

INGSA Conference 2024 Report

By Encieh Erfani

The International Network for Governmental Science Advice (INGSA) Conference 2024 took place for the first time in the Global South, held at the Convention Center in Kigali, Rwanda, from May 1 to 3, 2024. The proposal from the Scientific Excellence Working Group of the Global Young Academy (GYA), in collaboration with the [Comité Intersectoriel Étudiant](#), was accepted. A panel discussion titled "Towards a Global Definition of Excellence in Research" occurred on May 1.

Edmond Sanganyado and Encieh Erfani, co-leads of the Working Group represented the GYA. The panelists included:

- Rémi Quirion: Québec Chief Scientist, Fonds de recherche du Québec (FRQ) and President of INGSA, Canada
- Rini Astuti: Research Fellow, UNESCO Chair on Science Communications for the Public Good, Australia/Indonesia
- Menico Rizzi: Steering Committee Member, Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment, Italy
- Marie-Violaine Dubé-Ponte: Member of the Intersectorial Student Committee, Fonds de recherche du Québec, Laval University, Canada

The panel was moderated by Maria Esteli Jarquin, International Relations Coordinator, UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH), Costa Rica.

The Rationale for the Discussion

Researchers are often praised for their ability to generate knowledge, typically evaluated through metrics such as the number of publications or prizes. This definition of excellence is narrow, overlooking the importance of scientists in science advice and communication. Transforming knowledge into evidence and evidence into advice requires a distinct set of skills. While researchers excel at acquiring good ingredients (knowledge), they are not always trained to turn them into a great meal (impactful advice). Thus, redefining excellence is essential to encourage emerging researchers to develop skills that make them impactful for policymakers and the public. This redefinition should include recognizing and rewarding policy engagement and diverse career paths as part of an excellent researcher's career.

Key Discussion Points

The session aimed to explore good practices implemented by funding, research, and policy institutions to reward policy engagement and redefine research excellence, thereby building a stronger, more diverse, and impactful scientific community. The following questions were discussed:

- What should be the key priorities for funding agencies when rewarding policy engagement and impact?
- How can academia reward policy engagement through mechanisms, pathways, and funding?

- What are the current training needs for early career researchers to generate excellent knowledge while being impactful for policymakers and the public?
- How can diversity be encouraged when defining research agendas and roadmaps to policy impact?
- How can global initiatives contribute to reforming research assessment, and what impact can they have?

Key Contributions and Agreements

Menico Rizzi highlighted the new policy for research assessment from CoARA, with Luciana Balboa representing early career researchers and the GYA in the CoARA steering committee.

Edmond highlighted how South Africa's national policy evolved in the past ten years from creating a framework for embedding science engagement in the national innovation system to setting measures for monitoring and evaluating science engagement. He also noted that the Zimbabwe Young Academy of Sciences was the first institute in Africa to sign the CoARA declaration on research assessment.

Rémi Quirion mentioned that FRQ was the first institute in Canada to join CoARA.

All panelists agreed that research assessment needs to be modified to reward teaching and outreach activities, particularly for early career researchers who are most affected by the traditional assessment system. However, inclusivity remains the main challenge.