

# SCIENCE SUMMIT AT UNGA79



## Reciprocity in Multilateral Research Collaboration

Research Council  
of Norway

SCIENCE  
EUROPE  
Shaping the future of research

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## Conclusions

The event ‘Reciprocity in Multilateral Research Collaboration’ was organised by Science Europe and the Research Council of Norway (RCN) as part of the [Science Summit](#) during the 79th UN General Assembly. Building on the outcomes of Science Europe’s [2023 High Level Workshop](#) on international research collaboration, it brought together experts from around the globe. The dialogue explored the critical importance of freedom to carry out research, equitable access to scientific information and research infrastructures, while considering science as a public good. Those values are in line with UN Policy Briefs, the [New Agenda for Peace](#), and the UNESCO [Recommendation on Open Science](#).

The following remarks present the main messages from the discussion towards establishing more and better reciprocity in research collaboration, as well as the strong calls to transcend geopolitical boundaries and to advocate inclusive technologies that were emphasised during the event.

### Why do we need reciprocity?

The co-creation of a human-centered, peaceful, common future is urgently needed. This approach contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals, and addresses the world’s most pressing challenges. Reciprocity in multilateral research collaboration, however, requires that we challenge our current ways of collaborating and to go beyond the existing modus operandi. In this process, research free from interference, and equitable access to scientific information are prerequisites.

### How to achieve reciprocity?

#### A. Delivering academic freedom, scientific integrity, and equity for inclusive scientific collaboration

Achieving reciprocity in multilateral research collaborations requires a radical shift in perspective, by placing people and their diverse backgrounds at the heart of equitable partnerships. Partnerships should be guided by the fundamental principles of trust, dignity, inclusion, respect, mutual learning, and shared responsibility, all while being sensitive to the social-cultural identities and contexts of those involved. Building and maintaining relationships in trustful environments requires time, keeping in mind that collaborations, and co-creation initiatives, only move “at the speed of trust.”

In this vein, intellectual property rights need to be discussed, agreed upon, and respected. A commitment to Open Science is also vital, as it is the only way to ensure equitable access to scientific knowledge and information. Moreover, facilitating equitable access to research infra-



structures is essential, recognising them as vital tools that enable meaningful collaboration and bring the benefits from the generation of new knowledge to all partners.

## **B. Addressing challenges for reciprocity and equitable multilateralism in scientific collaboration towards achieving SDGs**

The following elements are conditions to enable reciprocal multilateral research collaborations:

- Governments and policy makers should prioritise scientific collaboration across borders as part of their strategic development. Funding agencies must provide space for embedding reciprocity in their collaborations, as well as for the ownership and management of resources by the research performers. The SDGs are a key example of global commitment, demonstrating the importance of defining shared objectives to drive collaboration and co-creation.
- Additionally, training researchers in enhanced inclusive collaboration methods is crucial to the culture of reciprocity. We need to create flexible and experimental institutional environments where researchers can collaborate with fewer restrictions. Furthermore, it is necessary to boost the South–South and North–South instruments of International Co-operation, highlighting that the global South also has a lot of rich knowledge to share.
- Among the enabling factors in global co-operation is facilitating logistical aspects, such as easing the visa process. Finally, a system to assess the degree of co-creation and collaboration (such as a report card) could be a valuable tool for assessing multilateral collaboration.

## **Towards better recognition of local and native/indigenous knowledges**

Indigenous knowledges provide perspectives and experience that help understand and tackle societal and global challenges in ways that conventional science does not fully capture. By embracing the intuitive force of indigenous and local knowledge systems, such as those based on kinship, we can create a more holistic understanding of the world. The limitations of traditional science could be transcended by expanding our mindsets towards relationality, interconnectedness, and care-driven collective action. To progress collectively, it is essential to increase the recognition of the historical context of our knowledge systems and the role that indigenous knowledges play in shaping them.

## **Next steps**

Voices from the five continents converged to discuss reciprocity in multilateral research collaboration. The dialogue was in itself an act of reciprocity, perceived as a first milestone towards building a regular framework for reciprocity to become increasingly embedded in research policies. This may be seen as a tipping point that shifts the way policies in multilateral co-operation are conceived and implemented. Through this dialogue, the emergence of a truly global atmosphere around the need for reciprocity was ignited. Science Europe is going to promote the messages delivered by the speakers in all international, European and global fora where it is represented, advocating a more human-centered approach to reciprocal multilateral co-operation. Ultimately, it is through reciprocal collaboration and embracing diverse knowledge systems that we can address global challenges.