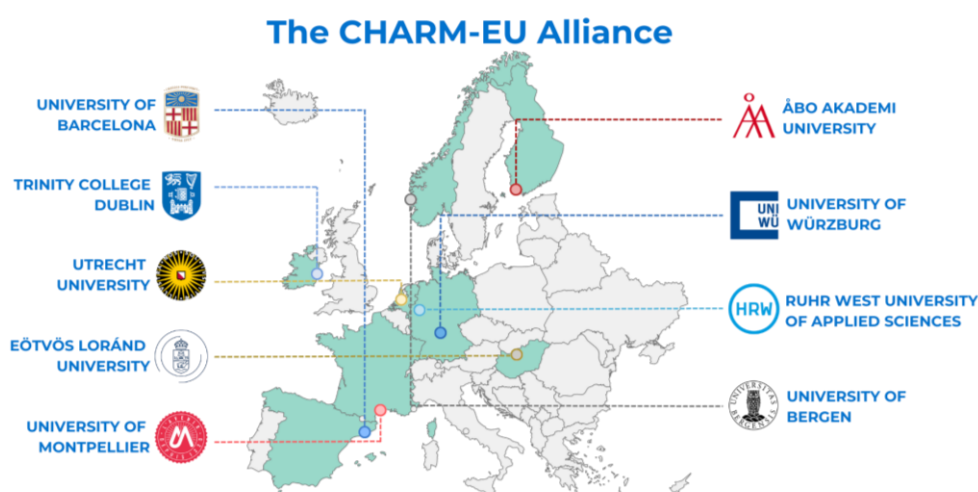


Driving multi-level impact and building the CHARM-EU R&I dimension: showcasing the achievements of the TORCH project



Kick-starting the development of the research arm of CHARM-EU, TORCH was working on the development of joint research plans and the assessment of good practices in various areas of responsible research and innovation (RRI). This article summarises the key results of TORCH, highlighting the multi-level impact of the project and providing a glance into the future of R&I in CHARM-EU.

Launched by the five founding universities of CHARM-EU in 2021, the TORCH project was created with the aim of enhancing the Alliances' academic and research networks through building up the research and innovation (R&I) dimension of the Alliance. The work undertaken in TORCH was focusing on identifying best practices in fields such as open science, citizen science and collaboration with societal partners, developing joint SDG-driven research challenges, establishing key priority areas, and developing pilots and action plans to advance them.



A summary of key TORCH results

During the first half of the project, partners performed a landscape analysis and identified gaps and best practices regarding cross cutting principles (inter- and transdisciplinary research; ethics and integrity; gendered innovation) and transformational modules such as developing

a common R&I agenda, cooperating with non-academic actors, mainstreaming open science and engaging the public through citizen science. Considering the research strengths and complementarities between the partner institutions, TORCH has taken the first steps to create a transdisciplinary and SDG-driven [Common Science Agenda](#) through formulating research challenges and exploring support mechanisms and infrastructures within the Alliance.

Partners have investigated how to strengthen [cooperation between universities and enterprises](#) through sharing strategies and exploring internal innovation detection, spin-off creation, and support for student entrepreneurship. TORCH experts have discovered and promoted [comprehensive open science practices](#) within the partner institutions and designed an Open Science Dashboard for the Alliance. TORCH has also explored the possibilities of the [co-creation of research and innovation](#) with societal stakeholders through addressing incentives and barriers at various levels and providing recommendations for transdisciplinary research and innovation. Best practices and tangible progress regarding several of these areas were highlighted in the [progress report on alliance's R&I projects](#) published by the European Research Executive Agency (REA) in 2023.



The results of the scoping activities carried out in the first half of the project helped TORCH and the CHARM-EU leadership to outline common mid- and long-term strategic goals for the Alliance. The experts working on establishing Common Policies and Strategies identified five priority areas, aligned with the ERA Policy Agenda (Figure 1). These strategic goals and priorities served as the basis of the [piloting activities](#) that TORCH has carried out and developed during 2023. Following these pilots, recommendations were provided for fine-tuning Alliance-level responsible research and innovation (RRI) policies and strategies, laying the foundations of the future collaboration of partner institutions in the field of research and innovation.

The multi-level impact of the project

TORCH aimed to generate impact both at the Alliance and institutional levels as well as on society through a transdisciplinary approach.

At the Alliance level, TORCH results are aligned with the actions of the ERA Policy Agenda regarding reforming the research assessment system and promoting sustainable research careers. TORCH partners' commitment to [CoARA](#) reflects the importance attached to this transformative process. The development of a common approach towards reforming research assessment and piloting a comprehensive RA framework by CHARM-EU partners through TORCH was highlighted as an important contribution in the [REA Report on Research Assessment](#), compiling achievements and best practices from Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe projects.

The project also fostered shared experiences among diverse research support structures (including Research Managers and Administrators (RMAs), Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs), and research infrastructures) which contributes to empowering institutions and enhancing the strategic capacity of research performing organisations. TORCH's orientation to multi- and transdisciplinary research focusing on societal challenges exemplifies the spirit of collaboration advocated through ERA actions to enhance research quality, performance and impact.

At the institutional level, progress can be tracked across partners through the development of gender equality measures, leveraging the work carried out around EDI practices; the integration of R&I standards that enhance social responsibility, inclusiveness and sustainability; actions to improve the development of a social corporate responsibility dimension to foster responsible innovation; and engagement with multiple stakeholders for R&I decision-making.

The collaborative nature of the work carried out in TORCH also enhanced transformation within the institutions through the development of new processes, rules and regulations and the involvement of strategic offices. Mutual learning between the partners paved the way for building trust and enhancing inter-university cooperation leading to institutional change.

In some cases, the impact of these targeted changes extends to public authorities, researchers, businesses, industry research and development, individual citizens and NGOs.

The future of the CHARM-EU R&I dimension

Following the successful completion of the TORCH project, the CHARM-EU leadership remains strongly committed to ensuring that the R&I dimension of the Alliance continues to develop, contributing to further positive impact on several levels. CHARM-EU is actively working on establishing synergies between its educational and R&I activities with a focus on enabling institutional changes.

Results and methodological expertise on building shared strategies for supporting research projects, scientific networks, reforms and engagement with fellow alliances and the European Commission derived from TORCH will enrich the Strategic Plan of the Alliance for the period between 2024 and 2030. CHARM-EU will also ensure the visibility of the R&I-related outputs,

activities and achievements of the Alliance to keep the academic communities of the partner universities and our external stakeholders engaged.

These outputs and achievements include tools such as the [TORCH Bibliographic Apps](#) that help researchers to search publications and discover inter-institutional research collaboration networks within the Alliance. The [CHARM-EU Guide of Experts](#) continues to provide a platform for academics to start the development of (or join) inter-institutional and multidisciplinary research collaborations. The Alliance will work on providing support to scientific teams developing research proposals with a particular focus on the research challenges developed under TORCH, striving to contribute to more successful joint proposals such as [ClimEx-PE](#).

Public resources and publications developed in the framework of the project can be accessed through the [CHARM-EU Zenodo profile](#). Further information about the project and its results are available at [Cordis](#) and the [website of TORCH](#).

Images for social media:

Alt1: image with the banner of the 2nd TORCH Annual Forum and the title of the article

Alt2: image with a summary of the article content: "read our article to learn more about the achievements of the project, the future of R&I in CHARM-EU and how TORCH contributed to Alliance and institutional level change with a commitment to societal impact through transdisciplinarity. www.charm-eu.eu"

