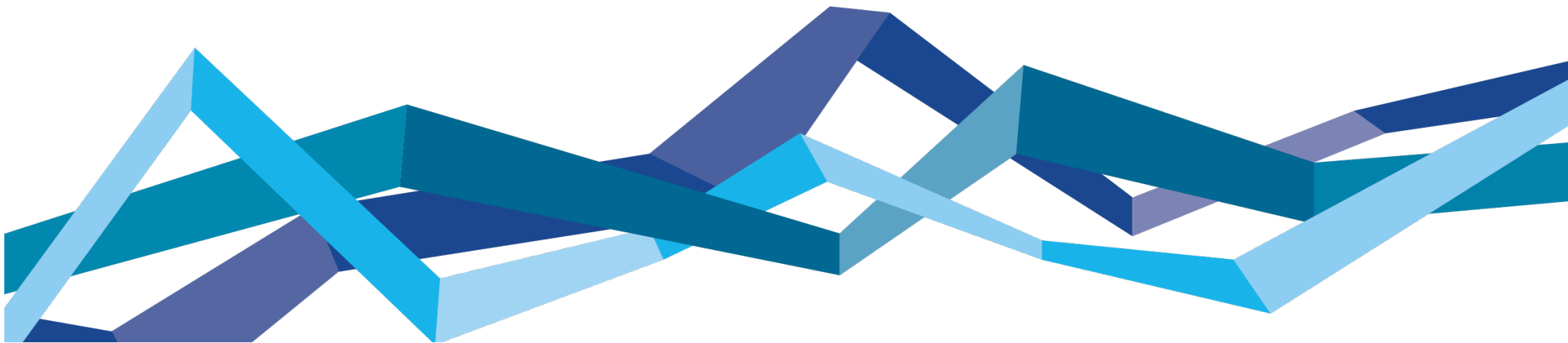# AGREEMENT ON REFORMING RESEARCH ASSESSMENT

Assembly meeting

8 JULY 2022

Outline

- Welcome and opening remarks
- Agreement
- Governance of the coalition
- To sign, or not to sign, that is the question!
- Next steps towards a constitutive assembly
- Q&A
- Breakout groups
- Back in plenary
- Closing remarks

Mariya Gabriel

Commissioner responsible for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth

Dear Research and Innovation Community,

Assessment of research is intrinsically linked with objectiveness and peer-scrutiny that contributed, over the centuries, to the development of our European values of freedom and democracy.

The way we assess research quality has a direct impact on the careers of individual researchers. It influences recruitment and career progression. Similarly, research organisations, academic and non, are impacted via the scientific reputation record provided by the assessment process.

Ultimately, the way we assess research determines the very concept of "excellence", and conditions the research culture as a whole.

I believe in a research culture that recognises a diversity of contributions to science and society; that celebrates high quality and impactful research; and that values sharing, collaboration, integrity and engagement with society, transmitting knowledge from generation to generation.

I am happy to see that more than 350 organisations from 40 countries have committed to sound principles for assessment and have an interest in being part of a stakeholder-driven initiative pledging for a consensual reform.

I supported the conclusions on this topic presented on 10 June 2022, at the last EU Council of Ministers of Research of the EU French Presidency semester.

They provide our political support to your initiative, setting the principles for reform and inviting EU Member States to promote changes, remove barriers, exchange good practices, and provide guidance and support to stakeholders.

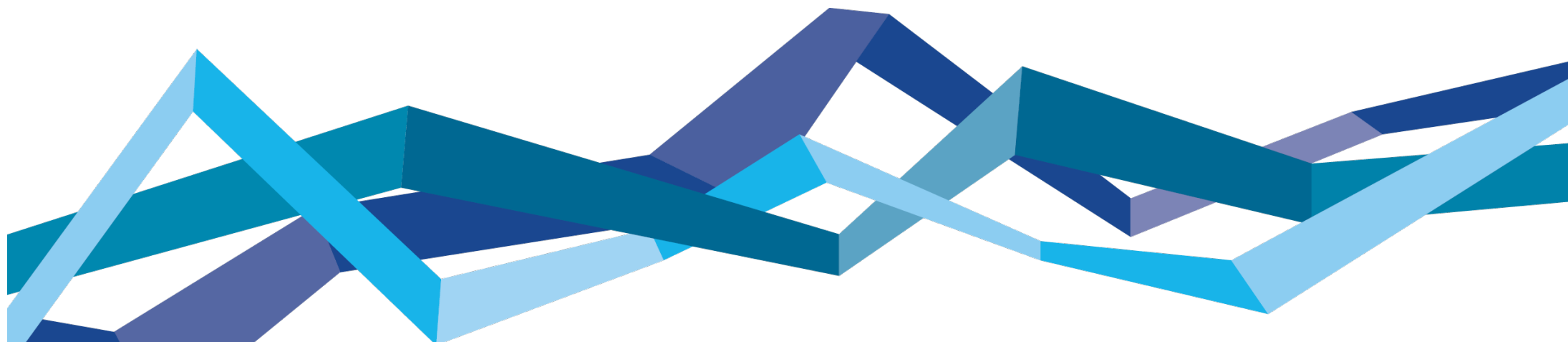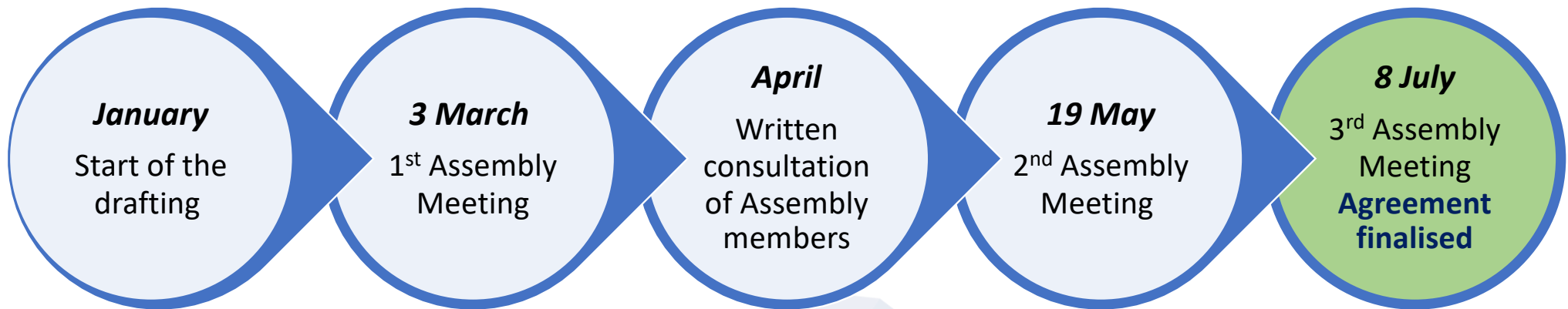I encourage your organisations to sign the Agreement and join the Coalition.

European Commission

THE AGREEMENT

Assembly meeting

8 JULY 2022

with the support of

Co-creating the Agreement

January
Start of the drafting

3 March
1st Assembly Meeting

April
Written consultation of Assembly members

19 May
2nd Assembly Meeting

8 July
3rd Assembly Meeting
Agreement finalised

- Core Group providing opinions and feedback on evolving drafts
- Feedback also through the European Research Area (ERA) Forum and the ERA Committee

Some numbers

24 Drafting Team meetings

6 Core Group meetings

3 Assembly meetings

1 written consultation of Assembly members
133 replies received

2 meetings and 1 workshop with ERA Forum members

2 discussions at ERAC meetings

**All input received has been carefully considered
and has helped improve the Agreement – Thank You!**
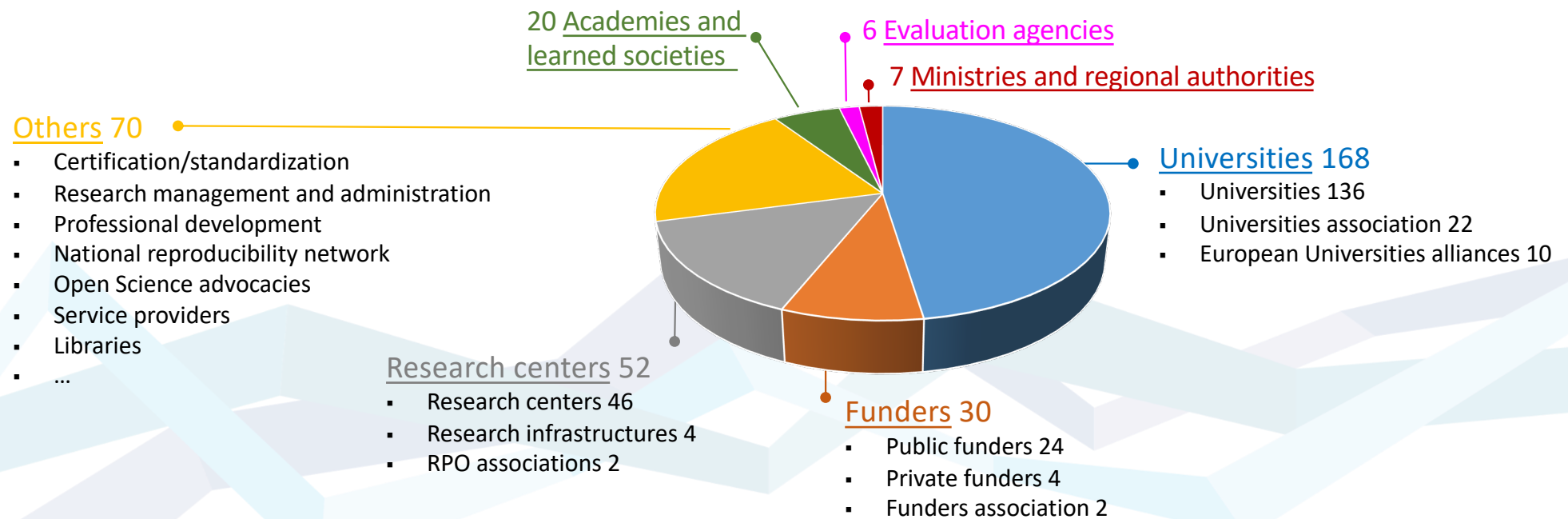
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Agreement reflects perspective of diversity of organisations …

- Over 350 organisations have declared they are committed to the principles in the Scoping Report and expressed interest in joining the drafting process

20 Academies and learned societies

6 Evaluation agencies

7 Ministries and regional authorities

Others 70
- Certification/standardization
- Research management and administration
- Professional development
- National reproducibility network
- Open Science advocacies
- Service providers
- Libraries
- …

Universities 168
- Universities 136
- Universities association 22
- European Universities alliances 10

Research centers 52
- Research centers 46
- Research infrastructures 4
- RPO associations 2

Funders 30
- Public funders 24
- Private funders 4
- Funders association 2

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... from across Europe and beyond

40 countries represented
(of which 25 EU countries)
+ Organisations of
international scope

NB: International organisations are international organisations, and umbrella organisations with members representing different countries
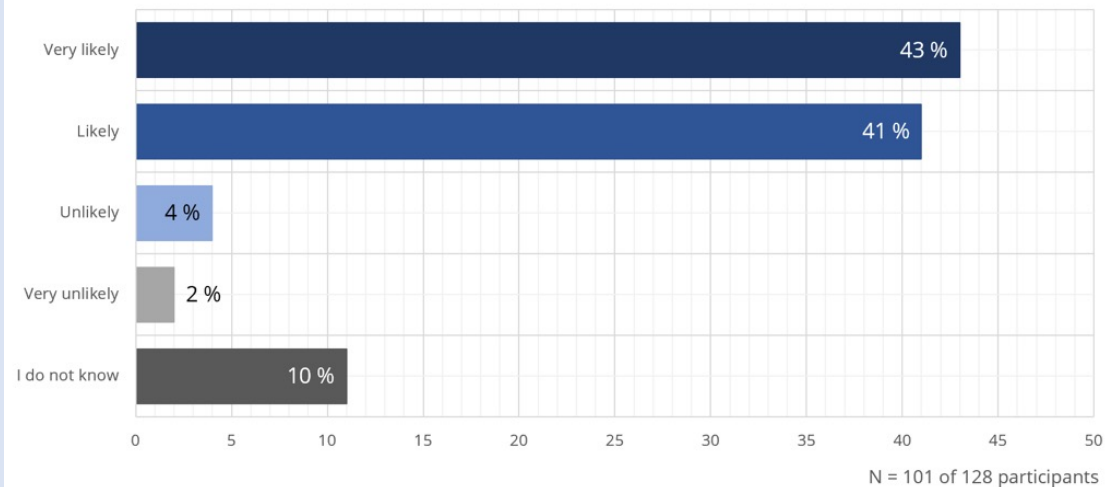
Main changes following 2ⁿᵈ Assembly of 19 May

- Broad consensus on the content of the Agreement

- Changes implemented were minor, meant to provide clarifications where needed

- For example:
  - Clarify that the Agreement and the Coalition are global in scope;
  - Clarify the definition of research assessment and that this does not include performance review of institutions, which often considers broader activities than research

In light of the presentations and discussions today, how likely are you to recommend that your organisation signs the agreement?

Very likely	43 %
Likely	41 %
Unlikely	4 %
Very unlikely	2 %
I do not know	10 %

N = 101 of 128 participants

Results of a poll during the 2nd Assembly meeting on 19 May

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Final Agreement

Introduction

I   Principles

II Commitments
- Core (1-4)
- Supporting (5-10)

III Principles for the coalition

IV Timeframe

Signature box

Annexes (non-prescriptive)
- Rationale and Context
- Reform journey
- Toolbox

Core commitments

- Two commitments to enable **better recognition of the diverse practices and activities** that maximise the quality of research

- Two commitments to **enable a move away from the inappropriate uses of metrics**

1. Recognise the diversity of contributions to, and careers in research according to the needs and the nature of the research.

2. Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer-review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators

3. Abandon the inappropriate uses in research assessment of journal- and publication-based metrics, in particular the inappropriate uses of journal impact factor (JIF) and h-index

4. Avoid the use of rankings of research organisations in research assessment

Final Agreement

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Supporting commitments

- *Three commitments **to pilot and enable** the move towards new criteria, tools and processes for research assessment*

- *Three commitments to facilitate **mutual learning, communicate progress** and ensure that new approaches are evidence-informed*

Final Agreement

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Key observations

- *Flexible and evolutive: assessment practices can vary according to the context, type and purpose of the evaluation.*

- *Respectful of the autonomy of organisations and of their respective missions*

- *Quantitative indicators: responsible use, not abandoning them.*

- *Timeframe: Touch-base points in years 1 and 5 after signature to communicate progress, based on self-assessment.*

- *Special attention to and involvement of young researchers*

- *The agreement is only the starting point: changes to be developed and implemented by the Coalition.*

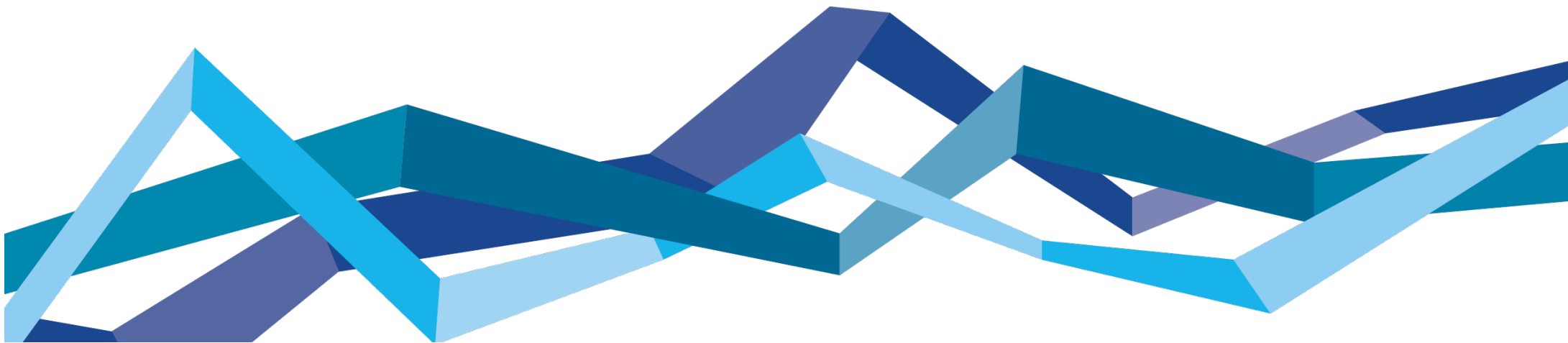- *Current version is undergoing proofreading. Final version will be made public soon.*

Thank you
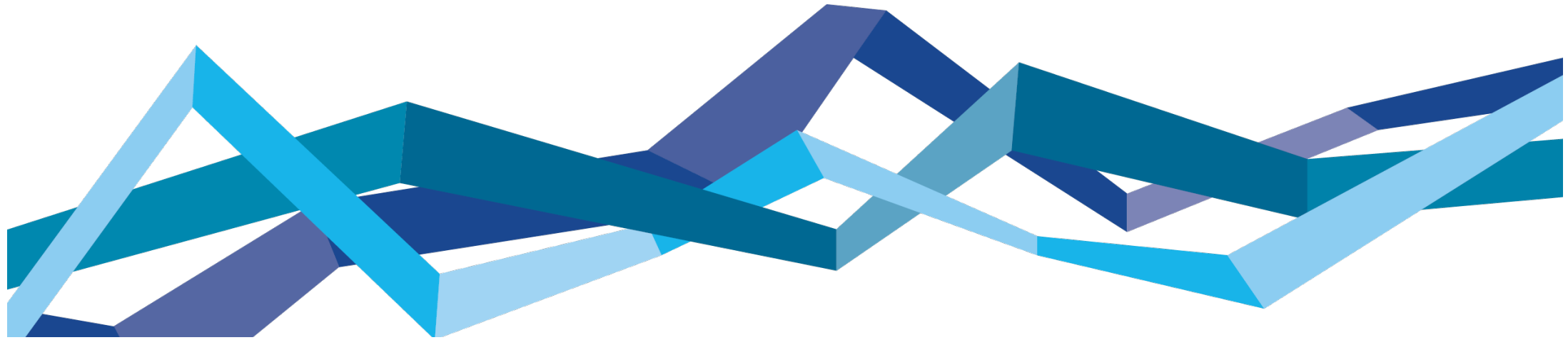
GOVERNANCE OF THE COALITION

Assembly meeting

8 JULY 2022

Mission of the Coalition

- **Enable systemic reform of research assessment** on the basis of common principles and commitments within an agreed timeframe, as set in the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment.

- Through **exchange of information and mutual learning** between all those willing to improve research assessment practices.

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Principles guiding the conduct and evolution of the Coalition

- **Openness** – to signatories of agreement; globally; accessible outputs

- **Responsibility** – general assembly responsible for rules and procedures of operation

- **Collaboration** - mutual learning and collaboration; also with other initiatives

- **Commitment and autonomy** – supports implementation of commitments; autonomy

- **Community-driven** – volunteer members; driving force

- **Inclusiveness** – global; different levels of progress

- **Trust** – self-assessment shared publicly

- **Funding** – voluntary in-kind; potential cash contributions from members

- **Non-profit** – no commercial activities; open and re-usable outputs

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Work of the Coalition

- Working Groups operating as **'communities of practice'** and offering space for mutual learning and collaboration

- **Examples** of communities of practice:

  - **"Interest communities"**, on ad-hoc horizontal topics

  - **"Discipline communities"**, on approaches to tailor criteria and processes by discipline, inter-disciplinary field, thematic area

  - **"Institution communities"**, on topics specific to a given type of organization

  - **"National communities"**, on issues specific to different types of organisations of a given country or group of countries

- Working Groups identified and proposed **bottom-up** by members

Membership

- Organisations that have **signed the Agreement** on Reforming Research Assessment

- **Not-for-profit** organisations **involved with research assessment**, typically:
  - public or private research funding organisations;
  - research performing organisations including universities, research centres, research infrastructures;
  - national/regional authorities or agencies that implement some form of research assessment;
  - associations of research funders; associations of research performers;
  - learned societies and associations of researchers;
  - and other relevant organisations.

- Membership **approved by the Steering Board**

- Members **may leave** the Coalition at any time

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Progress made

- Information on the progress made by members in implementing the commitments: through light **self-assessment communicated publicly**

  - ✓ May take the form of a public web-page under the responsibility of each member, presenting the policies and practices put in place to address the commitments

- Progress made by the Coalition as a whole, as well as effectiveness and efficiency of the Coalition organisation and operation, are **reviewed periodically**

  - ✓ This may involve independent experts/peers

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Links with national/regional authorities and with other initiatives

- Periodic interactions with representatives from national/regional authorities (e.g. with ERA Forum)

  ✓ To ensure links with developments at national/regional level

  ✓ Mechanisms of interactions to be developed by the Coalition

  ✓ Also, participation in the Coalition of national/regional evaluation and funding agencies, is encouraged

- The Coalition will seek for **complementarities, collaborations and synergies** with like-minded initiatives and organisations

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Coalition bodies

- **General Assembly of Members** - All Members. The organ representing all the members of the Coalition. The **highest level decision-making body**, that meets annually

- **Steering Board** – **Elected**. Responsible for the overall oversight, success, strategy, business plan and sustainability of the Coalition

- **Working Groups** – **Voluntary participation**. To exchange knowledge, learn mutually, discuss and investigate any topic to advance research assessment and help with the implementation of the Members commitments

- **Coalition Secretariat** - **Supports** the administrative, logistical, and other activities of the Coalition
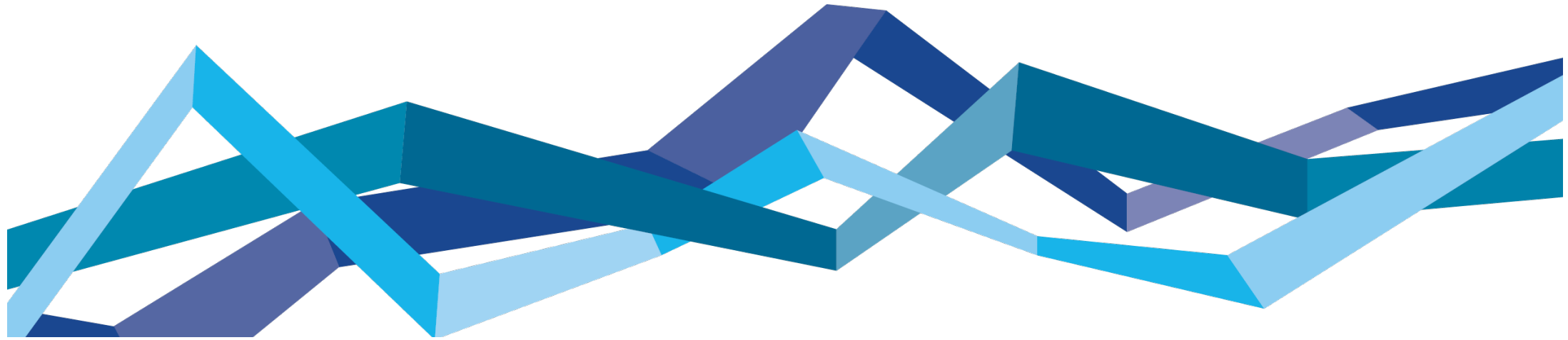
Secretariat responsibilities

- Management and support to **daily operations** of the Coalition. Support to the General Assembly, Steering Board, Working Groups (including for meetings)

- **Management of funds**, and seeking funding opportunities for the operation of the Coalition

- Support to the preparation of the **annual work-plan and budget**

- **Engagement with stakeholders and communication activities**. Support to synergies and dialogue between the Coalition and other relevant initiatives

- Organisation and preparation of **reporting** on the work of the Coalition. **Promotion** of the work and outputs of the Coalition, and **dissemination** of outputs and documents

- Support for the **periodic evaluation** of the progress made by the Coalition as a whole and its effectiveness and efficiency

Support and financing

- **Voluntary in-kind contributions** from the members, particularly for their participation in the Working Groups

- Funding provided by **some interested research organisations**

- And/or cash contributions from members. Modest, differentiated **membership fee**?

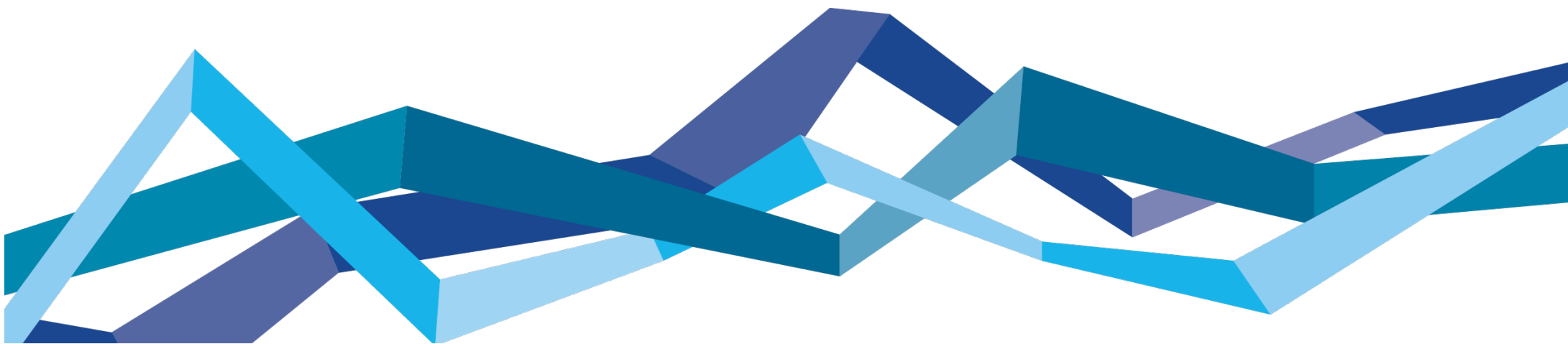- Further work will be conducted to **identify options** for the financing of the Coalition and draft its budget

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Thank you

Objectives for the coming months

- Promote the **Agreement** and open it for signature

- Continue to develop and finalise the **Governance Document**, including a Code of Conduct (CoC)

- Initiate the development of **Rules of Procedure** (RoPs) for working groups, for electing Steering Board members, etc.

- Identify options for the financing of the Coalition and draft its budget

- Hold the **Constitutive Assembly** (launching the Coalition)

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Timeframe

- **Today:** 3rd **Stakeholder Assembly**
  - Present the final **Agreement** & continue discussions on the organisation and operations of the Coalition

- **July-October** (indicative):
  - Continue the development and finalise the **Governance Document** including a **Code of Conduct (CoC)**
  - Initiate the development of **Rules of Procedure (RoPs)** for working groups, for electing Steering Board members, etc.
  - Identify options for the financing of the Coalition and draft its budget

- **September** (indicative): **open the Agreement for signatures**

- **November/December** (indicative): **Constitutive Assembly**
  - Launch of the Coalition: Adoption of Governance Document, election of Steering Board members, decision on Secretariat of the Coalition, etc.

Next steps (1/3)

1. Establish an **'Implementation Group'**

   - Core Group role ends with the finalisation of the Agreement

   - An 'Implementation Group' will continue the development of the Governance Document/ToRs, will initiate development of the RoPs for working groups etc., identify financing options and draft a budget, by working closely with the drafting team

     - **Profile of members:** 1) Experience in setting up of large stakeholder-driven organisations; 2) Experience in drafting of constitutive documents such as ToRs and RoPs for working groups; experience in setting up of organisational structures; 3) Experience with different governance models, and in working with stakeholders from different countries.

     - **Composition:** a limited number of members

     - Steering/chairing by drafting team members.

     - Core Group members and Stakeholder Assembly members can volunteer. Selection made by the drafting team (if too many volunteers)

   - Meetings foreseen in Sept-Oct. Role terminates with ToRs finalisation

Next steps (2/3)

2. Appoint **Interim Chairs**

- The interim Chairs will approve the membership of the Coalition and chair the Constitutive Assembly, until nomination of the Steering Board

- Science Europe and EUA act as Interim Chairs, unless objections to this proposal

3. **Interim Secretariat**

- The drafting team members would provide the interim secretariat of the Coalition, until the appointment of the secretariat by the Constitutive Assembly

- Other organisations (Core Group members and Assembly members) could volunteer to help with certain tasks in this interim period
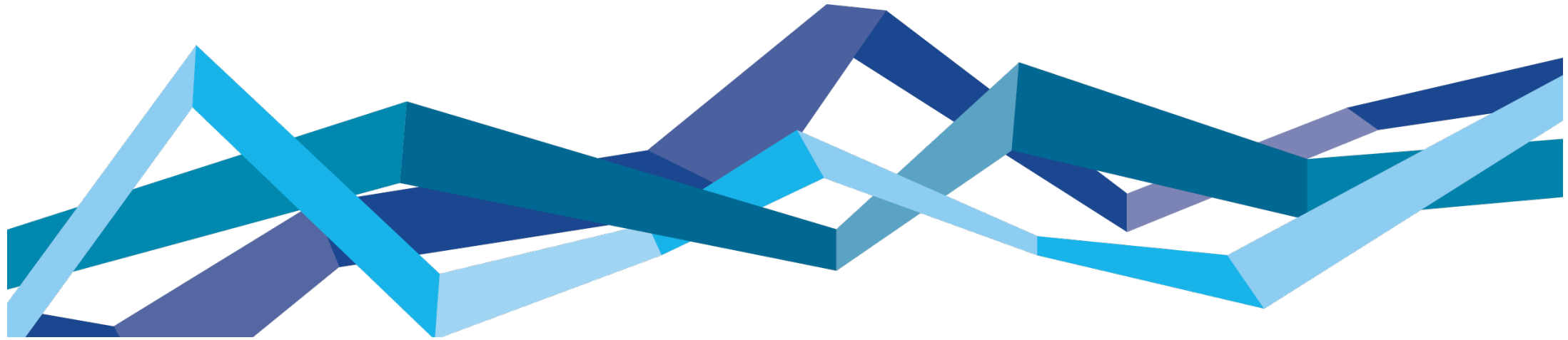
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Next steps (3/3)

4. Secretariat of the Coalition

- Assembly members may volunteer to act as Secretariat of the Coalition (from the Constitutive Assembly onwards)
- **Deadline** to present candidacies: **1st September, 18:00 Brussels time**
- Assessment of candidates to be made by the drafting team
- Drafting team's proposal for the most suitable candidate(s) and runners-up to be presented at the Assembly
- The Constitutive Assembly will approve the Secretariat, considering the proposal and analysis made by the drafting team

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How to present candidacies?

- E-mail to stephane.berghmans@eua.eu & lidia.borrell-damian@scienceeurope.org
- Include a Word document explaining how the organisation meets the following criteria (max 1 page per criterion):

  1. Capacity and expertise in secretarial support of associations or similar types of bodies; planning and organising a programme of activities; and planning, raising, and managing budget;

  2. Capacity and expertise in stakeholder engagement and in communication and dissemination activities;

  3. Capacity and commitment to undertake tasks for an initial period of up to 9 months, noting that no dedicated budget is currently available.
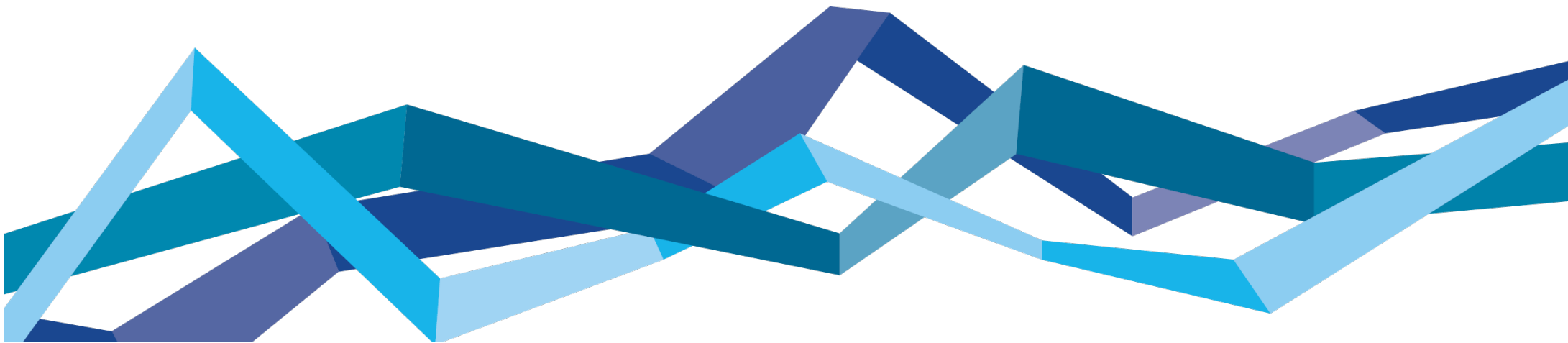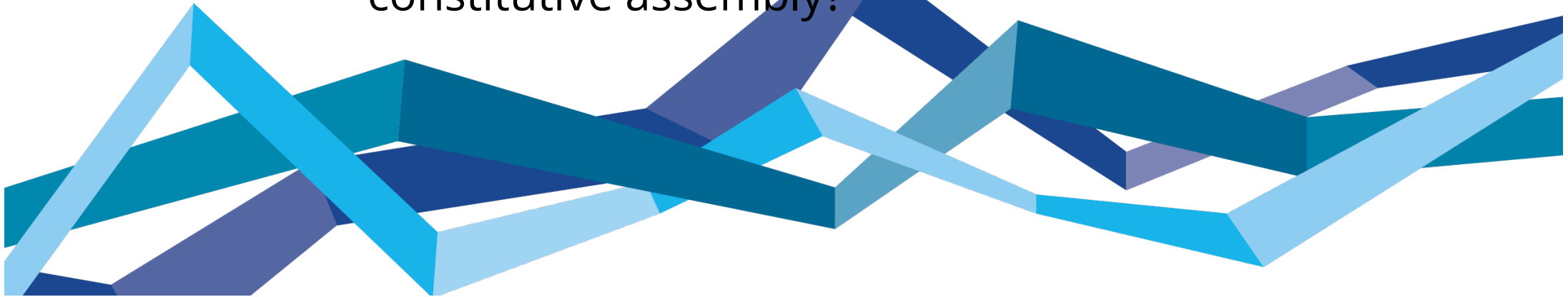
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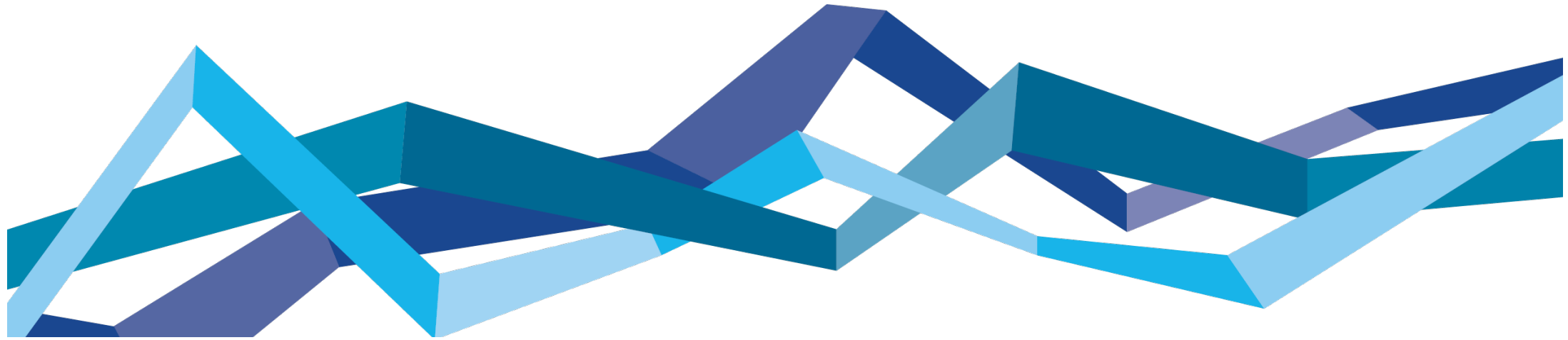
OPEN FLOOR Q&A

Assembly meeting

8 JULY 2022

BREAKOUT GROUPS

- What are your initial reactions to the proposed governance document?

- What are your comments and suggestions, on the objectives, roles, organisation and types of possible working groups/communities of practice?

- What are your remarks on the next steps towards a constitutive assembly?

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BREAK

Thank you all, enjoy the summertime!