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When policies meet practices, research data governance at the university of Lille, France

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In a context where the amount of data is doubling every three years, there is an urgent need to develop and define policies and harmonised practices for research data at an institutional level, connected to national strategies and international frameworks. The aim of this paper will be to demonstrate how international, national and institutional levels can be connected, through the example of the University of Lille, in France.

At a national level in France, the awareness has grown quite recently in the past five years, leading to the vision that every ministry needs to adopt a roadmap regarding the data produced by institutions belonging to their perimeter, under the umbrella of a national coordinator from the Office of the Prime Minister. For Higher Education and Research, a national data officer has been appointed in 2021, being in charge to coordinate the policy regarding both administrative and research data, with three overarching goals : to facilitate the re-use of public (research) data, to develop transparency for public institutions as data producers, to simplify and foster efficiency of the public sector thanks to a well-reasoned and relevant use of their data.

As a result, French universities as well as other research-performing institutions were advised to appoint a chief officer for research data in order to propose and prepare a policy for the whole life cycle of research data. The university of Lille, a comprehensive research-performing university in France, has created a framework for this research data produced and managed by the university, consistent with the national strategy in France. This framework is including :

- the creation of a data cluster, as a one-stop shop for the challenges the researchers are facing regarding their data,
- the development of tailored courses, in-person and online, to help researchers at all stages during the data lifecycle,
- the coordination of all the research-performing organisations in the area inside a network and a common collaborative-based structure,
- the creation of a data repository to leave no researcher with no solution for their data storage, curation and dissemination,
- the appointment of a chief officer for research data,
- the coordination of a unit including all the helpful bodies and competencies inside the university to prepare guidelines and solve complex issues raised by researchers, including relevant stakeholders in research-support services, Data Protection Office, libraries, archives, legal department, ethics committee, research integrity office, IT department, security office and so on,
- the participation in the national network to share and spread good practices and guidelines,
- the adoption of a strategic framework at the University of Lille for the governance of research data, also including codes and algorithms.

The framework, called « principles for the governance of research data, algorithms and codes at the university of Lille » and adopted by the research council of the university (March 2025), has defined several key principles :

- the respect of key values (transparence, scientific integrity...),
- the importance of the FAIRness for data,
- the need to describe the data, regardless of their openness or closeness,
- the need to take into account the specificity of algorithms and codes, that are different from research data,
- the importance of energy sobriety for data.

The framework has also defined the role of every stakeholders (researcher, research unit, faculties, university

level) and is progressively including practical guidelines and documents that are relevant either directly for the researchers or indirectly for the staff supporting research.

Primary author: ROCHE, Julien (university of Lille)

Presenter: ROCHE, Julien (university of Lille)

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