consequently e.g. universities may be doing and thinking same issues without knowing each other's experiences. RDA Europe events, such as this discussion event, are one forum for sharing knowledge. CSC will put some thought into this and will come up with a plan.

To summarize the meeting's discussions, it can be stated that Finnish actors could be more active in RDA and its working and interest groups. We have good expertise, and joining a global group of experts would benefit us and give us a chance to influence developments beyond the national scope. There are same kind of challenges at European, global and national level; thus we need a stronger dialogue across these levels.

RDA collaboration projects and next adoption call

RDA Europe launched the 1st call for collaboration projects in September 2015 to support communities that want to test or adopt RDA outputs. 25 proposals were submitted and seven were selected, and they have now entered the administrative review phase and should be able to start by mid-2016. These projects are displayed on RDA Europe's website. Furthermore, more people and expertise from Finland are needed in RDA, and an excellent way to get involved is by adopting RDA recommendations and outputs and participating in RDA working and interest groups. By participation and adoption we can make sure that national communities can both benefit from and contribute to RDA.

The 2nd RDA adoption call is upcoming in 2016, and CSC will provide information on this later. The next RDA Plenary will be held in September 2016 in Denver, and after that in the spring 2017 in Barcelona. All of your input is appreciated and all interested Finnish research experts are welcome to join!

More information:

[RDA Recommendations and Outputs](#)

[RDA Working Groups and Interest Groups](#)

[RDA Adoption Use Cases](#)

[RDA Webinar: Tokyo Plenary](#)

[RDA Webinar: Getting Active in RDA](#)